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AFRICA



Sunday School LESSONS

FOR YOUTH

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Number 22

Sunday School

LESSONS

FOR YOUTH

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Teaching the Bible is a privilege that God has given us, but it entails a great responsibility, since the teaching must be based on the Word of God. Therefore, we should be very careful to search the Scripture. We must seek the purpose that God wishes to communicate through the biblical writers.

Intelligently reaching out to youth is vital to the growth and development of the church. Most of the evangelical leadership will agree with this statement. On the other hand, being a Sunday School teacher is a privilege that God gives us, and at the same time, constitutes a great responsibility. The privilege of teaching comes from having been taught first and from the mandate that we have received from Jesus to teach others (Matthew 28:20). If we understand the dynamics of teaching well, we will not be frightened by the responsibility, but will enjoy the privilege, and constantly train ourselves to form Christ in others. We encourage you to study each lesson carefully in advance. That way you will have a better mastery of each subject, and without a doubt, it will be a time of spiritual growth.

Following, we have included for you various suggestions that we hope will help you to prepare and better present each lesson.

PREPARING THE LESSON

1. Before preparing each lesson, pray, asking God for wisdom and discernment to understand the biblical study passages and to apply it to your life. Additionally, pray for your students so that they may be receptive to the teaching of the Word of God, so that in the midst of the particular situations in which they are living, the Word of God would be of help, strength, and guidance.
2. Prepare a place free from distractions to study the lesson, where there is a table or desk. It's important to have some materials available such as paper, pens, pencils, and erasers, among others.
3. In addition to the book, you will need a Bible, and it would be of much help if you have on hand different versions. Also, try to have a language dictionary, a biblical dictionary and a good biblical commentary related to the lesson on hand.

4. Read the objective for the lesson multiple times. Knowing where you want to take the lesson will make the path much easier.
5. Memorize the Bible verse. You should be an example of what you are going to teach.
6. Read the lesson thoroughly as many times as necessary. Knowing the topic deeply will help you to develop the class time.
7. The book is designed for youth. Therefore, read the introductory activity. Practice it to be sure that it's feasible. Check to see if it will be necessary to take any additional material to the class.
8. Look in the Bible and read each biblical reference as indicated. Practice the reading, especially of those passages that have difficult words to pronounce.
9. Make your own summary of the lesson to guide yourself in the class. Write on a sheet of paper, or electronically on a tablet or phone, the name of the lesson, the principal points and develop a summary as you study the lesson, point by point. Write out and highlight the biblical references that will be read during the class.
10. Look for the meaning of unknown words so that you may better understand the lesson.

PRESENTING THE LESSON

1. Be the first one to arrive at the classroom and arrange the area in the best way possible. For each new unit, you can change the arrangement of the chairs, the board, etc. Look for ways to create a comfortable environment for the development of the class. Remember that a good environment will help create good attitudes from people.
2. Always begin at the scheduled time.
3. Start by welcoming your students. This allows you to create a comfortable study environment. Know the name of each student, looking for ways to remember the names of new students.
4. Begin class with prayer, asking the Lord to help all to understand His Word and to give everyone the desire to obey it.
5. Begin with the introductory activity; this will help to enter into the topic.
6. Write the title of point 1 and begin to explain it. Use the board and the flip chart as a teaching resource to note explanations. When you finish point 1, write the title of point 2 and continue in this way. Highlight important aspects of the topic.
7. Encourage the participation of each person in the class. Form work groups to develop each point. Ask your students to look up the biblical references, read them, and comment on them. Allow them to give their points of view. Ask for the participation of those who for any reason don't participate. Don't criticize any suggestion, be polite and don't avoid difficult discussions. Rather, guide them with the council of the Word of God.

8. Dedicate a few minutes to comment on how to apply the biblical truths learned in class to our daily lives.
9. Motivate the students to invite other youth to the next class. In a creative way, give them an idea of what the next lesson will deal with. Create anticipation in the youth.
10. Finish the class with prayer. Do it in different ways each day.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

1. Goals and prizes: You can offer a simple prize for the students that, during each class:
 - Memorize all the biblical texts.
 - Punctually attend all the classes of the unit.
2. Memorization. An important aspect of learning the Bible is memorization. You should keep in mind that when something is memorized, it's typically understood better and for a longer time. Therefore, help your students understand each biblical text that they are going to memorize. In order to do so, you can help by reading or writing it from different versions of the Bible, explaining to the students the meaning of difficult words, and helping them apply the text to a real situation in their lives. The following are some activities that we hope will help in the task of memorizing and helping others memorize the Word of God. Of course, you should choose the activity that works best in your situation. Keep in mind the number of people in each class, the characteristics of the class, and the class area and resources available.
 - Write the text on the board, and as you develop the lesson, begin to erase words as the students memorize them. Give some sort of prize to the first person that says the verse correctly.
 - Form teams of no more than four people. Give each team cards with words from the memory verse (one word per card). Allow one or two minutes so that, without looking at the Bible, the students put the verse together correctly and all the members of the team memorize it. Give a prize to the winning team.
 - Hide the text somewhere inside the classroom. Allow some time for students to look for it and memorize it. The one who achieves this first will be the winner. Don't forget a prize!
- Make stations in different places in the classroom. At each one, present part of the lesson. Before beginning each point, they must memorize part of the verse. The hope is that by the end of the lesson, all will have the verse memorized.
- Make two groups and ask each one to memorize the verse by creating hand motions. After a few minutes, when all members of the teams have the verse and the respective hand motions memorized, they will present it to the other group.

- Divide the class into multiple groups to memorize the text. The group that memorizes it first and can say it without any mistakes will be the winner. Give some sort of recognition to the winning group.

HOW TO PRAY WITH THE ONE SEEKING GOD'S FACE

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

1. Realize the importance of the moment and give it full attention
2. Kneel, sit or stand next to the person you intend to help.
3. 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.
4. Listen to the seeker's prayer to determine if they need help.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Remember to give the pastor the names of all the seekers and the outcomes of their prayers.

Objective: Reaffirm in the young people the value and relevance of the Bible as the only manual for the Christian life.

Memory Verse: Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Psalm 119:89

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Newspapers
- **Instructions:** Divide the class into groups and give each of them newspapers. Then write the following words on a chalkboard: Fashion, technology, politics, violence, money, and fun. Then ask them to give an example of those words with news items that appear in the newspapers they were given. At the end of the activity, discuss with the students how these items have evolved or changed compared to five years ago.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Divide your students into groups and assign each one the following topics:

Changes in fashion; changes in electronics; and changes in communication. Tell them that they should explain the development of each of these themes in the last 8 or 10 years. Then together make a comparison between the validity of the biblical message over time and the themes they addressed previously. How up-to-date is the Bible today?

The Bible is the best known book, having been translated into almost all languages and published throughout the world. This marvelous book was written by more than 40 writers during a period of 1500 years; however, its coherence, truth and importance remain to this day. The Bible contains a great deal of information about the natural world, which has been confirmed by scientific research and observations. Many historical events recorded in the Bible have been confirmed by extra-biblical sources. The Bible is much more than all that: it is God's description of who He is, what He wants, and what His plans are for humanity. It is there where the Bible's permanence and actuality lie.

Change is moving from one situation or state to another. The world is constantly changing. Thus, there are changes in society, in concepts, in science and in everything that surrounds the life of the human being, who in him or herself is in constant change.

Let us look at some changes that society is experiencing today:

1. Climatic and universe changes:

"Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'" (Matthew 24:29). Currently, we observe that the climate is constantly changing. The seasons and periods of rain are no longer the same as they were long ago. In the universe, the formation of stars and even new planets is constant. But we can also trust that the changes are controlled by God: "for He views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens" (Job 28:24). In the Bible God asks: "Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons?" (Job 38:32a). These,

among many other verses, show us that God has control over these situations. Even though everything around us is constantly changing, we can trust that God does not change: “I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed” (Malachi 3:6). As a consequence, his Word does not change either.

2. Changes in humanity:

Mankind constantly goes through many changes in ethical, moral and even spiritual perceptions. It is increasingly common to see people with moral deviations. 1 John 2:17 clearly shows us that the desires of humanity change: “The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God will live forever” (GNT). This scripture also affirms that the one who does the will of God is rewarded with eternal permanence. God, despite the fact that humanity is changeable, promises that His promises will not change. In the face of constant change in life and environment, God shows the permanence of His Word to give strength and build trust in Him. Let us carefully study what has been mentioned.

Permanence of the Word

1 Peter 1:25 says that the Word of God remains forever: “... but the word of the Lord endures forever.” This verse says that the Bible is applicable for eternity: “but the Word of the Lord will last forever. And his message is the Good News that was preached to you” (TLB). The Bible contains a great deal of relevant and accurate information. However, the most important message in the Bible is about redemption; that is always applicable to all mankind. When human beings search the Bible for who they are, the Word of God will never be wrong. Cultures change, laws change, generations come and go, but God’s Word is as relevant today as it was when it was written. In Matthew 24:35, it says: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

The Bible continues to speak to us today

The Bible continues to speak to us today. The mere mention of the Bible makes us think of something very old, and of themes and stories from another era. And this is the greatest danger: reading it like a book from the past. If that were the case, at best the Bible would be an interesting and instructive book, but it would not go beyond that for the person who reads it. However, we can affirm with certainty and with confidence that the Bible is much more than that because it is an always relevant book, like the Word it contains. In the Bible, God continues to speak to people here and now. Neither space travel nor electronic computers detract from the relevance of the Bible since its message is eternal. The Bible has to do with everything that happens in each person in the entire world.

Although it is a book that could be called religious, it is relevant to all reality since in it we find a variety of topics and advice that guide people throughout their lives. Reread it always with new eyes, not to make it say what one wants it to say, but for it to tell humankind what it has always had to say ... again.

Review/Application: Allow time for your students to write what these concepts mean to them

(we have included an answer in italics):

- **Change:** (Change is moving from one situation or state to another. The world is constantly changing. Thus, there are changes in society, in concepts, in science and in everything that surrounds the life of the human being, who in himself is in constant change.)
- **Permanence:** (Permanence is what lasts through time and does not change or disappear. The Bible is God’s description of who He is, what He wants, and what His plans are for humanity. It is there where its permanence and relevance lie.)

Have them connect the two concepts with what the scripture says and what they learned in the lesson.

Challenge: Take a few minutes of personal prayer to ask God to help you update His Word in your life. Take the time to apologize if you thought this was an outdated book. Finally, pray that this Word will be put into practice in your life.

Objective: That the young people will see the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice.

Memory Verse: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 2 Timothy 3:16

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Books, magazines, a small shelf, pens, paper, dictionary
- **Instructions:** Depending on the number of students, organize them into small groups of three. Direct them to appoint a secretary to take notes. Ask them to answer the following questions:
 1. What is a library?
 2. What is it for?
 3. Have you ever visited a library? Share your experiences you had when you visited it

Give enough time for them to answer. Write the definition of “library” on the board: Place where there is a considerable number of books organized for reading.” Compare it with the definitions given by the groups. Ask the scribes to help you place the books and magazines on the shelf. Encourage students to think of the Bible as a library.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Two cards, markers.
- **Instructions:** Have the cards handy, place one on the right and one on the left of the classroom. On the right, write “Ways to show love and interest in the Bible;” on the one on the left write “Actions that show a lack of love and interest in the Bible.” On each card, students are to write down their ideas. Share the answers with the class.

The people of God, in both the Old and New Testaments, had access to the sacred writings that men wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These were carefully selected and compiled into a single copy. In the beginning when the first part was formed, it was not called the Bible. It was known simply as The Law, The Prophets and The Psalms. Such sacred writings governed the life of God’s people politically, economically, socially, and religiously. They became what we know today as the Old Testament. As we all know, these writings contain information about things which happened before the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Later, other writings emerged after the redemptive work of Christ and his ascension. I am referring to the time of the apostles and the early church when the gospels, the letters, the book of Acts and Revelation began to circulate.

We, the sons and daughters of God, have before us the Holy Bible, the Word of God. We can access various translations or versions if we want. It is a great blessing to enjoy the beautiful content of the Bible.

Ask: How can we show our love and concern for the Holy Bible and take advantage of its valuable teachings?

1. Daily Bible reading

The Lord Jesus came to the Nazareth synagogue and He was given the book of the prophet Isaiah to read, and he read the prophecy that had to do with him and his ministry (Luke 4:17-19).

The Lord Jesus, in discussions with his adversaries the Pharisees and other leaders, assumed that they must have read and known the Holy Scriptures. (Matthew 12:3; 12:5).

We see, then, that the faithful reading of the Scriptures is of vital importance for the people of God.

The reading of the Holy Bible should be characterized by being:

- **Passionate**

The Christian Bible reader should be excited and encouraged that one is not just reading any old book about God. In the style of the believers of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, one must make sense of what one reads (Nehemiah 8:8).

- **Helpful**

The sincere reader of the Holy Bible takes advantage of its teachings because they are a guide in all aspects of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

- **Supportive**

The Word of God is food that sustains and nourishes one's spiritual life. The soul that is hungry for God and for doing good will be satisfied (Matthew 4:4). God uses his powerful Word to sustain us every day (Psalm 119:28,116; Hebrews 1:1-3).

2. Thorough study of the Bible

In addition to the good habit of reading the scriptures, we must study them. The purpose of Bible studying, in addition to assimilating the content, is to understand it. The following guidelines can help achieve this purpose: What does the passage actually say? Does the passage contain any specific teaching about God, mankind, the world, the church...? Does it contain an example to follow, a warning, or a promise? Is any action required in light of the passage?

3. Application of the Bible to everyday life

We know well that the Bible is God's message to humanity, and that the impact it has on people's lives results in transformed lives. Its effects are long lasting. There are some examples below.

It transforms our lifestyle: Whoever follows the teachings of the Word will surrender to Christ. The Lord then works a glorious change in the heart so that life will never be the same again (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Bible plays an important role in our growth and development.

Review/Application:

Direct your students to read the Bible verses and fill in the blanks:

1. Hebrews 4:12 "For the Word of God is alive and active."
2. Psalm 119:105. "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."
3. John 6:63. "The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life."
4. 2 Timothy 3:16. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."
5. Psalm 119: 9. "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your Word."

Challenge:

Get into groups of three and discuss the importance and the need to share the Word of God with young people who do not know the Lord. Get New Testaments, visit these young people, invite them to come to church, and give each of them a copy of the holy book.

Objective: That the youth will know God's promises and how He fulfills them at the right time.

Memory Verse: Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:23

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Write the following promises on rectangles of paper (Matthew 11:28; John 14:3; 14:16; Romans 8:28; Psalms 23:1; 91:1; 91:7; etc.). Then cut the verse in half to make them incomplete (example: "those who love him" - "all things God works for the good of"), Bibles.
- **Instructions:** Place the pieces of paper with some of the promises mixed up and upside down on a table or on the floor. Have the students take a piece of paper and look among their classmates to complete the promise written on it. When finished, each pair will read their promise and talk about what it says. If young people do not know much about the Bible, you can put the reference up so they can look it up.

Introductory Activity (18 – 23 years)

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk, or large paper and pencil.
- **Instructions:** On the board, write the word "Promise" in large letters and ask your students to describe what the word means to them (you can write the concepts on the board that they describe). After a few minutes, write the title "A Broken Promise" on the side and do the same exercise described above. In closing, encourage your students to think about the beauty of never-failing promises.

Throughout a person's existence, one receives numerous promises, for example: marriage, employment, housing, educational or financial results, gifts, visits, scholarships, etc. Some are fulfilled and others are not. Today's lesson displays the true value of a promise.

1. The meaning of a promise

In the dictionary, the word "promise" is described as "a declaration that something will or will not be done, given, etc., by one;" or "an express assurance on which expectation is to be based;" (www.dictionary.com). A promise can also be understood as "a legally binding declaration that gives the person to whom it's made a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act" (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/promise). Today's lesson is about the most special promises we can receive.

When we look around us, we can see that our social life is filled with promises. Students have a mutual contract (even though they have not signed an official document) with their school teachers.

The promises we receive from God are also an agreement that if we are obedient and trust Him, He will fulfill His part (1 John 2:25; Acts 2:33, 39). In these wonderful verses, God has very clearly and specifically promises eternal life to those who believe in Jesus, and that He also promises the help of the Holy Spirit. The special meaning of God's promises is that they are an expression of His eternal love for us, they demonstrate His clear intention to save us, and He is the one who initiates His promises to us.

2. The value of a promise

In life people are and will be surrounded by many promises that people make and receive. Unfortunately, many promises are not faithfully kept. We cannot deny that an unfulfilled or “broken” promise can bring a lot of sadness, disappointment, and pain to the heart of the person who expected to see that promise fulfilled. It is possible that these painful experiences are already part of the life of a young person, despite one’s young age.

The value of a promise is closely related to the truthfulness of the word of the person who makes the promise. In our case as children of God, we know that God’s promises are of such great value that they are incalculable, because no promise of God has failed. Unlike our trust in human beings who can fail us, our trust in God’s promises is beyond doubt. In Hebrews 11:1, we read: “What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead.” (TLB).

Take a look at the passages in Hebrews 10:23 and 2 Corinthians 1:20. The value of a promise resides in the person who says it and in the great peace and trust it brings to the recipient.

3. The fulfillment of a promise

When a promise is finally fulfilled, both parties who had agreed are completely satisfied that they received what they longed for ... the fulfillment of a promise. As children of God, there must be an understanding that the promises that God has made are both unique and of incalculable value because their value is spiritual. The fulfillment of the divine promises is in God’s timing. This time is known only to Him until He reveals it, and its timing is perfect, because it is determined by the perfect wisdom of God.

As human beings, it is very common to have the tendency of suffering from impatience, that is, having the feeling of urgency and / or despair about the time when things should happen. A feeling of despair, which can overwhelm us in difficult situations, must be submitted to God, and one must resist the tendency to despair or to think that God’s promises have to be fulfilled when “I” think it would be better. In the same way it is vital to resist the temptation to think that if what one wants does not happen “now,” God has failed one or does not care.

Finally, in order to see the fulfillment of God’s matchless promises, one needs to have patience and faith. Trust that He is faithful and He will do what He has said He will do (Hebrews 6:12). We can trust that God’s promises will be faithfully fulfilled at the perfect time.

Review/Application:

Give them time to write down what each promise means to their lives.

BIBLE REFERENCES WITH A	MEANING OF A PROMISE
Jeremiah 29:11	God has a good plan for my life and future.
Isaiah 43:2	Jehovah is with me during the difficult times.
	God can show me my professional field of study
1 Corinthians 10:13	God can help me overcome temptations
	God can give me peace in the moments of greatest anxiety
	God wants to help me make very good decisions

Challenge: Have you thought about God’s promises before today’s lesson? Do you have any favourite promises? I encourage you to ask God to make you a promise for yourself or for a specific time in your life. These special promises are very useful when we share them with others. During this week, think about and choose a promise for your life.

Objective: To promote memorization and application of the Bible.

Memory Verse: My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, Proverbs 3:1

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Poster board/large pieces of paper with the following words, mind, book, television, magazines, heart and spirit.
- **Instructions:** Take out each poster board and ask if each word refers to an external unit or an internal unit. When they agree or after a while, present the answers as follows: Mind: RAM memory. Internal unit. (Book, TV, Magazine): External unit. Brain: Hard Drive. Internal drive. Spirit: Internal unit.

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Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Individual posters/large papers featuring all the words of two or less known or rarely-memorized Bible verses.
- **Instructions:** Present the verses and have the students to memorize the verses. Then ask them to try to order the words of the verse or verses in the order they were memorized.

Humans can be compared in some way to the computer memory, because of the ability to store in memory data that is there when needed.

1. Like a RAM, the mind is a place where information is stored for a specified time, but when one disconnects from the information, it is lost and forgotten. Information does as the saying goes: “in one ear and out the other.”
2. External units or devices can be the different sources of information that appear in our lives: books, what one listens to and even what one sees. Many times one must resort to those external sources to remember what was said, but they are not always available at our fingertips.
3. The hard drive resembles the brain: If one saves or files something in it, one has the assurance that it will be within reach when one needs it. Therefore, it is internal. In this way it is protected from everything external and something that might damage it.

1. What do you keep on your “hard drive”?

Computer memory (RAM) is a temporary storage place for the files one uses. Most of the information stored in RAM is erased when the computer is turned off. Therefore, the computer needs permanent forms of storage to save and retrieve programs and data files that one wants to use on a daily basis. Storage devices (also called drives) were developed to meet this need.

The most common types of devices are:

- External drives: USB sticks, CDs, DVDs, portable hard drives, etc.:
- Internal drives: Hard drives.

The hard drive is the most important storage system in a computer. The program files and the files that one creates with those programs are saved in it.

The brain is a “hard drive”, an internal memory like a computer’s. In this sense, memory is one of the necessary conditions for learning to take place, which happens exactly when the content of memory changes. Thus, once a stimulus; data, explanation, etc. has been received, the memory goes from a state of not having data to having it. It can be said that learning is saving something in memory to remember it when necessary.

Memorizing is an intellectual activity by which one fixes and preserves in the mind the knowledge that one must learn, and then recall it when necessary. However, we must mention that there is a difference between memorizing and understanding. Memorizing is learning by remembering, without understanding. Understanding is learning by realizing and analyzing. According to the Bible, information is in the heart in a metaphorical way, and there we must keep the Word of God. It is full of advices to insert its truth in our hearts (Psalm 37:31, 119:9-11; Proverbs 4:4)

The word “retain” comes from the Hebrew term which means to “grasp, understand, capture”. Memorizing Scripture gives one a firm understanding of God’s Word, and allows the Word to captivate one. King Solomon also mentioned writing the Word “...on the tablet of your heart...” (Proverbs 7:3), and having the Scripture written within us so that it is “...ready on your lips.” (Proverbs 22:18). In Proverbs 3:1-2, there is a reminder from King Solomon’s advice not to forget the Word. In Joshua 1:7, Joshua as a leader was advised not to stray to either his right or his left from the Word.

2. Advantages of having the Word of God on your “hard drive”

If one save one’s computer information on the hard drive and protect it, one guarantees that one’s machine works well and that one gets good results from the information. In the same way, God promises good results to those who keep the Word and put it into practice.

The promises that God offers are in the following passages:

1. Proverbs 3:1-2: Length of days and peace,
2. Proverbs 3:3-4: Grace and thoughtfulness from people and God.
3. Joshua 1:7-8: Prosperity and wisdom in everything one undertakes.
4. Colossians 3:16: Helps one to help others.

3. It is not enough to know or store the Word ... One has to put it into practice.

The idea of saving information in the “hard drive” is to use it when one needs it. It makes no sense to fill the memory of the disk with information that will not be useful for work.

God asks that all the Word that one keeps in the brain (heart) be put into action.

Review/Application: Have the students list six benefits of keeping the Word, according to the following study verses (the answers are in lesson point 2):

1. Proverbs 3:1-2: Length of days and peace.
2. Proverbs 3:3-4: Grace and good opinion before people and before God.
3. Joshua 1:7-8: Prosperity and wisdom in everything you undertake.
4. Colossians 3:16: Helps us to help others.

Challenge: Take the following daily readings and try to memorize a verse from each reading. Next Sunday, we will discuss how it has been helpful to memorize these verses during the week. Monday: Psalm 119:1-11; Tuesday: Psalm 119:12-22; Wednesday: Psalm 119:27-36; Thursday: Psalm 119:89-94; Friday: Psalm 119:97-105; Saturday: Psalm 119:129-138; Sunday: Psalm 119:151-163.

Objective: To teach young people how to use the Word of God as the sword that the Holy Spirit gives them.

Memory Verse: Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Ephesians 6:17

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Photos of a soldier ready for battle.
- **Instructions:** Show the students the photos you collected and ask them to share with you what they notice is different in the soldier than they would see in any other person walking in plain clothes. Today's study about the protection of the children of God.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk, or large paper and pencil.
- **Instructions:** Ask them to describe how an enemy attacks a soldier in a war. Ask them to share the ways in which the enemy attacks God's children (doubts, temptations, painful trials, etc.). Write their responses on the board. Then ask them to share how they can defend themselves against these attacks.

When a soldier prepares to go into battle, he must ensure that he is going to be as ready as possible to survive the difficult situation he will face. In general, soldiers prepare themselves physically (to be able to run and escape, to endure injuries, or walk through difficult terrain), they prepare emotionally (to be able to control the emotions of fear and anguish), and finally, they also prepare by learning to use weapons that can help them counter the enemy. Today's lesson focuses on innovative and reliable weaponry.

In the passage from Luke 4:1-14, the author tells in incredible detail the experience of Jesus' temptation in the desert. By reading the story, one can understand the tension in the environment and the tough battle between Jesus and the devil.

1. Strength in God's Word

From creation, God leaves a clear mandate on the institution of marriage (Genesis 2:24). This indissoluble unity was the original purpose of God. He wanted them to persevere together.

As young people on the road of life, one cannot ignore or deny that there are many things that can destroy youth (alcohol, drugs, tobacco, sex outside of marriage, sexually transmitted diseases, love disappointments, car or firearm accidents, gang involvement, educational and/or employment problems, etc). These situations can cause not only illness or physical death, but can also greatly affect the spiritual and emotional health, causing depression, anxiety or panic attacks, insecurity or low self-esteem, thoughts of suicide or personal harm, etc.

For these reasons, it is important to know that God, The Creator, has provided with an exceptionally effective weapon to fight against these evils that attack us. This wonderful weapon is the Bible, the very Word of God. In Genesis 1, one can read about the amazing story of creation and how God used the word to create what one sees; that is, his word is so powerful that it can make created things appear from nothing (vs. 3,11).

This same power highlighted in Luke 4:4, where one reads that the Word gave Jesus the strength to overcome the temptation that the enemy presented to him. The Word of God has the ability to provide strength in time of weakness. One can be completely sure that reading the Bible and memorizing it will give one the ability to go on doing God's will. In a battle, one cannot win if one's weapons are not ready.

2. Guidance in the Word of God

Sometimes one faces difficult challenges that need very decisive decisions. Life can be compared to a garden. The ideas that one drops into the soil of one's heart and mind may seem like simple little seeds, but eventually they will become big decisions like a tree that will be difficult to ignore or remove. The enemy knows this process very well, and that is why he also attacks one's decision-making center (our mind) to achieve the bad results of making us fall into painful and complicated situations.

The Bible can help one decide how to think and act about drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. The Bible can also guide one on how to proceed in one's relationships with friends and also in dating. It can help one enjoy a happier courtship and marriage than one can imagine.

3. The Truth in God's Word

The enemy wanted to confuse Jesus by reciting to him some Bible passages that apparently allowed Jesus to do what the devil asked him to do (Luke 4:9-11). This was an extremely complicated and difficult situation.

As a young person, one must remember that many times the enemy will use lies to attack one in this battle one faces. Some lies that the devil uses repeatedly are the following: "don't worry, nobody will notice if you do it", "you're the owner of your body, you can decide what to do with it", "you aren't hurting anyone", "nobody loves you, you have no hope of being happy", or the most common, "nothing will happen".

The truth of God's Word is like a powerful flashlight that shines clearly for one to distinguish and discard the lies of the enemy. God's Word is what enables one to emerge victorious from the battle we face, just as Jesus did.

Review/Application:

Ask your students to look in their Bibles for some verses that can help with strength, guidance, or reminding them of a truth. They may ask for help from their classmates or from you.

ATTACK SITUATION	BIBLICAL WEAPON
Doubts about my future: calling, profession or dating/marriage and family	Jeremiah 29:11
Conflict with my parents	Exodus 20:12, Proverbs 23:22, Ephesians 6:1-3
Doubts about what to study in college	Psalms 25:9; 32:8
Addictions	Psalms 40, Ephesians 4:22-24, Proverbs 23:29-35
Feelings of anxiety, fear, or nervousness	Philippians 4:6-7, Psalm 27, Hebrews 13:5-6
Feelings of depression	Psalms 16 and 130, Ephesians 3:14-21

Challenge:

I encourage you to take refuge in the Word of God. It is your best weapon, and if you read it, study it and memorize it, you can be sure that the enemy will not be able to defeat you. This week, find someone who wants to share with you their testimonies of how the Bible has been their weapon in overcoming a difficult situation.

Objective: That students will value the role of grandparents within the family and their relationships with their grandchildren.

Memory Verse: “Then Israel said, ‘Bring them to me so I may bless them.’” Genesis 48:9b

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Photos of older people (these can be hand-drawn drawings, magazine clippings, or photos from the Internet).
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to express what they think when they see the photos you show them. Ask them how they imagine themselves when they are elderly, and what they would like to do during that time of their lives. Then help them consider how God has designed this stage of life for his children.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk, or large paper and marker.
- **Instructions:** On the board, draw a vertical line dividing it into two equal sides. On one side, write the title “Disadvantages of old age”; and on the other, “Advantages of old age”. Then ask them to reflect on both the positive and negative characteristics of being elderly. If they have difficulty expressing their ideas, suggest that they think of a grandparent or older person in the church.

In recent years, children and youth have enjoyed receiving great attention and appreciation from society. This renewal includes the development of children’s rights and specialization in health treatment for them. However, this change has also caused a certain devaluation of the elderly in our society, compared to ancient times when old age was considered with special respect and admiration. Today’s lesson will reflect on God’s perspective of older people (Genesis 28:13, 32:9, 48:8-10, 15-16).

According to different psychologists, senior adulthood begins around 65 years of age. At this stage of life, many elderly people stop formal working, and do not feel that they are an active part of society. In today’s passages, the Bible clearly teaches about the important role that senior adults play in family and social life, And the role of young people in the lives of the older people.

1. The Nature of Grandparents

In the passage of Genesis 48:8-10, Jacob has just found his long lost son, Joseph, after many years. By this time Joseph had been in Egypt for many years and had two sons of his own: Ephraim and Manasseh. Over time Jacob had become a grandfather and was not aware of it.

In verse 10 of this chapter “... Israel’s (the name God gave Jacob) eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see”. First, we see that old age changes a person’s physical abilities. In Jacob’s case, it was that his sight disappeared. In others, health and physical strength decline and cause various difficulties. There are older people who suffer from walking problems, body aches, sleeping or grooming problems, internal illnesses, etc.

In another aspect, older people often have a desire to share their time and affection with their family and friends. Being emotionally and physically connected is an important need of senior citizens.

By knowing the changes mentioned above, one can better understand the grandparents that God has placed in one's life, and avoid falling into the error of criticizing, mistreating or being inconsiderate to them. Rather, just as Jacob's family helped him, young people should support our grandparents in their burdens and encourage them in their difficulties.

2. Honoring our Grandparents

In verses 12 and 13 of the same passage (Genesis 48), another wonderful scene from this family story is shown as Joseph shows special respect for his father who was already very old. In the Bible older people, including Jacob in the aforementioned chapter, have a place of honor. It is necessary to work intentionally so that one's attitude towards one's grandparents and other older people is a true demonstration of appreciation, genuine esteem, and respect for being the parents of those who gave one physical life.

Through this passage, God reveals the place of value and honor that older people should have in and outside a family.

3. The Instruction of Grandparents

Jacob spoke up and instructed his grandchildren about Jehovah and his works (Genesis 48:15-16). In the final sentence Jacob blessed his grandchildren, asking God to give them a prosperous and happy future.

The key to success in experiencing the blessing of an older person's advice is to receive instruction with an open and humble attitude. It is necessary to spend time with the person and listen carefully to the stories and advice that the person can give. God is very good and loving toward all His creatures, no matter what stage of development they are in. In the same way, God calls young people to love their neighbor as they love themselves (James 2:8), and of course, neighbors include grandparents. Do not miss out on the great blessings that God has through the teachings of grandparents!

Review / Application:

Ask your students to describe some ways they can put today's lesson into practice.

Ways to Give Honor	Ways to Learn
Don't talk critically about my grandparents to other people.	Spend time with my grandparents, learning from them how to do things.
Address my grandparents with respectful names and words.	Listen carefully and respectfully when they give me advice.
Etc.	Etc.

Challenge:

Do you have an elderly person who is part of your life? I encourage you to make the effort this week to spend some special time with your grandfather or grandmother. If they live a long way away, call them or video chat with them for a while. If they are no longer alive, invite a senior adult in your congregation to join you and a friend for coffee or visit them at their home.

Objective: That students will value the role that mothers play in families.

Memory Verse: “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”
Hebrews 12:11

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to write down the word they use when they talk to their mother (“mom”, “mommy”, “mother”, “boss”, “lady”, their name, etc.) and then make a crossword/puzzle with the word they use, using words that describe their mom.
- As you **conclude**, remind your students that in this life most of us will only have one mother, and that if she is alive, we should honor her now, and not wait until it’s too late.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Ask each student to write the name of a mother found in the Bible (Hagar - Ishmael’s mother; Jochebed - Moses’ mother; Naomi - Ruth’s mother-in-law; Mary - Jesus’ mother; Elizabeth - mother of John the Baptist, Eunice - Timothy’s mother, etc.) and what her life has taught them.
- As you **conclude**, remind your students that the Bible gives us many examples of women who not only chose to become mothers, but who performed their role as mothers with excellence

In many parts of the world, the issue of abortion has been on the table for public policy discussion. The parties of the left, especially, have proposed that “it is women who should decide to become mothers or not,” because only they have the right to their body and to what they carry within it. Of course this is anti-Christian! But, in addition to that, it is interesting to see that many women, despite the fact that in numerous countries the decriminalization of abortion has already been approved and unborn children are simply considered a nuisance, continue to decide to be mothers.

1. Give More Value To Mothers

Before considering what the Bible says about mothers, it is important to take note of a few things women who decide to be moms go through:

- They are the ones that God has allowed to produce the “home” in which the embryo will grow into a human being.
- It is they who must take care of themselves at all times with physical exercise, and nutritious diet.
- Pregnancy can cause illness (for them and their babies) and even the death of the baby.
- They suffer labor pains ... To give us an idea, the biggest pain that men and women who are not mothers can have is a toothache. But labor pains are three hundred times greater than that!
- They are the ones who have to give the baby their first care and food (like breast milk)

Think of your mom: Many live better lives than their mothers did when they were kids because mothers want to give to their children what they did not have.

2. Honor Your Mother

When God gave Moses the 10 commandments, He included one that has a promise; it is the first commandment with the promise to live many years on earth: “Honor your father AND YOUR MOTHER...” (Exodus 20:12). The commandment does not say: “Honor your parents”, but expressly states that one should honor both the (male) father and the (female) mother. So it is a matter of loving Dad and loving Mom; to always obey and honor them. The word that is translated as “honor” has at least two meanings:

A. It means to speak well of a person.

The Bible is saying that it is one’s duty to speak well of one’s mother. It is true that she had to educate one and sometimes she was not the best at doing it, but one’s duty is to speak well of her. She may not have an academic education or big university degrees, yet it is not one’s job to judge her but to speak well of her.

B. It means speaking politely to a person.

The Bible tells us with this verb (“honor”) that it is not enough to speak well of her, but to speak to her with all of the respect possible.

3. The Reward: Long Life

In Ephesians 6:2-3 God gave a promise for children who honor their parents: “...so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

God’s will for one’s life as a young person is that one must learn to respect the authorities and one can only do that if one begins to respect and honor one’s mother. One will live many years because one’s name will continue as a good memory among the people who knew one. Many times one questions one’s mother before obeying her instructions, and sometimes the rules at home seem unfair, but God’s Word says that obeying is right. The obedience of children is one of the things parents want most. The mother seeks the best welfare of her family, striving to care for family members, especially her children.

Cheer up! If one fulfills God’s mandate, one’s life will be permanent and one’s name will be remembered for many generations.

Review/Application:

Ask your students to answer the following questions:

Based on today’s class, what are the two meanings of “honor”?

1. _____
2. _____

If you are honoring your mom, congratulations! God will reward you.

But if you are failing in either of the two ways to honor her, how will you honor your mom starting today?

1. _____
2. _____

Brainstorm with your classmates ideas of how you can honor your mom.

Write down and Memorize Exodus 20:12 that urges us to honor our mothers, no matter who she is.

(“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you”.)

Challenge:

Read Hebrews 12:11 and think about it. Examine your life and recognize your failings before God, for it is He who must be obeyed first.

Objective: That students will know what God expects of them in their role in the family relationship.

Memory Verse: “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”
Colossians 3:20

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** White sheets of paper cut in half; pencils and adhesive wall tape.
- **Instructions:** Give paper and a pencil to each student. Then, ask them to write on their paper their answers to the following question: What does God expect of me regarding my role as a child in my family? Tell them that they can answer according to their opinion or according to the Bible if they know verses that speak to the topic. At the end, invite them to share their answers with the rest of the class and encourage them to talk about it for a moment. Then start the lesson.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** White sheets of paper cut in half and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Give paper and a pencil to each student. Then ask them to write a definition of the word “child” in three to five lines. Next, choose five students to read what they wrote, and then brainstorm with all of your students to come up with a single definition for the word “child”. Keep in mind that young people have a different concept than their parents do because of their maturity. Therefore, it is important that they be identified as children.

Begin by having the students share words that they would like their parents to use to describe them to a stranger. Use those responses throughout the lesson so that the learners recognize that in order to receive those words they want from their parents, there are certain actions that they must take!

1. General Features

The book of Proverbs is without a doubt one of the best manuals a young person can use to learn how to be a good son or daughter. With all the wisdom Solomon received from God, he was able to put together a series of advice and instructions that anyone could follow, not only to be a good son or daughter, but also to live each day wisely.

In Mark 1:11 the best recognition a father can give his child is found. Jesus had obeyed and honored his Father in everything and God, like a proud father, wanted everyone to know that He loved His Son and was pleased with Him.

Perhaps the most taught responsibility regarding the role of a child is to be obedient to their parents. This duty, in addition to being a mandate from God, promises to bring much blessing to the child who fulfills it. But obeying is not easy, especially during the time of adolescence when one seeks to define one's own identity and achieve a certain degree of independence.

2. The Best Example

Let the students to define the word “obedience.” When reading the Bible, one can find several verses that instructs one to obey God, parents and authorities. When the Bible speaks of obeying, it leaves no room for considerations on the part of the person who obeys, that is, the command is clear. Obeying means giving up one’s will to do someone else’s will. This, due to human nature, can be a complicated matter, a difficult mandate to fulfill; but certainly not impossible.

For Jesus to obey was not a simple matter (Luke 22:42). Jesus chose obedience, and his Father could not have been more proud of Him (Philippians 2: 9). Seeing obedience in our Lord Jesus, who is our role model, can help us understand the concept more clearly. Obeying, especially in situations that are difficult to understand, can be difficult. But Jesus showed us that this is possible. He is our best example, our role model.

3. Pleasing God through obedience

Have the students make a list of where they have trouble obeying. Obedience, understood simply as a command, can increase the dislike of complying with it. In this regard, consider that your students may be facing situations in their families where it is difficult for them to understand why they have to obey their parents.

Obedience to parents, beyond being a responsibility that each child has, brings with it a great blessing. Obedience is not only getting parents to see that they are respected (although this is important), but it is also knowing that one’s obedience to them pleases God (Colossians 3:20).

Whatever the living conditions the students face, it is important for them to know that their obedience is not only making them “look good” to their parents; but it is building a better relationship with God because their heavenly Father will always be pleased with their obedience.

4. Being a blessing to our parents

Let the students write down four things they can do to make their parents proud of them. There is nothing better in the world than knowing that one is at the center of God’s will, that what one does pleases Him.

Christians are called to be light and reflect Christ in all aspects of life. This point is very important, especially if one lives in a non-Christian home. The testimony as obedient children can impact the lives of one’s parents.

There is no better gift for a parent than to be proud of what their child does. Jesus left a great example of this because his Father was pleased with him (Luke 3:22). By obeying and honoring parents, one is not just fulfilling a command and pleasing the Lord; one will also receive a blessing to our parents.

When parents see the obedience of their children, they will be able to express with pride: “That is my son!” or “That is my daughter!” When one’s parents are not Christian, one can be the light that reflects Christ in the home and help parents and/or the rest of family members come to Christ.

At the end of class have a prayer of commitment to God in which the learners express their desire to be better children and give testimony of their Christian life through their model behavior at home. Allow time for the students to pray individually. Then close with a prayer.

Review/Application:

In Colossians 3:20, the Bible instructs children to obey their parents in everything. Have the students: Make a list of the times when it is most difficult to obey their parents, write down four things they can do that will make their parents proud of their behavior and write out Luke 3:22. (“... you are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased”.)

Challenge: You may have to face times when obeying will not be pleasant for you. During those times, remember the following:

For Jesus, obeying was not easy but his example will give you the strength to obey even under difficult circumstances. Obedience is not only a commandment, but also a means of pleasing God. Your obedience is a blessing to your parents and a way to show that Christ lives in you.

Objective: For students to be convinced that God designed monogamy for the marriage relationship and Jesus reaffirmed it.

Memory Verse: “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Matthew 19:6

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Instructions:** Share the following scenario: “Imagine that a friend agrees to go with you on Saturday to walk around the shopping center. But later, she tells you that she is not going to be able to go with you because her parents do not allow it. You decide to go anyway with your parents, and while you are there, you see your friend with other friends”.

After presenting the above scenario, ask the class the following: “How do you think you would feel if this happened to you? What would you do and what would you say? What would you call/label what your friend done?” Allow the students to share their answers for a few minutes.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Instructions:** Divide the class into two teams. Then indicate to one of them that they are in favor of monogamy; while the other will be against it. Each team should present three arguments to support its position. Allow a few minutes for the members of each team to discuss and agree on their points. Then have each team present their arguments. Encourage discussion for five minutes.

God made human beings, male and female, in His image and His likeness (Genesis 1:27). He blessed them and made them stewards of His creation (Genesis 1:28). The Bible indicates that God evaluated His creative work as “very good” (Genesis 1:31). In chapter 2 of Genesis, the creation of man and God’s decision to make him one wife to be with him are narrated.

However, this purpose of God was spoiled by the entry of sin into the world, and from then on, society and culture have taken it upon themselves to make people believe that it is okay to have more than one wife or husband and/or to be unfaithful to one’s wife or husband.

God knows what is good for people and for this reason, He instituted a monogamous marriage and the Lord Jesus confirmed it (Matthew 19:4-6).

1. The best project for humanity

The institution of a monogamous marriage arose from the mind and heart of God when He saw that the man He created needed a partner so that together they could manage His creation (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:22-24).

The declaration of God in the beginning (Genesis 2:24), and of the Lord Jesus later (Matthew 19:5-6), that man and woman had become one flesh implies that marriage is meant to be monogamous. This means that the marriage union should be exclusive to two people of different sexes, there is no room for another woman or man to be part of or interrupt that marriage union.

2. Jesus confirmed monogamy

A. United forever?

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ interpreted God's desire for man and woman in the marriage relationship to become one flesh so that no one could separate it without damaging it, without ending its existence as a marriage and without harming loved ones (Matthew 19:1-11). The Lord concluded that: "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." (Matthew 19:8)

B. A hard heart

In the Old Testament monogamy stopped being a general practice very early in human history. Among them Lamech (Genesis 4:19), a descendant of Cain, who took more than one wife for himself. From then on, sin continued to harden the hearts of humanity. Thus, many important men had more than one wife: Abraham (Genesis 16:1-4), Esau (Genesis 26:34-35, 28:9), Jacob (Genesis 29:15-28, 30:1-13), Gideon (Judges 8:30), David (2 Samuel 3:2-5, 12:8, 15:16) and Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-3).

Men preferred to follow their personal desires rather than obey God (Leviticus 20:10-21, Deuteronomy 22:22-29), who also spoke to them through the prophets, letting them know that He condemns their disloyalty, because it goes against his original plan: monogamy (Jeremiah 3:1, Micah 2:9, Malachi 2:14-16).

3. An example of fidelity

The book of Hosea is a book of God's fidelity to Israel despite their infidelity to Him. God chose Hosea to show to the nation of Israel how unfaithful they were being to him. He sent His prophet Hosea to marry a woman who would never be faithful to him despite his love for her, because this is what Israel was guilty of. Hosea loved his wife very much and when she had left him for other men and was being sold to slavery, he went and bought her back. And this is what God did for the human race through Jesus Christ, He bought mankind with the blood of Jesus. In Hosea 14:4-9, God calls His people to come back to Him and promises to take care of them and to heal them, just as He continues to call humanity to return to Him today.

4. Monogamy based on trust and faith in God

Monogamy is the expression of faith that since God calls for a faithful and monogamous life, He will also accompany the fulfillment of the vows made by the spouses before God and the community of faith. Monogamy is believing that God will be with the marriage so that the couple grows together.

In all interpersonal relationships, people make certain commitments. And when one fulfills them, one is not only satisfied but also grows as a person.

Review/Application:

Divide the class into four groups; and if they are few, in pairs. Assign each group three questions to answer. Then take time to have them share their answers with the rest of the class.

How would you define fidelity? In what relationships should it be practiced? How could one person show another that they have a unique place in their life? How can you show respect in a relationship? What happens when there is no respect between the couple? How do you get to be honest?

Challenge:

Choose one of the five values that support monogamy and decide to practice it consciously this week. Next Sunday, share with the students how the implementation of this value went. Also, create a newspaper mural that displays the values that support monogamy. Then post it in a visible place in the church so that the faithful can see it.

Objective: For the young people to discover how they should contribute to the unity of the family.

Memory Verse: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”
Ephesians 4:3

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Paper (it can be scrap paper that is written or printed on) to be used to make boats or airplanes.
- **Instructions:** Place the sheets of paper on a table and have each person to make as many paper boats or airplanes as possible in one minute. At the end of the time, acknowledge the winner. Then form groups of three or four and give the same instructions. Remember to recognize the group that won.

Then let the students know that families have better results when they work together. If the members of a family seek their own well-being and not that of others, or if they try to do what is easiest for them, the only thing they will achieve is the destruction of the family.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Several spools of thread (it can be thread for sewing).
- **Instructions:** Divide your students into pairs and ask them to tie their wrists together with one strand of thread. Then instruct them to break free. Now instruct them to do it again, but this time use two strands of thread; and then have them try to break free again. Repeat the activity adding one more strand of thread each time until they cannot break the thread.
After finishing the activity, ask the students what they think about the activity. Then lead them to think about the family and how this exercise applies to the family.

1. The importance of the family

Young people must bear in mind at all times the importance that God gives to the family so that they can value it. Today's society is taking away the value and relevance that it has. Family times are replaced by other activities, and young people, wanting to be up to date with society, allow themselves to be affected by these ideas and follow them.

Divide young people into groups and task each group to study one of the following Bible scriptures about the family: Genesis 1:28, 2:24; Deuteronomy 6:7, Matthew 1:24-25. Have each group share the importance of the family according to the verses they read.

In Genesis 2:24, 1:28; God establishes and blesses marriage. Marriage is where the family is born and it is not a human invention, but God's creation. Marriage is the foundation of a family according to God's plan.

Deuteronomy 6:7 displays the fact that God knows the great influence that the family has on people and that society or communities are from families. Therefore, He urged that in each house His law be taught repeatedly and learned continually, because He wanted a people who would recognize, love, worship Him and thrive.

Matthew 1:24-25 points out that Jesus himself was born into a formed family rather than appearing on earth in surprising ways. So, it is valid to ask ourselves the following: Why did he do it that way? ... And the answer is

because God recognizes how important it is for each person to be part of a family and that the family is a tool to usher humans into society.

2. Submit to God

By submitting to God's will, a young person will find it easier to behave in a way that helps maintain harmony and peace within the home (Philippians 2:13). A young person who seeks God will have God's help to avoid being carried away by those rebellious and angry desires that occur in adolescence and bring division and disputes into the home. Only God can give the self-control needed (Galatians 5:23; 2 Timothy 1:7). One of the great commandments is found in Matthew 22:37. Once a young person adopts this commandment and puts it into action, everything that God asks them to do will be much easier to fulfill. And among all other things which God commands is the duty children to submit to their parents.

3. Submit to Parents

Ephesians 6:1-3 explains the role of the child is within the home. This is where the young people have many struggles because of their eagerness to want to do everything in their own way and feel free, they tend to break this commandment by rebelling against their parents. By following this commandment found in Ephesians 6, a young person is not only bringing unity and peace to the home, but also brings blessings into his/her life. Another way to contribute to the family unity is to pray for it.

There are examples in the Bible of families that were kept together by the correct attitude of one of their members and also of families that were divided by envy, selfishness or unforgiveness.

Exodus 2:1-9: Moses' sister did her best to keep her family together. When the princess of Egypt ordered her to bring a nurse for the child, she did not hesitate to call her mother to take care of her own baby.

Genesis 7:7: Noah's sons did not complain or protest about not staying in the place where they were born. They simply obeyed their father Noah and left everything. Their obedience helped maintain harmony and unity in the family.

Genesis 4:1-11: Cain was not a good example of a son/brother who sought unity in his family; on the contrary, he divided it by killing his brother.

Genesis 37:13-28: Joseph's brothers were carried away by envy and thus brought sadness and division to their family.

Finally, one must not forget that forgiveness is what will most help us to live in unity with the family. Regardless of the family that has raised and influenced one, one should never hold resentment against any relatives. Remember that Christ forgave us. Resentment only brings pain. Always seek unity and harmony in the home.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to answer the following questions:

What do Genesis 1:28 and 2:24 say about the family? How can you contribute to the unity of your family? What does Ephesians 6:1-3 say about the family? (God gives the promise that if the children submit to their parents, so that things will go well for them and they will have a long life on Earth.) What two great commandments are there in Matthew 22:37-39? According to James 5:16, how else can we contribute to family unity? (By praying for our family members.)

Challenge:

What has been your attitude towards your family so far? Do you think that you have done all you could to maintain bonds of love and oneness within it or are you just being carried away by your selfish desires? I encourage you to seek God so that with his help, you can be part of the list of people who have contributed to the unity of their family with a correct attitude.

Objective: That young people value the role that parents play in the family.

Memory Verse: “The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them.”
Proverbs 20:7

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk or equivalent.
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to come to the board and write a description of their ideal parent. Then ask (not waiting for a public response, just for their own reflection) if their parents live up to those ideals.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Pencils and blank paper.
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to divide the paper into two and on one side write the ideal relationship that should exist between parents and children, and on the other side make a list of threats to the harmony of the family. Then, just for their own reflection, ask what their relationship is like in their home and if the threats are destroying their home, they are also destroying the church of Christ.

The Word of God tells us: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord ...” (Ephesians 6:1-4). And to us readers of the Bible in this century, it seems like a radical issue: Obey? Why do we have to obey?

But let’s look at the context when Paul wrote this. The first Christians lived under the Roman Empire; what was customary in Rome was that the father had absolute power over all his children. He had the right to punish them as his anger allowed, without anyone being able to do anything to prevent it. The children were simply other pieces of his property. The father could sell his children as slaves if he believed that they were too expensive, or not worth it for him, or under certain conditions, he could even take their lives. This power of the father over his children lasted a lifetime. The child’s life was worth little, as a letter dated 1 BC, written by a Roman soldier named Hilary, from Alexandria, Egypt, to his wife Alis reveals. In the letter he ordered her that if she gave birth to a boy, to let him live, but if it was a girl, to get rid of her.

Abandoning children to provide for themselves was customary in those days.

1. The Value the Word of God gives us

What Paul did was to dignify the place of children in the homes of the Christian community (and confirmed what Jesus Christ did in Matthew 19:14, when He asked the disciples to let the children come to Him). And his focus was towards a relationship within homes where there is genuine love, which is the basis of all relationships, where everyone also has a social and even spiritual duty.

The world at that time didn’t value children, but the apostle Paul affirmed the infinite value of each child, as well as made a careful explanation of the mutual responsibilities of parents and children, which reinforced that value.

Paul exhorted children to obey their parents. The verb that’s generally translated “obey” (hupakouo) is a compound word based on the word “listen” (akouo); therefore it has at its base the idea of “listen to” or “pay attention to” and therefore “obey”. Much disobedience arises when children refuse to listen to the instructions given to them, as well as the reasons for those instructions.

2. Beware of our judgement!

When one is young and without the experience of being a parent, one often severely judge what one’s parents do or do not do at home. But the truth is that one’s parents had to learn to be parents. Parents do not have a access to a manual where they can find answers to every situation they face as parents. In many instances, the father does not exert much influence on the family since traditionally he is the one who leaves the home to work

and bring home sustenance. On many occasions the father figure is more of a kind of authoritative figure who punishes one when one does not do things correctly. Many times when a father requires us to do something that one is not willing to, one normally asks the question “why?” and the answer is normally spat “Because I’m your father.” This does not help build a healthy relationship.

Parents seem to know everything and that should not scare one. The reason for this is because they have much more experience and are using their experience to protect one. They want protect one from disappointments (in school, in love, in life). Experience has provided them with wisdom but does not guarantee good treatment or eliminate their humanity, which is why many times they continue to make mistakes. The apostle Paul himself, inspired by the Spirit of God, wrote: “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21).

Most parents want their children to be better than they were, go further, achieve more triumphs, etc! Parents often project onto their children their aspirations and the achievements that they did not reach. In most cases these aspirations seem to be “imposed” by parents onto their children. That is dangerous since the children will not necessarily have the same goals and objectives as the parents. One must seek God’s will for one’s lives and strive for it with love and perseverance.

3. Obey the Lord

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul displays the changes of the new life in Christ in relation to society and especially in family relationships. To fathers, specifically, he spoke about the treatment of his wife and children; this relationship should be a reflection of the Christ-church relationship.

From the Old Testament the Jewish people knew the commandment “Honor your father and your mother” which is the first commandment that includes a promise: “... so that you may live long...” (Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:2). However, it is not easy for children to fulfill this commandment since there are some parents who are difficult to honor. Note that difficult does not mean impossible because God will never require from one what God has not empowered one to do. So it is possible to honor one’s parents despite one’s negative feelings about one’s parents.

In Ephesians 6:4, Fathers are instructed not to exasperate their children but to “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” The children are commanded to “obey your parents in the Lord”; which means that one has to listen to them and do what they ask knowing that it pleases God.

Listen to the Word. God wants to have the same relationship with each one of His children as they have with their parents. The parent-child relationship is like a mirror reflection of the relationship one should have with God. The parent-child relationship teaches one to be obedient to God. Proverbs 23:26 says: “My son, give me your heart and let your eyes delight in my ways.” If there is love between parents and a child, it is easier to comply with God’s commandments, but there must be a mutual and individual commitment to God.

“Honor your father and your mother...” There is no excuse, it is a commandment so one must seek, within the will of God, to honor them. And parents should imitate the loving father of whom Jesus Christ spoke of in Luke 15:11-32. It is not about a shallow smiling love but something deep, like that of God towards humanity, a love that seeks to provide the affection, the protection, the security of a hug, the guidance and the example which are much needed.

A careful look at the story above, shows that although the younger son thought he had reason to leave, when he was away, the reason to return was greater: the love of his father.

Review/Application: Ask your students to respond to the following:

1. How is your relationship with your parents? (If you are in good relationship with them, you could have some time to pray and thank God. If not, what better way to start improving the relationship than by interceding for them and yourself!)
2. If your relationship with your parents is bad, what steps could you take to improve that? (Spend time with them, ask for forgiveness, forgive them and tell them about God’s love.)
3. Write down what you learned from the following two biblical passages in your relationship with your parents: Proverbs 23:12-26, John 15:1-17

Challenge: Remember that God will judge parents and children for everything that they do, say, and think. Do not forget to honor your parents with your life this week.

Objective: Students will learn that the Word of God is the only guide to face the disturbing influences of the world and maintaining personal relationships with God.

Memory Verse: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...” 2 Timothy 3:16

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Bibles, Biblical concordances (sometimes found at the back of Bibles), markers (pen, pencils, etc.), cut-outs of 2 swords, a hammer and a lamp of foam or cardboard.
- **Instructions:** Divide the class to work in groups, or if there are few have them work individually. Distribute each one of the shapes and have the students look for a verse where the Word of God is compared with each of the items they were given. Once the verse is located, they must write it on their respective item.

Have four participants (one for each shape) read their verses and briefly reflect on the meaning of the assigned symbol. (Answers: Sword (Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12), Hammer (Jeremiah 23:29) and Lamp (Psalms: 119:105)).

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Bible, sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Distribute the sheets of paper and pencils to the participants and have them make a list of the Bible verses that they know by heart, and underline the quote of their favorite verse.

Have a few volunteers read their lists, some may recite their favorite verse and others explain why their chosen favorite verse is their favorite.

The Bible calls itself “the Holy Scriptures” and “the Word of God”. This wonderful book has been “inspired by God”; it is full of wisdom for practical life and reveals salvation through Jesus Christ.

In this sense, it is very important to learn the Bible from our youth. Many have been raised in Christian homes and therefore have received biblical teaching from childhood. This makes a good foundation for a personal relationship with God.

The Bible teaches everything one needs to know about God and His purpose. It can also successfully help one deal with any problem and live properly. The Bible can be compared to a map or GPS that guides one so that one does not get lost. How wonderful is the Word of God!

1. The Bible: Knowledge Plus Influence

It is one thing to appreciate the Bible because it has been taught from childhood and another to be personally persuaded that it is the Word of God. Everyone needs to take a personal position in relation to it.

The study passage for this lesson teaches about the importance of the Bible for a Christian life. This is found in 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

Timothy was a young man raised in a believing home and had been taught the scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 1:5). It is said that a Jewish boy, like Timothy, began being instructed in Scriptures from the age of

five. For this reason, Paul called him to “persist” in such teachings that he had learned from his childhood. (2 Timothy 3:14-15a). This means that it is necessary to persevere in the truths that one has learned from the Bible. Timothy also experienced Christian “influence”. The latter is produced by the Word of God through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, and leads to repentance and new birth. In the verses cited, Paul said to Timothy: “...you know those from whom you learned it...” This suggests that there were several influential people in Timothy’s life who taught him the Word. One of them was Paul. His grandmother Lois and mother Eunice are also mentioned (2 Timothy 1:5). These people set good examples for him to follow.

2. The Bible: The Map to Salvation

In public and private buildings where many people live or work, there are always plans or maps that indicate escape routes in case of emergency. These routes are also indicated on airplanes, ships and trains. Following these signs can be a matter of life and death! Likewise the GPS, is a small instrument that guides one to the destination.

In the same way, the Bible indicates the only safe routes for human beings to travel towards eternal life. Paul tells Timothy that the Scriptures (the Bible) “...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:15b). In other words, obedience to biblical teachings enables one to live according to God’s purpose and ultimately get to heaven.

3. The Bible: The “equipment” for our trip

The big reason for God in giving humans the Bible is to provide the necessary “equipment” to live life as He originally designed it. In the aforementioned passage from Hebrews, Paul said that the Bible is the weapon needed to live life correctly. This is by quality of its nature: “All Scripture is God-breathed.” (2 Timothy 3:16a). This means that God, the author of the Bible, empowered ordinary men with his Spirit to write it.

The effectiveness of the Bible to teach in righteousness: Provides knowledge about the doctrine of God and how to live a holy life. To rebuke in righteousness: Provides light to conscience and moral sensitivity when we sin or err. To correct in righteousness: Provides repentance, discipline and rectification of the conduct toward the good. To instruct in righteousness: Provides ongoing spiritual admonition that helps us persevere in faith.

The wonderful thing about the Bible is that it contains teachings which are relevant to all human situations and needs. It provides useful tools for one to be victorious in the face of any challenge and fulfill the will of God according to 2 Timothy 3:17: “...so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Review/Application:

Ask your students to define the following in their own words:

The Bible: _____
 Christian persuasion: _____
 Divine Inspiration from the Bible: _____
 Rebuke in righteousness: _____
 Correction in righteousness: _____
 Instruction in righteousness: _____

Challenge:

This week, read the following Bible passages that discuss the importance and effectiveness of the Bible: 1 Peter 1:23-2:3; Hebrews 4:12-13. Next, write down your personal thoughts about what the Bible means in your life.

Objective: For students understand that God hears the prayer of a sincere heart and responds to each request according to his will.

Memory Verse: “As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed.” Daniel 9:23a

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk or equivalent.
- **Instructions:** Write the following question on the board: “What is prayer?” Then ask the class to give answers and write them on the board. Then have the group come up with a combined answer that takes into account the answers that the students gave earlier.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** Chairs placed in a circle, blackboard and chalk or the equivalent.
- **Instructions:** Ask the class to sit in the chairs as they are arranged. Then ask the following question: “Does God answer all prayers?” Allow your students time to discuss this question for a few minutes. Then write important statements that emerged from the conversation on the board.

Pray (praying, prayer) means: “to entreat, implore; to address God with adoration, confession, supplication, or thanksgiving.” (www.Merriam-Webster.com).

On the other hand, prayer according to the theological dictionary is defined in this way: “It is the conscious act of man turning to God to communicate with him or to seek his help in time of need. Man can be driven to seek God by his desires, by emergencies or by his own insufficiency or inability to face difficult situations every day.” (Beacon Theological Dictionary. CNP, USA: s / f, p. 479).

In order to come to a conclusion, today’s lesson will be evaluating how God answered the prayer raised by Daniel.

1. Sincere Prayer

Daniel was a young, Israelite man who at the time of the captivity was taken to Babylon (Daniel 1:1-8). He was faithful to God and as time went, he became a counselor to kings. Despite the captivity and his position, Daniel was not willing to give up his convictions. Daniel applied the commandments of God to his life and did not change the good habits that he acquired, such as the habit of prayer, which he maintained despite the fact that it threatened his own life (Daniel 1:1-6:28).

Daniel teaches by example that one should not wait to be in a difficult situation to learn about prayer and especially to put it into practice in our own lives.

The biblical commentators emphasize from Daniel’s qualities the fact that he was a man who was close to the Word of the Lord. Because of his closeness to God, he was able to realize that some of the prophecies in the books of Leviticus and Jeremiah corresponded to the times in which he was living.

Daniel's example shows that he was a man of integrity and that God heard his prayer. In the Bible, there are other people who did not have a close relationship with God and lived a less than holy life, but in a moment of distress, cried out to the Lord and were heard. Examples of such cases are the following: the thief on the cross (Luke 23:40-43), the centurion (Matthew 8:5-13), the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14).

2. The Answer to Prayer

James 4:3 says: "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." There is a difference between the prayers prayed by Daniel and those prayed by many people today. Daniel prayed by putting himself in someone else's shoes and taking responsibility for his sin and the people's sin (Daniel 9:20-21a). In other words, Daniel prayed for the sins of others and for their bitter consequences. He prayed for his people (Daniel 9:3-7).

There are aspects that are very important to include in prayer and yet are often overlooked. Such aspects are: prayer for the knowledge of God's will (Colossians 1:9), prayer to walk worthy of the Lord, prayer to have a growing relationship with God (Colossians 1:10), prayer to bear fruit and for it to remain in God (John 15:16), prayer to have the power, endurance and patience to continue our Christian walk in the midst of trials (Colossians 1:11) and prayer for joy and a good attitude (Colossians 1:12).

3. "Yes", "No", "Wait"

God expects a sincere heart, full of faith, patience, and the security that comes from knowing that one is in His hands and that He is always in control of everything (Hebrews 10:35-37). When it seems like He is delaying in His response, it is because He is doing what He knows is best and is fulfilling His plan.

If the answer to prayer is not what one expects or wants, it does not mean that God does not listen to one. One must always remember that God always listens to prayers, wants one's well-being and that His purposes are in relation to the advancement of the Kingdom. He sees the sincerity of our hearts. His Word says in 1 Corinthians 13:9,12: "For we know in part and we prophesy in part,... For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." One day, when one sees Him "face to face," one will understand why God answered one the way He did. For now, one needs to fully trust that God has a plan, God has a purpose and that is in control.

God does answer all prayers although not always in the way one hopes. Sometimes He will say "yes" to a request, sometimes "no" and other times "wait."

Review/Application:

Allow time for your students to respond to the following:

- How do you feel when you do not get a response from someone?
- Certainly, God answers all prayers. Do you feel that there is a prayer in your life that was not answered? Why?
- Give examples of two clear answers to prayers that you prayed for.
- Develop a prayer time in your life. Make a daily plan and include prayer time within this plan.

Challenge:

What do you think about keeping a prayer journal that includes the things that touch God's heart? These could include:

- Your consecration to God.
- Conversion of the lost.
- Intercession for the needs of others
- Prayer for our leaders (parents, teachers, employers, president and civil authorities, etc.).

Objective: For students to understand that even in the most difficult moments of their lives (sadness, bitterness or loneliness), God will always be by their side.

Memory Verse: “I cling to you; your right hand upholds me...” Psalm 63:8

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Instructions:** Divide the class into two groups. Each group must form a line. Each row should be located with its back to the other, keeping a distance of one meter between the two rows and half a meter between each of their respective members. Let the groups turn around with their eyes closed, so that each of the members of each row are facing each other, without opening their eyes and in silence. Once the two rows facing each other, have the students raise their arms and take a small step forward with their arms extended so that they hold hands with the person in front them. Finally let them, holding hands, to open their eyes and hug each other.

Many people need a sweet look and a hug, even if there are no words involved. Remember that God will always have His arms extended towards one to embrace one, so it is up to one whether or not one wants to receive it.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** White sheets of paper cut into four pieces and colored pencils.
- **Instructions:** Give the papers and pencils to the students. Have them write the following sentence on their papers: “GOOD FOR A HUG”. Then point out that at the end of the class, each of them should exchange their paper with someone they are not very close with or someone with whom they have had a disagreement.

Keep in mind that young adults, although apparently more mature, often have a more difficult time approaching other people, especially when they have been offended. However, it is very important for them to keep in mind that if God embraces everyone despite being evil or have sinned against him, who are they not to accept or give a hug from another person?

Start the class by asking the students the following: Have you ever had to hide from someone? Who was it and why? What was your hiding place like? If someone wants to share, give them the opportunity to do so. Next, read Psalm 63 in a dynamic way, if possible from a contemporary version, to introduce the Word of God and so the application remains in the minds and hearts of the students.

In this Psalm, David found himself in hostile situation and was fleeing through the desert away from his loved ones, surrounded by rocky mountains. However, his trust and hope were in God. The psalmist recognized that God was the only one who deserved his praise from dawn until dusk and he also knew that worship and praise brought peace, security, and strength.

1. I know you are here

Every human being faces difficult situations at some point in life and they feel powerless, they seek refuge in something or someone. King David was no exception. In fact he needed God because he had problems with his children. His eldest son named Amnon had raped Tamar, his stepsister, and Absalom, her brother, ordered Amnon to be killed (2 Samuel 13).

Verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 63 says: “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. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.” Without a doubt King David recognized who his God was and that is why he addressed Him confidently even though he was in a bad situation. His son Absalom had started a revolution in order to take the throne, turning part of the people against his father. That is why David fled to the desert. While

he was far from the city, David knew that God was with him because God is everywhere. Although he did not have access to a sanctuary or temple, he was sure to find the Lord even in that inhospitable place. For that reason, David decided to seek him from dawn so that he could see the power and glory of God that he had seen and known before.

The miraculous God that met David at the point of his need, is the same God who is willing to lift anyone out of depression, sadness, anxiety, anger, etc. whenever one looks to him.

2. “Hide me in your arms”

A shelter is a place of refuge that does not last forever because it is a temporary place of security and offers only what is necessary to survive (food, shelter and protection). David, in the midst of his anguish, did not stop praising and worshipping the Lord because he knew that these were weapons to attack the despair that was besieging him. In fact, the king was making his relationship with God his hiding place. The act of raising one’s hands is a symbol of surrender.

Displaying empty hands gives the attacker assurance that he will not receive a counterattack. In verse 4 of Psalm 63, the writer says that he is raising his hands in the name of the Lord of hosts, because he was sure that the Lord will be the one who fights his battles and give victory. In the moment of helplessness, surrender plays an important role. That is not say that God is attacking one, but that many times the attacks come as a result of one’s actions and that victory is received when one totally surrenders to God.

As a young man, David was well-known for being a simple, humble, worshipping, praising, obedient, and courageous, a man after God’s own heart; and many more attributes could added which the Lord pleased with him. However, David also had weaknesses like other human beings have. One of David’s weaknesses was his attraction to women. His children (of various wives) were rebellious and did not live in peace with each other. Added to that is the fact that within this family were rapes, deceptions, murders and to close with a “flourish”, the taking of the kingdom using force by his son Absalom among other things. These experiences and others, led David to despair, to the point of having to flee to the desert to seek refuge. What was he battling with? He was being persecuted by his son (2 Samuel 17:1-2). But David, even in the face of all this, was confident that he would be victorious because he trusted in God.

3. I am satisfied to be with you

Who does one prefer to be with when facing psychological, moral, emotional and spiritual challenges? Apart

from the physical shelter, it is also important to have the company of someone who lifts one’s spirit. Someone who gives one words of hope and has better ideas to get ahead. A person who gives one security, love and support needed in the difficult times.

It does not matter what happened before or what led the person to such a place. What matters is that the person receives the support they need and are surrounded by those who will give it.

King David found shelter in the desert, possibly in a cave without the comforts of the royal palace, accompanied by his bodyguards and his warriors. Maybe there were a lot of them, but none met the requirements to comfort him because they were his subjects, and David needed someone superior. Psalm 63:5-8 says that God was his help and that His right hand upheld him. God is the only one who can provide everything necessary in all areas of human life, and David knew it.

This eternal refuge can be experienced and is obtained through worship, praise, prayer and trust directed to the only One who deserves all of this and much more, Jesus Christ The Lord and Savior.

Review/Application: Allow time for the students to reflect and answer the following questions.

- What kind of difficult situations have you faced or are you facing? _____
- How did you face those difficulties? _____
- What personal lessons can you draw from Psalm 63? _____
- According to what you learned from Psalm 63, write a personal prayer. _____

Challenge: On planet Earth, there are shelters to go to in difficult circumstances. In today’s lesson we learned that there is an eternal place for those who accept Jesus Christ as their one and sufficient Savior and Lord. This week, no matter what happens, go to Him as your only refuge.

Objective: To recognize that Jesus taught about the need to fast.

Memory Verse: Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 4:4

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** White paper cut into heart shapes and markers.
- **Instructions:** Have the class read Matthew 6:16-18 and give each participant a paper heart and a marker. Allow time for them to write on one side of the paper heart two or three attitudes, which in their opinion, were in the hearts of the Pharisees while they were fasting; and on the other side of the heart, have them write down what should be in our hearts when we fast. Then let them share what they wrote with the class.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** White sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Divide the class into groups and allow time for them to read the following Scripture verses and then complete the chart.

a. Deuteronomy 9:8-11 b. Deuteronomy 9:15-19 c. Daniel 10:1-12 d. 2 Samuel 12:15-20

Biblical Passage	Name of the Person	When did they fast	Reason why they fasted

Have each one comment on which situation of the different characters caught their attention and why.

In the Old Testament, people fasted mostly in times of deep trouble. Fasting was accompanied by expressions of sadness, such as crying, clamoring, dressing in mourning clothes, and wearing rough clothes generally made of goat skins (what was called “sackcloth”). Also, those who fasted sat on ashes and threw it on their heads (Esther 4:1-3; Psalm 35:13).

When the Bible talks about fasting, it always relates it to spiritual purposes. Fasting is a way to approach God by presenting our one’s body on the altar of worship as a living and holy sacrifice.

1. The effectiveness of fasting

This study is focused on the book of Esther, which illustrates the tremendous power of fasting. This book is about the rescue of the Jewish people which occurred during 5th century BC, the time of the great Persian Empire.

Esther was an orphaned Jewish girl taken to the capital of the empire by her cousin Mordecai who had adopted her. By the providence of God, she “... had a lovely figure and was beautiful” (Esther 2:7). She was chosen from

among many virgins by King Xerxes to be the queen in place of Vashti, his former wife, whom He had dismissed for disobeying an order he had given her (Esther 1:1-22).

An evil man named Haman, a favorite of the king, had obtained from him under deception, a decree to eliminate the Jews (Esther 3).

When Esther found out, she, along with Mordecai and their people, did nothing but approach God in fasting and prayer. Read Esther 4:3-16 and answer this question: What was the fasting of the Israelites like?

Esther played a key role in this change. With great faith and wisdom sustained by the grace of God, she succeeded in helping her people win a great victory over their enemies (Esther 5:2-3).

Fasting expresses a deep desire to obtain divine help. It is not an empty, meaningless practice, but it is highly effective. God promised to answer when one cries out to Him: "Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:12-13).

2. The time of fasting

Read Matthew 9:14-17. These verses clarify Jesus' concept of fasting. Jesus did not mean that He and his disciples down played fasting, but rather, that they did not share the legalistic way it was practiced in their time. After the ascension of Jesus, the early Christians practiced fasting as an important means of seeking God's direction and grace (Acts 13:2). Fasting has great importance, and even more so in these last days. The frequency of fasting depends on one's need for God and one's love for Him.

3. The food of fasting

Just as the body needs to be fed regularly, so does the soul. When one starts fasting to seek the face of God, this is what happens precisely: one feeds on the presence of God and his Word.

Today's culture teaches one to place greater importance on meeting one's physical needs rather than one's spiritual need. Commercials try to sell all kinds of fast food with lovely images. For this reason, in many homes there is an unreasonable desire for food and people have gotten used to gluttony!

The most important thing about fasting is the spiritual motivation one has. God's response to fasting will correspond to the motivation in one's hearts.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to answer the following questions:

1. How many days did Esther and her people fast? (Three days.)
2. Was Esther's fast partial or absolute? (Absolute.)
3. What is your food during the fast? (The Word of God and prayer.)
4. Have you ever fasted? What was your experience like?

Challenge:

Set aside one day this week for a partial fast. This means that you have to skip one or two meals. The best way to start the fast is to consume only fresh fruit juice. Even if you are doing your usual daily chores, stay in an inward attitude of prayer, worshiping the Lord. The most important thing is your spiritual attitude. At the end of the fast, eat a light meal, preferably consisting of fruits and vegetables.

Objective: To teach students that regardless of the situation they are living in, they can and should praise God.

Memory Verse: “I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.” Psalm 34:1

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** White sheets of letter-size paper, pencils or pens.
- **Instructions:** Give a sheet of paper to each student and ask them to clearly write their names at the top. Then, each person must pass their paper to whoever is sitting on their right. Then, those people will write down positive characteristics, praises and good qualities of the owner of the paper they have in their hands. When finished, they pass the paper to those on their right, who do the same. This is repeated until the papers return to their original owners. Then, each person should read what was written on their paper and share with the group how they feel.

This activity serves to reflect on the importance of sharing the positive with people and how this is received.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Instructions:** Ask the students to sit in a circle and each student will take a turn standing in the center of the circle. Once in the middle, the other students will tell the person who is the focus of attention all the positive feelings and thoughts they have towards him or her. The person should only listen ... not speak. The impact of this exercise is strongest when everyone stands in front of the person, touches them, looks them in the eye, and speaks directly to them. At the end of the exercise, give everyone the opportunity to comment about the experience.

Ask: How many times a week or a day do you praise and celebrate people around you with words? This probably seldom happens in your daily lives. As a Christian, how many times do you praise and celebrate the name of your God? That is probably rare too. Normally praise is limited to Sunday worship when God's name is praised through songs and other times, praise is based on one's situation or emotional state to do so.

When reflecting on Psalm 34:1, one can discover the echo these words have on one's heart and action. Today the word “praise” is generally linked to the times of singing in the church. Thus, when looking for the definition of “praise” one finds the following: “the offering of grateful homage in words or song, as an act of worship; the express approval or admiration of; comment; extol.” (dictionary.com). This definition reveals that praise is really linked to exalting the name of God with words and songs. In this regard, have the students answer this question: What song or praise comes to your mind that exalts the name of God and fulfills that function?

It is very important to reflect on the attitude with which one praises God as well as the moments in which one does it. Today, many Christians in their churches wait for the time of “praise” to exalt the name of God, but what happens the rest of the week?

1. Praise at all times...

Psalm 34 tells of the wonders that God did in David's life. The psalmist expresses the vast amount of gratitude towards the wonders that God did for him. David did not write this in moments of glory and peace, but in the midst of anguish and persecution. He was running from Saul, who wanted to kill him. This account is described in 1 Samuel 21. This was not the first time that David praised the name of God in the midst of his flight. There are eight psalms whose titles refer to David's persecution by Saul (Psalms 7, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59 and 142). Praise to God must start from the recognition of God in one's life. The psalmist in this Psalm, teaches that one should not only praise God when one receives something special and pleasant from Him, but it is also necessary to praise and bless the name of God in the midst of pain or affliction.

2. Praise is born out of the recognition of who God is

Biblical principle begins with the understanding that God is the Creator. It is important to note that God is the initiator and source of everything and that He is also relating with humanity. By being created in the image of God, humans share certain attributes such as feeling, thinking and knowing with Him. So when one actually meets God face to face, one is able to exalt His name and acknowledge all that He is.

3. Praise is born of one's will

God is still God even though the whole of humanity does not recognize Him. In His infinite mercy, God has continually reached out to humanity throughout history to offer His great love, forgiveness and salvation; even to the point of reaching out through His Son Jesus Christ. The life of the Christian is a continual decision to stand firm and seek God's will, joy, and reflection in their life. This joy God gives, the world cannot take away and can lead one to be like David, and be able to say in the same way: "I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips," no matter what circumstances one is going through.

4. Praise infects others

King David said: "I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice" (Psalm 34:2). This happens within the body of Christ: one rejoices by oneself and rejoices with other brothers and sisters in faith who glorify the name of God and give thanks in the name of Jesus. In the community worship, there is an appreciation of God for what He has done, what He is doing and what He will do. It is important to remember that God is still God; He continues to work in one's life, giving one His love and sustenance, and is always there for one. So one must keep praising His name.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to create an acrostic with the word "Praise".

Prayerful heart Reflection Adoration

I am loved

Singing songs to God

Everyone worships together

Challenge:

As we have learned in today's class, it is important to praise God at all times. Pick a song to sing to Him daily, and practice praise during prayer time. For next Sunday, come ready to share with the group what it feels like to praise God in private.

Objective: For the students to understand what is true worship of God.

Memory Verse: “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” John 4:23

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Read John 4:1-24 as a group (or if you prefer, individually). Then hand out the sheets of paper and pencils and ask your students to draw an aspect of the story that caught their attention. Have a volunteer to explain the meaning of their drawing.

Drawing helps students create mental images of what they are reading and sets the scene for what will be seen in class.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Read John 4:1-24 as a group. Then hand out sheets of paper and pencils and ask them to answer the following questions:
 1. Where did this meeting take place?
 2. Who participated in this biblical passage?
 3. When did this meeting take place?
 4. What was the central theme of the talk between the woman and Jesus?

These questions will help students envision the topic globally before diving into it.

If one grew up as a Christian attending church, then one has probably heard the term “worship” often. If one has had little time in church, one may have heard of worship in regards to church music. It maybe that one associates “worship” with an artistic or sports figure. This lesson focuses on the worship of God including its spiritual dimension and element of truth.

1. The Stage

As one reads the gospel of John 4:1-24, one learns that Jesus was going from Judea to Galilee by passing through Samaria. The Lord could have gone the long way, through the eastern part of the Jordan. However, He chose to take the busiest shortest route, even if it meant crossing the territory of the unwelcoming Samaritans (John 4:9a).

His encounter with a woman at Jacob’s well sets the stage for a conversation with impressive statements from Jesus. First, He, a Jew, spoke to a woman, worse than that was the fact that she was a Samaritan woman. He not only spoke to her, He also asked her to give Him a drink from the water. Due to the historical animosity between Jews and Samaritans, the woman was shocked by Jesus’ request (John 4:9b).

Later, Jesus began to speak of water in metaphorical terms (John 4:13-14), while the woman spoke of water in literal terms. When she saw the benefit of drinking the water that Jesus offered, that His water would forever do away with her thirst, she asked Him for a little.

When Jesus mentioned the matter of her husbands to the woman (vs. 16-18), she told him that He was a prophet. Then she herself, out of insight or wanting to change the subject, brought up the matter of worship (v. 20). For Jews and Samaritans, worship had to do with a physical place: the temple in Jerusalem and the temple on Mount Gerizim, respectively. Ask: For you, where and/or how should we worship?

2. The crux of the matter

This is where the matter got interesting. Jesus made a forceful statement: “You Samaritans worship what you do not know...” (v. 22a). The Amplified Bible translation says: “You [Samaritans] do not know what you worship.” Actually, the problem with the Samaritans and with some people today, is the fact that they believe that worship has to do with a place, or with a type of music, or with gestures, or with clothing; but in reality, it has to do with the knowledge of the One being adored, God Almighty. And the Samaritans did not know Him. The Samaritans only accepted the Pentateuch (which are the first five books of the Bible also known as The Law of Moses or the Torah), while the Jews had what is now known as the Old Testament. In this part of the Bible, God’s revelation of promised salvation is manifested in the figure of the Messiah. And the Messiah, Jesus Christ, revealed to the world who the Father is. The Father is our reason for worship. He cannot be confined to a physical space like a temple or a mountain or limited to a rhythm or type of clothing.

The Father is Spirit. In verse 23, Jesus says that the worship of the Father in “spirit and in truth.” Thus, Jesus did not define worship in physical terms but in spiritual terms. True worship goes beyond anything that is known and it is not a question of ethnicity or location.

“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (v. 24). In other words, the worship that God demands is worship that entails total surrender. According to Daniel Steel, in spirit “implies that we surrender our will to God, our thoughts and plans to those He has for us...” (Beacon Biblical Commentary, Volume 7, CNP, USA: 1985, p. 76). In truth (or in a true way) refers to the fact that “we are not worshipping an ‘image’ of God, made according to our ideas ... Only Christ presented us to the real or ‘true’ God.” (Beacon Biblical Commentary, Volume 7 CNP, USA: 1985, p. 76). This means that God can only be worshipped by those who believe in Christ Jesus as the Son of God.

3. True worship that reveals

True worship reveals who God is and what He requires from mankind. In the introduction to what He said about worship, Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman that He was the Messiah. The woman knew that the Messiah would reveal or explain all things to them. On that occasion, He revealed to her that true worship was centered on God, the Father, and that it had nothing to do with the material aspects that she had been taught.

Worshiping Him truly involves stripping oneself of poses and preconceptions. True worship is not about people, it is about God. It is surrendering everything, including oneself, to Him. He is the center and the reason for all worship.

Review/Application:

1. Why did the Samaritan woman ask Jesus why he asked for water? (Because she was a Samaritan and He was a Jew; and Jews and Samaritans did not use anything in common, they did not interact at all.)
2. According to the woman, where did the Jews say to worship? (In Jerusalem.)
3. According to verse 22, what did the Samaritans worship and what did the Jews worship? (The Samaritans what they did not know, the Jews what they knew.)
4. How will true worshipers worship the Father? (In truth and spirit)
5. What do these words mean to you today?

Challenge:

During the week, think about some ways you have worshiped God, whether collectively in church or alone. How would you change your worship knowing that those who worship the Father “must worship in the Spirit and in truth”?

Objective: For students to understand that God's love is lived and reflected, first of all, in families; and that the Lord's desire is that every family worship Him.

Memory Verse: "...and all the families of the nations will bow down before him." Psalm 22:27b

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Colored pencils and white sheets of paper.
- **Instructions:** Provide the students with the paper and colored pencils and ask them to draw a picture of a family based on what they consider a family to be.

The idea is that at the end, they share about the different concepts that exist about family and this introduces the lesson.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk or equivalent.
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to think of an ideal family. Then, ask them to come to the front and write a single word on the board that they feel is the most important concept that distinguishes that ideal of family (love, respect, education, children, etc.).

At the end, remind them that the most important issues in a family, whatever it may be, are the values that sustain it.

There is no single absolutely correct model of what a family is supposed to be like. There are different types of wonderful godly families. Even in the 66 books of the Bible, there is no single ideal model of family, but rather a variety of family realities. Here are some examples: 1] Jesus' family consisted of a father - who would soon be absent due to death - a mother, an older son (Jesus) who left home, and younger brothers and sisters who questioned the work of the elder; 2] Jacob's family consisted of a husband (Jacob), two wives (who were sisters), two concubines and thirteen children; 3] The family in "The Parable of the Prodigal Son" consisted of a father and two sons; 4] Another family consisted of three single siblings (Martha, Lazarus and Mary); among many others.

But in Genesis 2:24 God commanded the man to leave father and mother (mentioning the basic family) to form a new family with his wife. In Ephesians 5 and 6, Paul gave a basic model of family: husband, wife, children. Have the students think of their families. Maybe might not be what one wants or perhaps it is going through a crisis: it has become a fragmented family, or may be considered a dysfunctional family ... But be that as it may, it is one's family, and in the Word of God there is wise advice for to put into practice to improve the life of one's family.

1. The Christian Life

John Wesley affirmed that worship "is not about a quiet time, a time of worship, but a devotional life, a whole life of worship." And that is exactly how Christianity works: it is not about a specific time and place where one acts as a Christian (the church, the public worship on the weekend), but it is about all of life, daily life, everyday life. One needs to practice Christianity in real, daily life. It is where there is lack of faith that people of faith are

needed most. It is in places outside the church community worship that one needs to live out all that has been learned from the church.

It is necessary to live out Christian convictions, which are also called values of the kingdom of God (love, justice, forgiveness, mercy, peace and joy, among others), outside the building where one meets Sunday after Sunday to celebrate Jesus Christ. One must live these convictions throughout all hours of every day, in every week of the whole month, every year. And the most concrete way is to live these Christian convictions at home (1 John 4:20).

2. Who is my neighbor?

While Jesus was physically on earth, He taught that one should be good to others. In this regard, in Luke 10:25-37, an interpreter of the law questioned Jesus and insisted on asking him the following: "... who is my neighbor?" This question is still valid because the original meaning of this word has to do with "the closest" person to one. And the people who are closest to one are those who live with one every day: One's family.

Do not make the mistake of loving someone who is far but fail to love someone who is closest.

3. The simplest and most difficult of acts

Most people suffer from this: loving those who are not part of the family but want nothing to do with those in their own home. Jesus himself suffered through something similar in John 7:1-5 with His own brothers. Because family members know each other well, they also each other's weaknesses. Precisely for this reason, one can today decide to love them as one love oneself (Luke 10:27).

4. Family Worship

If one has a Christian family, one has a huge advantage in accomplishing this last point: Family worship. As part of family worship, the family needs to spend time studying the Word of God, teaching and discovering ways of how to do what it says, pray together, support and encourage each other to live lives that worship God daily. Worshiping God is not just about singing hymns or singing the latest choruses; It is not limited to religiously attending a church or holding many meetings with fellow members of the congregation. Worshiping God is something much deeper and always goes beyond the religious.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to write down what will be asked of them and then share some of that in the group so that they can intercede for one another. In the end, encourage them to make a commitment to worship in their respective families.

Write the names of those who make up your family, their roles in it and the needs they have right now.

	Name:	Role:	Need:
Example:	Andrew	Dad	To accept Jesus
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____

Finally, make a commitment to be the one to initiate worship in your family. Here is a model of this commitment. "I, _____ commit myself before God to worship God in my home, being an example in everything I do and say."

Challenge: This week, try to live out all of your religious beliefs at home. Here are some tips: pray for each other once a week; pledge not to insult each other in any way at home: no fighting, not in words or gestures; read a Bible passage once a week; have the family pray together before and after returning from trip when travelling together; play music that honors Christ during housework.

Objective: For the students to understand that the church functions as a body and that as such, each part or member of it has a specific function.

Memory Verse: “...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” Romans 12:5

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** A large piece of paper or blackboard, a marker or pencil, sheets of paper, and tape.
- **Instructions:** Draw the silhouette of a human body on the board. Cut the piece of paper into small pieces, and on each one write the spiritual gifts and functions, especially those that are clearly performed in your church (ushers, pastors, teachers, compassion, prayer, etc.). Put them all in a basket. Let each student take a piece of paper and place it on the part of the body where they think it fits, according to its function, and briefly explain why they put it there. For example, the gift of prayer could be placed on the knees, because a person who prays spends a lot of time on their knees, or the gift of compassion could be placed on the heart, etc.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and pencils or pens.
- **Instructions:** Cut the sheet of paper into small pieces, and write on each of them the name of all the participants in the class. Put all the names in a basket and ask the students to take one. If the name they got is their own, let them change it.

When everyone has a name, encourage them to write a gift which they think that person has and explain how that person, with their gift, can contribute to the unity and harmony of the church or class. For example: “Emmanuel’s gift is service; he’s always willing to help”, or “Anna is a person who reads the Bible a lot and she motivates the group to seek more of God.” By the end of the round, everyone will have heard something positive about themselves.

The city of Corinth was a place of unusual immorality “with all that could serve the pleasures of the senses ... it was one of the most lustful, brazen and immoral cities in the world” (Beacon Biblical Commentary, Volume 8. CNP, USA: s/f, p. 321). The Corinthian church could not keep itself out of all the sinful influence around it. That is why Paul in his letter to the Corinthians reminded them that they were “called to be [God’s] holy people” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Adding to the problems the Corinthian church was facing, was added or loss in value of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit by considering some gifts to be superior to others. By belittling ministries of the Holy Spirit that they considered less important, they lost their sense of unity and service.

1. One in Christ

Every Christian is a member of the body of Christ. Humans are different, live in different parts of the world and have different roles. Despite all this diversity, in Christ there is unity (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). For Paul, it was crucial that the Corinthians understand the unity in Christ Jesus. That is why he repeated the word “one” five times in just two verses. He made it clear that the emphasis was on unity.

In verse 13, Paul explains the common denominators that make Christians one in the church; two experiences that are shared by all believers:

- a. All were baptized by one Spirit (12:13a). This eliminates any differences that may exist between Christians, such as race, culture, position, etc. Both Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, men and women, rich and poor, all share the experience that makes one part of one body, one church.
- b. All were given the one Spirit (12:13b). Christians are united because same Spirit that dwells in each one. In this fellowship, one shares eternal life and the provision and mission of Christ (John 6:53- 58), thus breaking down all barriers that cause divisions.

2. Importance of diversity

“Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.” (1 Corinthians 12:14). This analogy between the human body and the body of Christ teaches us that the body is a unit. Personifying the different parts of the body, he conveyed the idea that each part, no matter how different, is important.

Indirectly, Paul presents two problems or tendencies in the church that prevents many from enjoying and valuing unity in diversity; and these are the inferiority and superiority complexes. Do not underestimate the importance of oneself in the body of Christ (Low self-esteem). On the other hand, do not overestimate the importance of oneself in the body of Christ either (pride). Always take care to seek unity and enjoy diversity in the church.

3. Different gifts, but the same body

Paul presents a list of gifts and responsibilities of the church in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. All the members of the body of Christ have unique spiritual talents, abilities, and gifts. This variety of gifts enriches the church. Each part is vital and necessary for the proper functioning of the whole body. Everyone is called to do their part, to contribute with their gifts and talents to the growth of the body. This means that each person must discover their own spiritual gifts and serve in the best possible way.

Review/Application:

Divide the students into groups and ask them to write definitions for the following gifts, and one or two practical functions in the church. (List taken from 1 Corinthians

12:28 and Romans 12:6-8). Then let them think about what their gift is within the church.

1. Administration: Ability to organize and direct activities, secretary, treasurers.
2. Exhortation: Ability to motivate people to live a true Christian life, counselor, teacher.
3. Distribute or Give: Ability to materially support the work through offerings.
4. Preside or Lead: Ability to guide a group with vision and concern, cell leader, pastor, teacher.
5. Mercy: Having compassion for the needs of others, compassionate ministries.
6. Prophecy or preaching: Ability to proclaim and apply the word of God, pastor.
7. Service: Ability to help others in a practical way, ushers.
8. Teaching: Ability to clearly communicate biblical truths to others, teachers, cell leaders.
9. Healing: Pray for healing, visit and pray for the sick.

Challenge:

The church is like a big puzzle. No two pieces are the same. If they were, we would not be able to see the finished image and that would mean one piece left over and another is missing. In the body of Christ, the same thing happens. There are no two identical members, therefore your gift is needed. Do you already know your gifts? Do you serve in your church, community, or neighborhood? Put your gifts at the service of God!

Objective: For the students discover the talents and gifts that they possess have been given to them by God so that they can serve Him.

Memory Verse: “For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.” Matthew 25:29

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Pieces of paper (5 x 7 cm) and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Have each student write on piece of paper a list of their skills, such as public speaking, writing, singing, painting, etc. Then ask them to read and share how they can use those skills to serve in the church.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Newspaper from the jobs section and blank sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Bring the newspaper sheets from the jobs section to the class and ask students to read aloud the profiles that are required for some of the jobs. Have them create a profile of a servant of God and discuss whether they fit that profile to serve the Lord and whether they are serving effectively in the kingdom of God

A talent is a person’s ability to understand and perform a certain activity. Talents can be acquired by genetic inheritance or by stimulation and learning. Whether one gets them by inheritance or by learning, one must consecrate them to the service of God. What can one do to honor God with the talents He has given one?

1. Fulfilling the role of servants

As a child of God, one has the responsibility to serve Him and watch over the interests of His Kingdom. That is why He gave His children abilities to effectively carry out the ministries that He entrusted to them. In Matthew 24:45-51, the Lord Jesus shared a parable to teach His children/followers how He wants to trust them as good servants.

A. The good and faithful servant

The Lord Jesus Christ promised to return for His church and no one knows when it will happen, but in the meantime, everyone must be doing what He said to do. According to this parable, the good servant of God has the following characteristics:

Faithfulness: It means taking care not to defraud or betray the trust placed in one. The person is faithful in the presence or absence of the superior; executes exactly what was entrusted to him/her. One must ensure that one does not break God’s trust by serving Him with excellence, love, and gratitude (vs 45-46).

Prudence: A prudent person is cautious and sensible in their attitudes and actions. This quality is necessary so as to not harm the interests of those who trusts one. In one’s service to God, one needs to put in all the effort so that one is effective and the Lord is pleased (vs. 45-46).

Reward: Every decision has a consequence. The servant who decided to be responsible faithful, and wise was declared blessed and would be put in a position of greater authority. The Lord will reward by blessing those who serve him faithfully (v. 47).

B. The bad servant

According to this parable, the evil servant has the following characteristics:

Neglectful: it is knowing what to do and not doing it. The bad servant is the one who does not do his part, thinking that his boss will take a long time to return, or that he will not hold him accountable and believes that he will have time to correct his carelessness (v. 48-49).

Abusive: it is the misuse, excessive, unfair or improper use of something or someone. This servant misused his time and other resources available to him in order for him to be successful (vs. 48-49).

Reward: The bad servant had to face the consequences for his disloyalty and recklessness. When his master returned, he was severely punished and thrown out of his post. It would be better for one to responsibly assume the role of a servant of the Lord so that when He returns, He will find one doing His will and serving Him (v. 51).

2. Using and reproducing talents

The talents that the Lord gives must be used and reproduced. In Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents is found. Talents were a measure of change used in transactions but the vital teaching of the parable includes aspects beyond economic value.

A. Trust, ability and responsibility

Each talent represented a fortune placed in the hands of the servants: The man deposited not only his wealth but also trust in each one of them. Intellectual, artistic, professional, administrative, manual, counseling skills, etc., are gifts/talents received from God to be used to please God, and not just to earn money. The Lord gives gifts/talents according to His plan. God entrusted each person with talents by giving each the ability to perform certain activities, but He also gave the responsibility to use them for His best interests. The Almighty does not need anyone, but with love He gives each person the honor of serving Him.

B. Different actions

The first two servants assumed an active, positive attitude because they immediately took action to carry out what was asked of them, and the result was evident because they doubled the capital received (vs. 16-17).

The only effort of the negligent servant was to hide the capital received (v. 18). Many Christians do not undertake anything in the church because before trying it, they have already decided that it will not work.

Each faithful servant received praise and increased his capital, but the negligent servant lost what little he had. If one wants to have God's blessing, one must use the gifts and talents that were given instead of hiding them and making excuses (vs. 21-18). The Word emphasizes the reality that the day will come to render an account before God of the use of the time, abilities and skills, without excuse. The important thing will not be the amount of talents received, but the results of having invested in the Lord's Kingdom.

Review/Application:

Questions for group discussion:

1. According to Matthew 24:30-51, what are the characteristics of those who are not faithful in doing the work that God has entrusted to them? (They are lazy, pessimistic, negligent, and irresponsible.)
2. What practical lessons does the parable of the talents have for your life?
3. What are you willing to do as a result of studying this lesson?

Challenge:

Make it a duty to serve in the church. You can do this by talking to your Sunday school teacher or another leader, asking how you can help. This could be preparing materials for the next lesson, setting up, contacting class members, etc.

Objective: To help the students recognize the importance of fulfilling the ministry to which God has called them: inside and outside the church.

Memory Verse: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers» 1 Timothy 4:16

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** White sheets of paper, pencils, individual chairs.
- **Instructions:** Ask the students to form pairs, and each will interview the other asking: If you had to lead or start a ministry in the church, what would it be? Each pair will come forward and introduce their partner and say what they wrote about that person.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Individual chairs to organize equipment, cards with signs.
- **Instructions:** Bring to the class cards with names of different ministries that can be developed in the church: evangelism, discipleship, compassion, prayer, visitation, administration, education, music and worship, etc. Post them in different parts of the classroom, and ask each student to sit near the ministry sign that catches their attention the most. Then each group will talk about how they could develop a ministry inside and outside the church. Have them share their ideas with others in the group.

Defining the word “ministry.” In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term “sharat” was used, which means to minister, serve, officiate. The Latin term minister in turn is derived from the adjective “minus” which means less or less than. The minister was the servant or subordinate who was in the service of his master. In the New Testament, the most used term for minister was “diakoneo”, which means to be a servant, assistant, serve, assist, minister. It is mainly translated to the verb “serve.” (Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament words. W.E. Vine. Caribe, 1999, Colombia, page 554).

These definitions help one understand that developing a ministry in the church implies a serious commitment to serve God and people.

1. To develop a ministry, one must first be a servant

In the New Testament context, being a servant was synonymous with being a slave in the service of one's master. This implied total submission to the will and orders of their master. In the Christian life, being a servant means first being a Christian and accepting the lordship of Jesus Christ as King and Lord. Every Christian is called to serve in the church, since this is a living organism; each one is empowered by the Holy Spirit to develop a specific ministry within His work (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

2. To minister, one must prepare

Paul invited Timothy to be a good minister of the gospel. In 1 Timothy 4:6-16, he indicates some qualities one must cultivate to be a good minister.

Prepare for the task: This implies preparation, study. Thus, Timothy would be a) Nourished with the words of faith, and b) have good doctrine.

Recognize false doctrine: The Message says: “Stay clear of silly stories”. Those who serve God must know God through his Word.

Be godly: In its Hebrew expression (*hasid*), implies mutual, effective and faithful help to brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, allies, etc. Paul says that godliness has promise for this present life and for the life to come.

Work and suffer: Paul says to Timothy: "... be strong..., Join with me in suffering..., No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs...,competes as an athlete..." (2 Timothy 2:1-8). If the minister does not receive a good training, at the first battle he will immediately leave the ministry.

Be an example: Paul clearly mentions that whoever wants to serve God needs to live a life of integrity as an example to others; in their way of speaking, in their conduct, in their love for the neighbor, in faith and purity of heart.

Stay busy: To develop a ministry, one has to work at it. Even though Paul knew that Timothy was very young, he urged him to prepare and practice for ministry. Read, one must find out more about what one is going to do, learn from others, teach others, and serve the Lord.

Take care of your ministry: Timothy had received the laying on of hands to become a minister of the church, (what today is known as being ordained) in order to shepherd a congregation. This implied a great responsibility for a young man. Therefore, Paul's recommendation was for Timothy to take care of the his gift and use it to bless others. One must take one's ministry seriously. Serving God is a privilege, not an obligation.

3. To serve, one has to be ready for anything

A. Minister within the church.

There are usually many possibilities to serve within the church, such as being teachers, ushers, participating in music, singing, discipling, prayer, administration, leadership, etc. Most Christians are involved in developing these ministries.

B. Minister outside the church

The ministries that are most needed in the church are those that have the purpose of reaching others, and these should be developed to reach outside the four walls of the church. Among them we can find the ministries of evangelism, visitation, compassion, discipleship, cell leaders, preachers, church planters, missionaries, etc.

Today you must reflect on your spiritual life and ask yourself: Am I truly a child of God? Am I willing to be a servant? What spiritual gifts has God given me to serve Him? How am I developing my gifts? In what ministries can I get involved inside or outside the church?

Review / Application:

Allow time for the students to read the passages, reflect, and respond:

- 1 Timothy 4:7-8 - Why should Timothy ignore gossip and put aside physical exercise to dedicate himself to fulfilling his ministry?
- 1 Timothy 4:12 - In what areas of your Christian life must you work at in order to develop a ministry in the church?

In what areas of ministry would you like to serve God inside or outside the church?

Challenge:

God continues to speak to us about service and to share what we have received from Him with others. Keep meditating on it, and this week, if you already have a ministry, think about how to develop it, and if you are not serving yet, do not wait. This week put your hands to work and start now.

SERVANT OR MASTER?

Lesson

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Objective: For the students to see that service as part of their Christian life.

Memory Verse: “and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.” Mark 10:44

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Drawings or pictures of people helping others (crossing the street, carrying something heavy, caring for a sick person, giving money, comforting someone who is crying) or posters that mention some kind of service.
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to express how they feel when they see these scenes; reflect on how God works in one when one is in need and how one should serve others in the same way.

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Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk or large paper and marker.
- **Instructions:** On the board, write on one side: “Helpful person” and on the other side: “Selfish person.” Ask your students to describe the characteristics that each of these people usually have. At the end, reflect together on the differences that have been mentioned and the influence that these characteristics can have on the interpersonal relationships of these people.

TTrue Christian service is basically related to its original meaning, that is, it includes attitudes of humility, sacrifice, and active love. One must recognize that these characteristics are not to be temporary in the life of the young person, but must become a daily lifestyle in which they live consistently serving God and others, answering the question: Am I a servant or a master?

1. The attitude of humility in ministry

In the verses before the study passage for today (Mark 10:35-45), Jesus had been traveling to Jerusalem and teaching the people along the way (Mark 10:1, 17:32). In Mark 10:29-31, Jesus made it clear to the disciples that in the kingdom of God, the order of importance is completely opposite to the order of importance that exists in our human society (v. 31).

Unexpectedly, just a few verses later, two of Jesus’ disciples make a request that contradicts what the Master had just said. In Mark 10:37, one reads that brothers James and John asked Jesus to “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” In these words one notes that the brothers were thinking about their own well-being in the future, and that they had an attitude of pride in thinking that they deserved a more prestigious place than the other followers of Jesus. Unfortunately, this attitude is one that is repeated, even today, in many of the current followers of Jesus.

Jesus was very patient and clear with his disciples, yet they still struggled with an attitude of pride. He clarified that in the kingdom of God, only God knows how things will be organized and this should not be our responsibility or concern (v. 40). Instead, what is of utmost importance for a young Christian serving in Jesus’ name is to have an attitude of humility on a daily basis, for example: consistently be thinking about how others feel, what others need, and what can one do about it (Luke 1:37).

2. The willingness to sacrifice in ministry

In the following verses of the study passage, Jesus shares something difficult with the disciples who wanted to lead. Jesus said: “‘You do not know what you are asking,’ Jesus said. ‘Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?’” (Mark 10:38). (Here Jesus was referring to what He had just said in Mark 10:33-34, which was His torture and death on the cross).

Jesus made it clear to His followers that Christian ministry was not centered on the privileges and/or blessings that come with that path, but rather it is a journey that requires a clear and decisive willingness to sacrifice for others. This sacrifice requires a lot from the young Christian, including personal time, family time, work time, money and other material resources, and also often emotional suffering and discomfort. (Mark 10:39; Matthew 28:20).

3. The action of service in ministry

Finally, in Mark 10:43-44, Jesus spoke to the disciples about the importance of serving others. The Lord mentioned that many secular leaders of that time abused their position of authority over others for their own benefit (v. 42). The same abuse is noticed in today’s contemporary society.

On the contrary, Jesus taught that one must characterize oneself by a constant act of service to others, and not by seeking others to serve one. Jesus had time to eat and rest with His close companions, He had time to fast and He had time to pray. Furthermore, Jesus enjoyed time with family and friends (the wedding at Cana of Galilee, John 2:1), and with children (Mark 10:14). Today, young Christians will benefit from taking care of their physical body with exercise and basic medical care; also taking care of their mind and heart by taking time to be alone with God, rest, have fun, and enjoy time with their close family.

Humility, sacrifice and service are closely related characteristics that are essential and indispensable in true Christian service. The kind of service that is full of spiritual vitality, is only possible when God is the center of all effort, and the young person simply does what the Lord Jesus asks daily. “For we are co-workers in God’s service...” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Review/Application:

Allow time for them to think of practical examples from their daily lives that demonstrate the corresponding attitude (answers are by way of examples).

TEACHINGS OF JESUS

MY RESPONSE

Attitude of Humility

- Talk to those I do not feel comfortable with.

Willingness to Sacrifice

- Do not speak ill of others; rather say positive things
- Give offerings instead of buying something for myself.
- Share my food with another person.

Service in Action

- Help with the housework of an elderly or sick person in the neighborhood.
- Raise funds for a family in greatest need.

Challenge:

What is your perspective on Christian ministry? What experiences or examples have you had with your leaders? Have you ever wanted to serve in the church or are you already doing so? Remember that God created you for a special plan. He says in Jeremiah 29:11, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” Do not hesitate to share your doubts and questions with me, your Sunday school teacher.

Objective: For the students to compare the characteristics of the servant of God with the characteristics they currently have.

Memory Verse: “Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 3:13

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper (rectangular size 20x10 cm, White or colored), pencils or markers and paper clips/pegs for each student.
- Arrange the chairs in a circle. When the students arrive, welcome them, ask them to sit down on one of the chairs. Choose one of the students to be a teacher’s helper by giving each of the others students a piece of paper, a pencil, and a clip. Each student should write a characteristic that they think a servant of God should have on their paper. As they finish writing, each one will come to the front and clip their paper to the clothes of the designated person as the assistant.

Make a list of the different characteristics that the young people wrote down.

Have the class compare themselves to the characteristics or qualities of a servant that you all wrote down. Ask: How much are you like him/her?

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Copies of paper with a table, which has enough blocks for the number of the students. Write the qualities of each of your students in a block (example: for 10 students, a table with 10 blocks) and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Give each students a copy of the paper with the table of characteristics and have them to go find the person whom they believe has the characteristic listed in the block and have that person sign in the block. The first one to fill the entire table with different signatures will be the winner, but everyone must fill each of the boxes with signatures.

Everyone has special characteristics that make each person different and valuable to others.

The apostle Paul wrote that Christians are open letters that are read by everyone (2 Corinthians 3:1-3). In other words, the people around Christians are reading the lives of Christians, to see their testimony, the way they behave, speak etc.; all the time.

Ask: What do you think people might say about us as Christians? Do people see in us the qualities of a servant of God? Has it ever happened that while you were doing something, you did not have everything you needed, so you solved the problem by replacing one thing with another?

When it comes to doing a good job, there is nothing more important than having everything one needs. For example: if one is going to fix something, one needs to have all the relevant tools ; or if one is going to cook, one needs all the ingredients and if one is going to make a craft, one needs to have all the materials necessary. God also chooses instruments or tools with which He does everything that He wants to do in one’s life at any time. Many times He uses young people who put themselves in His hands. But what kind of youth does God use? The Lord uses young people with certain significant qualities. For example, He used the following young people:

1. Joshua, a young man different from the others

- a. From an early age, Joshua was characterized by a life of consecrated and dedicated service to God. “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.” (Exodus 33:11).

- b. Despite the negative thinking of his fellow spies, Joshua proved that he could make a difference in the midst of a rebellious, ungrateful and unbelieving generation (Numbers 14: 6-9).
- c. When God looked for Moses' successor, He did not need to go very far; it was a natural transition of leadership for the people.
- d. For times as difficult as those of today, God will use "Joshuas" who have learned by serving their leaders and who think contrary to how other people often think: "it isn't possible", "I won't achieve the objectives" or "I will never get ahead in the middle of this situation." People challenged by God, like Joshua, look to God for answers when they face difficulties.

2. Josiah was a young man with a good heart for God

- a. Josiah was king of Judah and instituted very important changes for the entire nation. Josiah came to the throne at eight years of age, due to the murder of his father, Amon, and reigned for thirty-one years. He did not imitate the evil ways of his ancestors. "He [Josiah] did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of his father David..." (2 Chronicles 34:2; 2 Kings 22:2)
- b. Already at 18 years of age, Josiah showed great concern for the house of God, which until then was abandoned and not maintained. He set about to repair it (2 Kings 22:7). Scripture explains how he was saddened and anguished at the reading of the Word, which he heard for the first time (vs. 10-11), because the people were not obeying it. His heart melted, he humbled himself before the Lord, tore his clothes and cried in God's presence.
- c. Something very interesting to highlight is that by listening to God, God listened to Josiah (v. 19).

He turned to the Lord with all his heart, and as a result of such consecration, he was turned into an instrument that brought great spiritual revival to the entire nation. God still continues to use useful tools to produce revivals (2 Chronicles 34:3, 14-33).

How many times have you asked yourselves: Will ministry be an option for me? Lord, will I be the ideal person to develop this work? I once heard an author say that "People do not reject the message, they reject the messenger."

Today God wants to use you. For each job, God needs an effective tool to carry out his mission, like Joshua who learned from the great leader Moses and imitated his steps and stood straight before God, or like Josiah who turned his heart to God instead of following the ways of his ancestors and received God's favor, not just for himself, but for his entire nation. Today God wants to continue using young people who are willing to obey him.

Review / Application:

Ask the students to identify throughout the Bible people who said yes to ministry as a way of life.

- He was born in Tarsus; he was a persecutor of the church; he preached to the Gentiles. (Apostle Paul)
- Man full of the Holy Spirit, faith and wisdom who was martyred for his faith in Jesus. (Stephen)
- Hebrew leader, called by God to liberate his people. (Moses)
- A native of Bethsaida, his name was Simeon and also Simon, son of Jonah; Andrew's brother, he was a fisherman, he denied his Master three times. (Peter)
- He was the second king of Israel, the youngest son of Jesse, he was a shepherd of Bethlehem; he acquired fame for his musical abilities and for his bravery in his confrontation against the giant Philistine Goliath. (David)

Challenge:

Look closely at those involved in the ministry of the local church and ask them some of the following questions:

- How did they decide to devote their time and talents to the work of God?
- How did they know that they should get involved in this specific ministry?
- Were they challenged by other people to take on this task?

Share your answers with the rest of the class during our next class session.

Objective: For the students recognize the call to fulfill the Great Commission is for all Christians.

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,...» Matthew 28:19

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Pencils, blank sheets of paper, a watch, three chocolates and a mailbox (this can be a wrapped cardboard box).
- **Instructions:** Distribute a blank piece of paper and a pencil to each participant and ask each one to write as many names and surnames of their friends as they can. They can be friends from their school, neighborhood, etc. Give half a minute, and once the time has passed, ask them to add up the names, and then put their paper, with their own name at the top, in the mailbox. The three participants who have written the longest list of friends will win.

Ask: Have you shared the gospel with these people? How have you been able to express the message of Jesus to each of them?

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Box with objects: a Bible, a letter, devotionals, a light bulb, paper, radio, cell phone, etc. Markers and a blackboard.
- **Instructions:** Ask them to divide into two groups and each group to organize itself into pairs. Then each pair must stand back to back, so that player “A” faces the group and player “B” faces the board, with a marker in hand. The one who runs the game must give player “A” an object from the box. He should describe it to the partner, Player B without telling him what it is. Player “B” will have to draw it without seeing it. Keep track of the time it takes each pair to describe the object and draw it. Couples who do it in less time will win for their group.

How quick are we to share the gospel and be witnesses to his Word? The world needs light, each drawn object expresses a message.

The book of Acts tells the story of the first church. The Holy Spirit is the author of all the events in each of the stories.

The first church was founded by the apostles, by people who through the years took on the responsibility to be witnesses of Christ. This story is a narration of events, of miracles, of changed lives. Jesus requires that each of His followers be His witnesses so that through his story others may hear His message and receive salvation (Matthew 28:19).

1. A witness who waits for the promise, receives it

The disciples had enjoyed many experiences with Jesus but the time had come when they would have to go on alone. Jesus had fulfilled His purpose and was physically leaving earth and going to heaven. He had many plans for His disciples and a special calling for their lives; He wanted them to be His witnesses. The disciples took on a great challenge to achieve the plans that Jesus had for them.

The disciples had to learn to “wait.” Jesus had promised them that they would have the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who would comfort and help them in all the plans they undertook, projects they assumed and in being His witnesses. Waiting is hard, just as trusting is. Yet those who learn to wait upon the Lord, Jesus will use and make them part of His great projects.

It is time to be disciples of Christ. Do not get carried away by conscience or decisions, but rather learn to consult God on each decision, especially in terms of service to God. Follow the example of the disciples (Acts 1:13-14) who learned to wait by praying together to the Lord.

2. A witness who assumes his role and bears fruit

“Making disciples” was not an easy task; it was a great challenge and the disciples had to take it up with great commitment on their part. Their task was important: they had to be witnesses (Acts 1:8) and had to share the story of Jesus, the story of salvation. But “making disciples” was not only talking about the gospel, it also included sharing the teachings of Jesus to the point where people publicly declared that they belonged to Christ through baptism.

The present must recognize that this great challenge of “disciple-making” was not for the past disciples of Christ in Jesus’ time. It is a commitment that given to the disciples of Jesus even today, for it is a task that those who consider themselves children of God, those who are committed to the message of Jesus Christ, must consider and apply to their lives now.

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They must be witnesses taking on the role of making disciples, carrying the name Christ high, sharing His Word, working harder so that people accept Jesus, learn from Him and seek to be baptized. New disciples must be motivated so that they are encouraged to continue sharing this Good News with others and in turn make new disciples.

3. A witness summoned, plays his best game

Being summoned to be part of a team, assuming the role assigned, identifying with the team and sharing the same purpose, builds a sense of belonging and motivates one to achieve goals and challenges.

The disciples were from Jesus’ team and they knew that they were part of a great team. When Jesus left and came back to summon them after risen, they believed in Him and were encouraged to go to the place where Jesus ordered them to: “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go” (Matthew 28:16). But not all of them went to the gathering; one of the twelve was missing for he was no more (Acts 1:16-19).

In the secular world, the largest number of teams are driven by sport. Being a player called up to belong to a national team is a great privilege. But not all players are willing to give their all, not all assume their role, not all give their best during the game. Only the best team brings home the trophy of winner, best or one of the best. Jesus summons His followers to give their best as they assume the role of being witnesses. Jesus knows how talented one are and is confident that one can play the best game. It is interesting that in Matthew 28:17 says: “When they saw him, they worshiped him...”, but it is also sad to read “but some doubted.”

Jesus trusts one and has hope in one. Do not doubt the great things He can do with one. Accept and play the best game. Respond with confidence to the command that He left: “...go and make disciples of all nations,...”

Remember that walking with Jesus is learning more about him every day. It is experiencing His grace, enjoying His goodness. Becoming his witness is helping others live the same experience, having the great opportunity to see lives transformed by His message and giving blessings to each person who meets Him.

Review/Application:

Ask your students to look up the following scriptures and find the names of Christ’s witnesses who were his disciples:

Acts 2:14 (Peter)

Acts 3:1 (Peter and John)

Acts 6:8 (Stephen)

Acts 8:26 (Philip)

Acts 9:36 (Tabitha)

Acts 16:1 (Timothy)

Acts 17:10 (Paul and Silas)

Colossians 4:12 (Epaphras) Ephesians 6:21 (Tychicus)

Challenge:

How can you express that you are a witness for Jesus? Think of creative ways to be a witness for Christ. Share your ideas with the class next week when you meet.

Objective: For the students to understand that we are God’s people, chosen out of love, and therefore it is our responsibility to keep his commandments.

Memory Verse: “The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today.” Deuteronomy 7:6,11

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** A sheet of paper and a pencil for each student.
- **Instructions:** Design on the sheet of paper, a chart with several boxes and in each box write things that your students may have in common, (name, age, height, weight, shoe size, month of birth, gender, number of siblings, etc.). Inside each box leave a space for them to fill in and another for their colleagues to sign. When your students arrive for class, give them the sheet and a pencil to fill in the boxes. Let them know that they have a certain amount of time to ask each other questions in order to find the person who matches the description in the box and ask them to sign. At the end ask: How many of you knew those who had similar characteristics to yours, without asking? There are many things that you have in common and perhaps you did not know because you do not know each other well or because you never talked about it. But yes, there is something that all of us in this place have in common. Then start the lesson.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** A Bible, large clothes, i.e., pants and a T-shirt into which two people can fit at the same time, a small table, a chair, something to drink, a glass, silverware, napkins, a plate, something to eat; It can be a sandwich, a cake, dessert or just a packet of cookies.
- **Instructions:** Get three volunteers to help you and have them come to the front. Ask two of them to dress in the set of clothes you brought, with the arm of one person in one shirt sleeve and the other person’s arm in the other sleeve, and one person in one leg of the pants and the other person in the other leg. Explain that they will be “the body” and the third person will be “the head” of this body. The “head” will position himself in the middle by standing behind the body and putting his head between the two people of the body. Move the table and chair forward with all the items. The “head” must give the “body” instructions and the “body” must perform them. Example: “The head will say: “I’m very tired, I want to sit down. I’m thirsty, I want a drink., I’m hungry, I want something to eat. I wonder what today’s devotional says?” (Deuteronomy 7:6-11). “The body” must try to sit in the chair, figure out how to eat and drink and look up the Bible verse so that “the head” can read it aloud. After the activity is complete, ask your students what lessons they learned from what they observed. Then start the lesson.

Ask: Have ever you stopped for a moment to think how important and special you are to God? The Bible says that humans were created in his image and likeness and were made rule over all the earth in Genesis 1:26-27. Scripture also says that He made humans a little less than the angels and that He crowned them with glory and honor (Psalm 8:5-8).

When one accepts Jesus into one’s hearts, He gives one a very privileged place and makes one His beloved child. This makes one part of His family and His special people. One may wonder, how is it that humans are so important to God? Why? For what reason? God has given humans a great place of honor, with a great purpose: together study what His Word says about this.

1. Part of His people

Read Deuteronomy 7:6-11 and 1 Peter 2:9. In these verses, the word that is emphasized is “people.” In the Old Testament the concept of “the people of God” was born. It originates with Abraham, the patriarch of the people of Israel. God called him to leave his land and everything there and go to an unknown place, and it is there that God gave him the promise (Genesis 12:2). God chose Israel as his people to keep his law, his commandments and be an instrument of redemption so that through them the nations would know God (Isaiah 42:6-8). But as their story unfolded, the people of God were unfaithful on repeated occasions. They disobeyed His law, worshiped other gods, and little by little they turned their backs on God and forgot the purpose to which God called them.

With time, God raised up prophets, judges, and kings to guide his people, but time after time they fell into sin and turned away from God. However, when the right time came, God, who is merciful and whose great love is incomparable, sent Jesus Christ to save the world (Luke 19:10). Jesus Christ did not come only to redeem or save Israel, but all mankind, just as it says in John 3:16. The only way to become part of God’s people is by placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ, who through His sacrifice on the cross made it possible to be reconciled to God. Sin separated humans from God; humans were slaves of the devil, yet He loved and forgave the human race.

Thanks to His blood shed on the cross, one can become part of the people of God, not of a nation, nor of the Jews, but of the people of God.

2. The privileges God has granted

Deut. 7:6-11 clearly shows God’s love for his people, and today his words are extended to non-Jewish people who are part of the chosen people. Allow the students to explain in their own words each phrase of the text. If necessary, clarify some of the concepts that they do not understand: we are a holy people, we are chosen to be a special people, we were insignificant, He loved us and rescued us from servitude so that we may keep his commandments.

In 1 Peter 2:9 there are four characteristics or privileges that God gives his children, to those who believe in Him as their Savior and Lord.

- a. A chosen people: one belongs to a family, one is an offspring, that is, God’s offspring (Gen. 12:1-9).
- b. Royal priesthood: According to some scholars, it may indicate that one “belong to or serve the King, God.” It can also mean “a royal house” or “a royal residence.” Peter said that his readers were a house or a palace where God the King resides. Just as in the Old Testament priests should be free from contamination, they should be holy people, consecrated for this service. God calls the followers of Christ to live holy lives so that they too can be a holy priesthood.
- c. Holy nation: Denotes that one is part of a nation and not just any nation, but one that is specially dedicated or consecrated to God, since He has separated His nation from the world for his honor and glory.
- d. God’s special possession: It means that one belongs exclusively to God. He bought one with the blood of his son Jesus. One was a nobody, one did not deserve his love and mercy. However, He chose one as part of His people. This means that He gave one an identity; one is now His child, and in return for what God has done, one’s life should be at his service completely.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to write in their own words what 1 Peter 2:9 means.

Challenge: It would be great if you could organize yourselves to plan a day or afternoon in a specific place in your neighborhood or near church to put evangelism into practice. (I am glad to help) Maybe you have not had the chance yet; there are many ways to share the gospel: through a booklet, a play, a dance, etc. Do not miss this opportunity to share what God has done for you!!

Objective: For the students to feel that they are part of a church with a missionary call, willing to commit to God to fulfill the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse: “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 10:14

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Clippings from newspapers, magazines or pamphlets of national or foreign tourist places, one for every 4 or 5 students; one or two sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Show the clippings to the students and let them choose the place they would like to visit. Gather them in groups according to the place chosen, provide them with paper and pencil to make an approximate budget of expenses, including passport cost if it is abroad, visa procedures, unforeseen events, etc. Then do an analysis, together with the students, of the obstacles of going on a trip like the one that was budgeted. Make a list and save it for the end of the class.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Instructions:** In advance, prepare two young people (may be from the class) to act out an experience of a mission trip. Ask one of them to share all the difficulties they witnessed (including personal costs for the trip) and the other to mention achievements. Then take stock with the group. (Encourage the role- players to agree to make the trip worthwhile.) If someone in the church had an experience of a mission trip or activity, invite them to share it and not do the role play. Finally, you can plan an extra classroom activity with the students, it could be to a hospital, nursing home, etc. to take something to share.

Without a doubt, the results of a recreational trip are not always entirely satisfactory, despite the fact that it had been a rest activity. The bustle of the trip and unforeseen events (illness, accidents, theft, etc.) may overshadow the restful actions and result in tiredness. However, there remains the satisfaction of having done activities different from the routine. Possibly, the economic factor ends up in a difficult situation due to having taken out a loan or if the expenses were paid with a credit card, and more than expected was spent. It happens in some cases that travelers return beaten or ill due to climate changes and food, which involves more expenses and discomfort. At other times, it may be that none of this happens and everything turns out excellent.

The meaning of the word “gospel” is nothing more than “good news.” When one shares the Good News with others, one is sharing how Jesus Christ brought salvation: one is presenting the gospel and preaching his Word to others, then one is fulfilling “the Great Commission” entrusted to those who are Jesus’ disciples.

1. The Great Commission

The Lord Jesus told his disciples to make disciples, and if one is his disciples, one must obey his command (Mark 16:15-18). This reading corresponds to what is called “the Great Commission” because it is what Jesus Christ left for His followers to do. The church is made up of all who believe that Jesus was born as a man yet He was God. He was crucified and died to give salvation to humanity. He rose again on the third day and

ascended to heaven, where He is our intercessor. The church must continue sharing the message of salvation with those who do not yet know Him and are walking in darkness.

2. A Missional church

The church that fulfills the “Great Commission” is a missional church. When the Lord Jesus was finishing His mission on earth in physical form, He promised not to leave His disciples alone. He made the promise to send the Holy Spirit, who as part of the Trinity would fill the void that He would leave. The presence of God through His Spirit would provide comfort, peace, strength, authority and everything necessary to fulfill the Great Commission. He is the one who distributes the gifts for the edification of the body of Christ.

3. Steps to Follow

In the same way that the diversity of gifts is needed for the body to function, there must be a procedure to achieve success in the mission. It is important to take into account the following steps:

- A. **PRAY.** It is the key that opens doors. This is part of the armor that a Christian should wear (Ephesians 6:10-18). Paul also mentions praying at all times in all circumstances, in good and bad times (Philippians 4:6). There are different kinds of prayers; the prayer of gratitude, intercessory prayer, the asking prayer, to name some. To be successful in prayer, it must be done with giving thanks to God in every situation. It must also be done with faith (Matthew 21:22) and as the apostle Paul did, with joy, (Philippians 1:4).
- B. **LEARN:** Learning is one of the elements needed to go to the battlefield. It is essential to know the strategies that are going to be used and learn how to handle the weapons that one has at one’s disposal to fight the enemy (Ephesians 6:10-18).
- C. **TEACH:** The knowledge acquired is to be used for personal benefit and for the church. One must not forget the Great Commission and make more disciples. What is learned is to be shared with others, so that the gospel continues to spread, as established by the Lord Jesus.
- D. **GIVE, SHARE:** it is the strategy that Jesus used to give the message of the good news. He used His power to restore physical health through miracles of healing, feeding the crowds and his disciples, and bringing peace to those deceived by the devil. Jesus was so generous that He gave up His own life as a sacrifice to save everyone who believed in Him.

One can contribute to missions by giving economic resources such as money, remembering that what you contribute is the best (Colossians 3:23). Many may not be able to physically go on missions, but they can give to sustain the missionaries. Use all the resources available to take the gospel to those who do not know it yet. The mission is to share, not to convince because that is the task of the Holy Spirit.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to answer True or False to the following comments.

1. The workers to preach are very few. (T)
2. Only pastors should be missionaries. (F)
3. Works do not need faith. (F)
4. Generosity is also necessary in work. (T)
5. I can dedicate myself to teaching without having learned. (F)

Have the students complete the following scripture: Ezekiel 3:11 “Go now to your people in exile and speak to them. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says,’ _____
_____.”

Challenge:

There are currently 195 officially recognized countries in the world: 54 countries are in Africa; 48 in Asia; 44 in Europe; 33 in Latin America and the Caribbean; 14 in Oceania; 2 in Northern America. Encourage your students to make a prayer chain so that during the week everyone can take turns praying for the countries that our church has not yet reached.

Objective: For the students to see the church as the flock of Jesus that depends on His care and direction.

Memory Verse: “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” John 10:14

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Material:** Large piece of paper and markers or blackboard and chalk. You can also use cut outs from magazines or photos of sheep, rams, pastures, sheep dogs, shepherds, pens, and other items related to shepherds.
- **Instructions:** Form two teams. Ask the students if they know or have seen any shepherds and their flock. Most likely they have at least seen them in movies or photos. On the paper or chalkboard, have them draw or paste pictures of the animals and people involved in shepherding. This may include the sheep, the shepherd with his staff, the sheepdogs, and perhaps even the wolves that attack the lambs. Then give each group time to describe what each character does and the picture they put on the board. The group that gives the most complete description will be the winner.

Ask if they know of famous shepherds that appear in the Bible.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Large paper and markers or blackboard and chalk, dictionaries and/or any other reference materials.
- **Instructions:** To get acquainted with some important concepts from the lesson: ask the students to find the meaning of the words in the list below. Also try to explain what each thing, animal or person listed does. If reference materials are not available, encourage young people to express the meanings in their own words. In any case, it is important that the teacher prepares to give an explanation of each word.

Write this list on the board:

- | | | | |
|---------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| • Sheep | • Pasture | • Crook | • Gate |
| • Fold | • Graze | • Shepherd | • Go astray |
| • Flock | • Path | • Rod | • Thief |

What is the church? The church is a group of people who believe in Christ and come together to worship Him. But what else is the church? Jesus, and later the apostles Paul and Peter, used metaphorical figures or examples, to explain what the church is, the relationship between its members, and Jesus' position in it. Sometimes they call it a body, other times a people and even a building. But the best known is the figure is that of the flock and the good shepherd.

This concept was born in the Old Testament and Jesus himself used it to describe believers and to teach what our relationship with Him should be like. Read the Gospel of John 10:7-21 together; surely the students will enjoy listening to a different version than they are used to. What is the flock of Christians like? Who is the true shepherd of that flock?

1. The Church: God's Flock

Practically every Christian knows Psalm 23 by heart, which speaks of Jehovah as a shepherd who cares for His sheep and provides them with food (recite it together). And Psalm 100:3 says "...the Lord is God! It is He made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture." Also in the writings of the prophets, God's people described as a flock: Ezekiel 34 and Micah 7:14. In the New Testament, in John 10:7-21, Jesus presented the parable of the flock; in verse 14b he says, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me." Sheep also distinguish voices that are not from their shepherd (John 10:8). John 10:16 says that there are some sheep that do not belong to his fold, that are lost, but Jesus will go look for them to bring them back. So this is good news!

2. Jesus, The Good Shepherd

Jesus, as the shepherd calls the sheep by name and they listen to him (John 10:3).

Ask: What does a shepherd do for his sheep? Look at Psalm 23:

- He provides food and sustenance (v. 2). The Lord supplies physical and spiritual food (the Word), which helps one to mature and grow in faith, and quenches one's thirst with the water of life, (John 4:13-14).
- He guides one onto the right path (v. 3). Jesus said "I am the way," If one follows Him, one will not get lost (John 14:6)
- He rescues and protects one (v. 4). The shepherd's crook is a long stick that is curved at one end, like a hook. This is used to pull sheep that move away or fall into holes and get trapped. It also serves to defend sheep from wild animals. Jesus rescues one when one is in trouble and difficulty, and He also pulls one back into the flock if one is straying. He also defends one from the enemy's attacks.
- He encourages and gives one strength (vs. 3-4). Christ cares for one and one should not be afraid.

It is wonderful to know that the shepherd gave His life for one (John 10:1-2, 11). There is no greater act of love than the one Jesus did for humanity! He gave His life in payment for humanity's sins, and now everyone can have eternal life.

3. A Flock and a Shepherd

Although there are many pastors in the world, there is a pastor who is perfect and who guides them in their work; Jesus, the good shepherd. In the same way, although there are many local churches throughout the world, all Christians belong to a single flock. In this flock there are those who know Jesus and follow Him only; when they hear His voice and obey him, they have salvation and eternal life.

Review/Application: Allow time for the students to match the word in the first column with the correct match in the second column: in the first column appear the concepts that have been studied in class and in the second what they represent.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| A. Flock | (B) Physical food and the Word of God to grow and mature in faith |
| B. Food & Sustenance | (F) They are the ones who neither listen nor follow Jesus. |
| C. Rod & Staff | (E) The Holy Spirit guides us to follow Jesus. |
| D. Gate | (A) Group of people who know Jesus, believe in him, listen to his voice and follow him. |
| E. Path | (G) Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and give us eternal life. |
| F. Lost Sheep | (D) Jesus is the only door to salvation. |
| G. Give Life | (C) The good shepherd rescues us from danger and protects us from the enemy. |

Challenge: Is God calling you to be one of the shepherds of his flock? Or does He want you to be the voice that calls out to the lost sheep? In flocks, the more experienced sheep also help guide others. Do you help the little ones in the faith within your congregation? If you have not already done so, put yourself at the service of your church, whether it is to help, teach, accompany, or advise others. And remember the model of Jesus.

Objective: For the students to understand that as a child of God, they are in the world but not of the world.

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

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Instructions:** Once everyone is in the class room, dramatically choose just a few young people. Separate them from the rest of the group and tell them something secretly or give them a treat and congratulate them. Let the rest of the group complain about the special treatment that the “chosen” received. Then regroup them and ask them how the “chosen” felt about having received special treatment. Ask others how they felt about not being chosen.

The Bible says that we are God’s chosen people. (Give everyone else a treat.)

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk or equivalent.
- **Instructions:** Ask students to list things they are careful about when making choices (examples: party clothes, shoes, boyfriends). Write the results on the board. Then ask them to rank each item by giving a number from 1 to 5. The 5 means that they are extremely careful when choosing that item. The 1 means they are not so careful.

In life there are many things to choose from. God chose a very special people and gave them a unique task.

God, in His perfect plan, chose a very special people, the Israelites. They were taken out of slavery and separated from other peoples. God asked them not to do anything they saw in Egypt or what they saw in other pagan nations that were around them (Leviticus 18:1-5). Ask: Why did God ask His people to turn away from the things done by others? Why did God want to keep them in the midst of the culture of that time but make them different? God asked this so that the people would stay under His direction and commandments and not turn away after other false gods and beliefs. A lot learn from the people of Israel. Christians have to live in the midst of this world and its cultures. Ask: What should our attitude be about this? How should we behave? Should we assimilate/adapt to the current culture or should we be different? Would it not be easier if we were completely separated from this world and form a completely “Christian” community? God’s people have been called to live in this world, but not to be part of this world. 1 Peter 2: 9 helps one understand: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellences of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (NASB1995).

This is how this verse, 1 Peter 2:9, applies.

1. Chosen People

People: “a group of persons related by common descent or heredity; a group of tribes or peoples forming an ethnic lineage;” (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/race?s=t>).

Ask students to think about how wonderful it would be to be the descendant of a hero or famous person. Although Christians come from different ancestors and countries, their spiritual race is the same. Through Jesus they have been adopted into the family of faith (Ephesians 1:5 and Galatians 4:4-5). They are now part of a “chosen people”, their behavior and conduct must honor the faith of the family. In the daily walk, at school, at work or in the market, they must represent the family faith well with attitudes and actions.

2. Royal Priesthood

Royal Priesthood: In Revelation 1:5b-6, it is written that believers are priests, but not in the way of the Old Testament priests, whose function was to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus Christ came to this world to be the High Priest and bear the sins of the world once and for all, thereby opening direct access to God (Hebrews 10:19-22). In 1 Peter 2:4-5, the priestly role is to offer spiritual sacrifices. Ask: How is this? The primary role as spiritual priests is to live lives that honor and serve God, thereby bringing others closer to God. Service to God extends to one’s attitude towards other people.

3. Holy Nation

Holy Nation: God is looking for a holy people (Exodus 19:5-6). Leviticus 11:45 says “I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.” God is holy and wants his people to be holy. The life of holiness is completely opposite to what this world demands. Holiness has an effect on this world. When God’s people go against the current of the world and walk in the holiness of God, creation is liberated. Sin and evil lose their hold on people and salvation is inevitable. Romans 8:19-22 says that creation itself is waiting for its freedom. People of God begin to walk in holiness!

4. A People chosen by God

God not only chose and He paid a great price for mankind as His people. John 3:16 says that God gave His most special treasure for the human race, His son Jesus Christ. He redeemed mankind from sins (Ephesians 1:7), saved and gave him eternal life. It is no wonder the psalmist asked: “What is mankind...?” (Psalm 8:4) Why mankind? Why does God put so much energy and effort into mere human beings?

In His infinite grace, God chose to pour out his love on mankind. The response to this love should be one of gratitude and proclamation, and the desire should be to share this good news with everyone.

As young Christians, you need to understand that we live in this world, but aren’t of this world. God chose us as his people; he adopted us and made part of his family. We’re of a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people chosen by God to “proclaim the excellences of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). God does not want Christians to seclude ourselves in a holy community, physically cut off from the world. God wants Christians to reflect Him to the world, to practice the royal priesthood in spiritual sacrifices for our neighbors, to be a holy nation that impacts creation, and finally, because of God’s great love with which He chose His people, to proclaim to the whole world the great virtues of God.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to respond to the following:

1. What things do you still do that belong to the world?
2. What things of the world have you stopped doing?

Challenge:

It is important that application/doing follows what has been learned. As priests, we have been called to offer spiritual sacrifices. Make a list of ways you can offer spiritual sacrifices to God. Pick something from the list that you will focus on next week. Find a classmate and pray with him or her and ask God for help in this spiritual sacrifice that you are going to offer God. When you meet them in the next class, you should be prepared to share your experiences.

Objective: That students understand that the church is a community of believers who recognize Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Memory Verse: "...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, ..." 1 Peter 2:5a

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Papers and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Write the word "CHURCH" on the board in large letters. Put the papers on a table for them to grab one. Then have each student write their definition of church on their piece of paper and post it on the board. Read the definitions, and at the end, explain that in the lesson they will have more biblical insight about the Church than what they have written down.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard, tape, paper and pencil.
- **Instructions:** Form and assign each group a letter of the word "CHURCH" and have them write a phrase referring to the activity that God asks of a church. Then highlight the fact that by working together, the students will see progress in their spiritual life, just as they did during the project. In this lesson, there are some factors that show the privilege of being part of the family of God, which is the church.

From the beginning in God's mind was the desire to have fellowship with humanity, but sadly, sin thwarted that initial plan. Then, God sought a way to restore communion with mankind; for that he sent an intercessor: Jesus Christ. Today, thanks to Christ, human beings have the privilege of being able to belong to the family of God.

Ephesus was a city belonging to the Roman Empire; today it is located in western Turkey. The apostle Paul visited that city in passing at the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19). However, he planned to stay there for a time during his third missionary trip (Acts 19).

When he arrived in Ephesus, it was not easy for him to preach the Gospel in that port city. He ended up staying there for about three years until he managed to plant and organize the church. It is very likely that he stayed in Ephesus longer than in other place. Then he left young Timothy as the pastor.

After a few years, the apostle sent a letter to the church in Ephesus (Ephesians 2:11-22). In it, he outlined in various sections the role of the church of Christ. He began by describing who makes up the church and what its purpose is. The church of Christ is everyone who recognizes Christ as a personal savior. To explain how to become part of Christ's church, Paul first taught what the church is not, what the church is, and then what its dynamics are.

1. What the church is not

According to the Old Testament, the only people of God were the people of Israel because of their history and covenants. However in this letter Paul, implied the universality of the Gospel by affirming that everyone who received Christ in their life automatically and by grace became part of the people of God, the spiritual Israel which is the church (v. 19).

2. What the church is

Paul's intention to help believers understand that citizenship goes beyond simply believing in physical citizenship. He leads believers understand that a believer's citizenship is spiritual and makes one a partaker of the homeland of the saints (Ephesians 2:11-14). The apostle explains the privileges of a child of God, belonging to a heavenly nation because one has become a fellow citizen with the saints (v. 19). The good news that believers are very special to God. Believers have earned that privilege through The Lord Jesus Christ; "For it's by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God..." (Ephesians 2:8).

3. The dynamics of who we are

In Ephesians 2:19-22 there are three special purposes that must be taken into account within the dynamic as God's people.

A. A building dynamic

All the members need to build one another spiritually on the biblical foundation (v. 20).

Build through:

- the talents, gifts and ministries that God has given the church. Paul mentions five ministries that serve to edify: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- love (Ephesians 4:16), wise encouraging words (Ephesians 4:29), and the teachings inherited from the prophets and apostles and that are in the Word (Ephesians 2:20).

Like all the buildings in a city that are built on large rocks or strong foundations, likewise, the church has only one foundation, which is Christ (Ephesians 2:20), the immovable Rock.

B. A dynamic of coordination

This has to do with the attitudes of unity that must exist among church members. When a bricklayer wants to build a wall, he does not put brick on brick only; this would be illogical. He uses the mortar or cement paste in-between the bricks. In chapter 4 of Ephesians, Paul teaches that unity is important and gives four essential attitudes to keep members together as mortar on the bricks: Humility, meekness, tolerance and patience, and all this must be grounded in the love of God. (v. 2).

C. A growth dynamic

Unity not only keeps members together but also gives spiritual growth. The Christian life is not about monotony, but about well-structured growth (Ephesians 4:15). The church is called to grow in number and quality, but above all it must be concerned with its spiritual quality growth. The outstanding characteristic of its growth is in the love that it practices. As the church grows in quality, it will to grow in number.

Review/Application:

Ask you students to answer the following questions:

1. Where was Ephesus located and where is it now?
2. What is the church built on? (On the foundation of Jesus Christ, the rock, with the pillars established by the Bible written by the prophets and apostles.)
3. According to Ephesians 4:2, what are the four basic attitudes to keep us united and coordinated? (Humility, meekness, tolerance and patience)

Challenge:

It would be nice to ask yourself where or what you are? Do you feel like a stranger and nobody? I implore you to be part of the privileged who sit at the Lord's table as family members. If you are already a part of this family, share that this week with someone you think moved away from the family a while ago.

Objective: That students understand the figure of the priesthood and the responsibility of the church to exercise the priestly function.

Memory Verse: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” Hebrews 4:15

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Instructions:** Divide the class into two or more groups and have each one write a list of characteristics that they have observed in a Catholic priest. Some students may not have seen a Catholic priest; in this case, have them make a list of the characteristics they have observed in their pastor. Afterwards, have them share what they wrote with the whole group. Give them time to ask questions, which will give you the opportunity to answer some and then announce the title of the lesson, telling them that the other questions will be answered in the course of the lesson.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Perform a drama of the moment. Provide yourself with a priestly tunic and collar; a tie and a basket. Ask the class to choose who will dress up as a priest and another as a pastor. Have them put on the clothes and then distribute sheets of paper to everyone else. Have them write something for the priest or pastor. Receive the papers in the basket. Once everyone has deposited their papers, take them out one by one and give them to the “priest” and the “pastor”, who will then read them to the whole class. It will surely generate discussion and questions, an ideal time to announce the title of the lesson and then develop it.

There are different nations in the world. On many occasions, there are wars between two or more nations. When the situation permits, mediators or a mediator are used. Generally, the UN secretary general, the presidents of the most powerful nations, the pope or other famous people are mediators. In some countries, there are Conciliation offices, which are centers for the solution of family and neighborhood conflicts, etc. Many human conflicts are resolved with mediators or conciliators.

1. The Human Priests

There are priests in all religions. In Old Testament times in Israel, the separation between human beings and God required mediators; these were called priests (Hebrews 5:1-4).

A. What were the priests of Israel like?

Read Hebrews 5:1-4 and list characteristics of Jewish priests.

- **Verse One:** they were to act on behalf of men and women; their relationship with God was special; they presented offerings and sacrifices for the sins of the people.
- **Verse Two:** they were patient, especially with the ignorant and lost; they recognized that they (the priests) were human beings with weaknesses.
- **Verse Three:** they had to offer sacrifices for their own sins; they had to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people.
- **Verse Four:** amongst the Jewish people, a priest was called by God. Exodus 28:1 says that it was God who ordained Aaron and his sons to be his priests for the people of Israel.

B. Other characteristics of the Israelite priesthood

The Old Testament offers a lot of teaching about priests. Take a look at the following:

God chose Aaron and his sons to be mediators between God and the people of Israel (Ex. 28:1); they had to avoid hairstyles and tattoos that threaten the integrity and purity of their bodies (Leviticus 21:5); they were supported by the people through offerings, tithes, first fruits and other rights that God himself established (Numbers 18:8-32).

2. Christ: the perfect high Priest

Have a look at some of the characteristics of Jesus as High Priest:

Through Christ, Christians are cared for (Hebrews 4:14-16): because He is the Son of God, divine and human at the same time (v. 14). He knows human weakness and the closeness to God; hence He can lead those who follow Him to please God (v. 15a); He went through all human experiences, especially temptations (v. 15b). The hardest and most difficult temptations were endured by the Lord as a man. Jesus Christ is unique, He is eternal; the Aaronic priests were many, because they were not eternal (7 vv. 22-24); the redemption He offers is eternal (7 v. 24);

He permanently intercedes for His followers (7 v. 25); He is holy, innocent, without blemish, and set apart from sinners. We summarize the above in the expression: "...one who is holy, blameless, pure" (vv. 26,28); He does not need to offer sacrifices for sins every day because he has already offered a perfect and eternal sacrifice (v. 27). In short, the Aaronic priesthood was imperfect, it was a predecessor of the priesthood of Christ. This priesthood was necessary until the sacrifice of Christ, but when Christ died, rose again, and ascended to heaven, he became the perfect, permanent and faithful High Priest who intercedes permanently.

3. Christians are priests too

1 Peter 2:4-9 states the following:

A. The Christian priesthood

The Bible affirms that believers in Christ are also priests because believers offer daily offerings and sacrifices of praise and adoration to the Lord, either personally or in the church community (Hebrews 13:15) and intercede before the Lord through prayer. Intercession is done for family members, the sick, etc., and especially for sinners, because we love them and want them to repent (Philippians 1:4; Colossians 4:12); believers are called to dedicate total lives to God and live in holiness. An Aaronic priest had to be holy. Christ our High Priest was and is perfectly holy; that is why today's priests have to be holy, totally consecrated to the Lord (1 Peter 1:15-16).

B. The purpose of priesthood

God is to be served every day of a believer's life, in all aspects, with everything one has, without losing faith or imitating the world. Christ calls believers to serve Him daily in holiness and righteousness, to be intercessors for unbelievers so that they may believe and are saved.

Review/Application:

Have your students answer the following questions:

What was the priesthood like in Old Testament times according to Hebrews 5:1-4? What truths about the priesthood of Christ do you find in Hebrews 7:22-28? How do you feel knowing that you are a priest?

Challenge:

Through Facebook, text, WhatsApp or other social media, send your friends a great gift: 1 Peter 2:5, 9,10. Try to send it to at least ten friends. Do it Monday and Tuesday. And then on Thursday and Friday invite them to your youth group.

Objective: To encourage students to think about the privilege and responsibility of being members of the church.

Memory Verse: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” 1 Corinthians 12:7

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Small pictures of the human body with the names of the parts (you can find them in a human biology book, at a bookstore, or online), newspaper, permanent markers.
- **Instructions:** Organize the students into three groups, give them a sheet of newspaper and a marker. Have them appoint a coordinator and a secretary. Ask them to draw a human body without naming the parts, and then lead them in answering the following questions:
 1. According to the teaching of the apostle Paul, what does this body symbolize?
 2. How many members is the body made up of?
 3. How important is the unity of the body?
 4. Can we, as Christians say that we do not need other members of the body? Why?
 5. Use biblical or church terminology and name the body parts you drew according to the different ministries they have in the church (Example: leader, deacon, etc.).

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Paper with the following verses printed on them.
- **Instructions:** Organize the students into two groups. Direct each group to choose a moderator and a secretary. Have them read the printed Bible verses and complete the following:
 - Matthew 16:18. The founder of the church is _____.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:12. The body is _____, the body has many _____ all the parts form one _____
 - Ephesians 1:22. The head of the church is _____.
 - Ephesians 5:24. The church is subject to _____.
 - Ephesians 5:27. The church is _____.
 - Colossians 1:18. Paul uses the figure of _____ to refer to the church.
 - 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul also uses another figure, the _____, to refer to the church.

The Christian church is the living organism that Jesus Christ founded and is made up of all the people who have surrendered their lives to the Lord. “The church of God is made up of all spiritually regenerated people, whose names are written in heaven” So, it is of capital importance to know it and to know that each member has a function to perform.

Belonging to the church of Jesus Christ is a powerful experience in each person’s life. To feel part of it is to be sure that God reached one by his grace and granted one salvation through His blessed son Jesus Christ. The book of the Acts of the Apostles says that “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47). So one is in the Lord’s church, not by chance or by human will but by the sovereign action of God. He called, forgave and incorporated each one into the glorious body of Christ.

1. Being a member of the church is a privilege

Privilege is the grace granted by a superior to a person. In this case, God has bestowed a great blessing of belonging to His church. So the members must be happy, motivated and grateful to belong to the most important and impactful organization in the world. The privileges and blessings enjoyed by joining the church of Jesus Christ are very sacred and precious. In it is a communion so holy that it cannot be experienced in any other way.”

2. Being a member of the church implies responsibility

To speak of responsibilities is to speak of the duties that the members of the church must fulfill.

A. Contribute to the unity of the church

It is imperative for all members of the church to live and work harmoniously. Divisions within the church are not God’s will and have always damaged the church’s witness to a divided world (Ephesians 4:2-3). Believers are called to foster unity and fellowship within the Lord’s church. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 there is a teaching and illustration about the unity of the church and the various functions, activities, and gifts that members have.

B. Building the church

In a strict and absolute sense, Jesus Christ is the one who builds His church. But in a relative and secondary sense, each member of the church contributes to its edification with their good testimony, work and use of their gifts and talents. All members must do their best to build up others and not harm the Lord’s church.

C. Value and not belittle other members of the body

Members must be supportive, compassionate, merciful and understanding attitude towards other members of the church. Paul took a further step forward when he told the Philippian brethren to regard others as superior to themselves (Philippians 2:3-4).

D. Sustain the ministry

God’s method of sustaining His work on this earth is through tithes and offerings. Church members should tithe and give generously as God prospers them (Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

3. Being a member of the church is having opportunities to serve

The highest vocation, and at the same time the most humble that all members of the church have, is that of service. It is about the action of serving God and neighbor.

Review/Application:

Organize your students into two groups. Ask them to read the Bible verses and match the teaching with the correct verse.

Bible Verse	Teaching
1. 1 Corinthians 12:12	Not looking to our own interests, but the interests of others. (7)
2. 1 Corinthians 12:14	God has placed the parts in the body, just as he wants them to be. (3)
3. 1 Corinthians 12:18	Members (parts) have equal concern for each other. (4)
4. 1 Corinthians 12:25	The body has many parts (members). (2)
5. 1 Corinthians 12:26	We are the body of Christ and each one is a part (member) of it. (6)
6. 1 Corinthians 12:27	The many parts (members) form one body. (1)
7. Philippians 2:4	If one member (part) suffers or rejoices, they all suffer or rejoice. (5)

Challenge:

If you are a member of the church, make sure you know your privileges and responsibilities. If you are not already a member of the church, talk to your pastor about the steps to take. Mention the names of those who missed class today and plan to visit them during the week to find out the reasons they did not come to church; pray for them and encourage them to continue serving the Lord.

Objective: That students understand the kind of love God wants us to love our friends with.

Memory Verse: "...but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk (or equivalent), masking tape, newspaper or magazine clippings, colored markers to write on the paper.
- **Instructions:** Write the following on the board or on a large piece of paper: At the top, "best friend"; in the middle, "good friend"; and at the bottom, "bad friend." Then hand out the magazines or newspapers to the students and ask them what things make a person your best friend. Give them some ideas like these: They might like soccer or video games, watch movies or read, laugh or be serious. Afterwards, ask each one of them to find a clipping and paste it near a phrase on the board or paper if they consider that the illustration corresponds to a bad, good or best friend. After everyone has pasted at least one thing, invite students to put themselves in their friends' shoes with this question: "If your friends had to rate you, would they think you were a good friend?"

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk or large sheets of paper (one per team) and colored markers.
- **Instructions:** Divide the class into teams; If the students are few, pair up or do the activity in a group. Then ask: If there was a recipe for making friends, what would it be? Next, using the input of each member of their teams, they should write and present a five-step recipe that allows anyone to make friends.

We all like to have friends, and the more friends the better. The Bible gives us the key to having friends.

Ask: Imagine for a moment that you could make a single wish and it was granted. What would you wish for? Surely, something that you have longed for all your life and that you want to last forever. Jesus had such a wish before He was handed over and crucified: He prayed to the Father, asking that His disciples, including those who believe in Him today, would unite with one another in love (John 17:20-21).

To see Jesus' wish fulfilled, there are only two options: The first is that we wait for others to come to us to offer us their friendship; but we would have to wait a long time for this to happen. The other option is that each of us be the one who takes the initiative to reach out to others to befriend them. If all of us take this attitude, unity will be a reality. Jesus gave us the key to achieve it; read it in John 15:12-13. Read it in the versions available in class.

1. A new commandment

On one occasion, a teacher of the law approached Jesus to ask what he had to do to inherit eternal life and the answer is to love God and one's neighbors (Luke 10:26-28). Does it not seem strange that Jesus' command was to love one another? It could be considered contradictory that God tells us to love others; is not love supposed to be a free choice?

For God, it is important that we not only love Him, but also love our neighbors, and that includes those who are our friends and those who are not. Jesus himself wanted to teach this very important principle in the kingdom of God. Thus, during his Last Supper, the Lord gave his disciples a command, a new commandment (John 15:12).

2. The best example of love

Christ lived his life as the best example of love for one's friends. When Jesus gave the command to His disciples, He said to love each other in the same way that He had loved them (John 15:12b).

Here are five principles of his love.

- a. The Lord loved us first (1 John 4:19). This teaches that we are the ones who should begin to love others regardless of whether or not they show interest in loving us.
- b. He came to serve (Matthew 20:28). Jesus teaches that instead of seeking to use our friends, we are the ones who must be available to them and offer ourselves for their benefit.
- c. He made himself equal to us (Philippians 2:7). We must put ourselves in the shoes of our friends, feel what they feel, know what interests them, rejoice for what makes them happy.
- d. He forgave us (Luke 23:34a). The Lord teaches us to forgive wholeheartedly.
- e. He brought us closer to God (Ephesians 2:13). Thanks to Christ, we can draw closer to God. In the same way, we must help our friends come closer to God.

God promises to be with us to guide and help us do the things we cannot. At first it will cost us work, and frankly, we can never love as perfectly as Christ. But little by little, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will learn and mature in our friendship relationships.

3. Show yourself a friend

What a great privilege we have! Loving our friends in the same way that Jesus loved us is a great joy. But it also requires that we strive to achieve it.

One of the principles of Jesus' love is initiative; this means that we have the opportunity to show this kind of love to our friends before they do. We must remember that we can sincerely tell them that we love them, but it is always better to show them with actions that we really do.

Loving our friends is something relatively easy because they are people we like. However, Jesus said that anyone can love those who love him, but only God's children can love their enemies (Matthew 5:38-48). Having friends is very important in your development as an adolescent and youth. And it is also important to God, because He teaches us to love our neighbor regardless of whether we like them or if they hurt us. The Lord wants us to love each other so much that he gave us the example of his Son as our role model. Just as Jesus did, we can take the first step in showing love to our friends, or in reaching out to those who do not seem to love us. In this way, we will live as true children of God.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to answer the following questions, and then share their answers with the class. When it comes to making friends, what is the hardest thing for you to do? What is difficult for you in establishing a new friendship relationship? How could you change or improve that?

Challenge:

Unity in love is extremely important for the spiritual growth of the church. Think of a classmate of yours or someone you know who goes to church but you have not considered them in your circle of friends. Take the initiative and approach them to become their friend. Follow Jesus' example and show them that you want to reflect God's love in your life.

Objective: That students understand that as followers of Christ, each must learn to tolerate others and not be quick to get angry.

Memory Verse: “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” James 1:19

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Give a sheet of paper and a pencil to each student. Then, ask them to make a table with three columns, and tell them that in each column they are to write down the following titles respectively: Things I could not forgive; Types of people that I do not tolerate; things that make me angry.

This is an awareness-raising activity that sets the frame for the class and helps the teacher introduce the topic of tolerance.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years).

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Give a sheet of paper and a pencil to each student. Then ask the students to answer the following questions with the first thing that comes to mind.
 1. What has been done to you that you consider impossible to forgive?
 2. What kind of people is it difficult for you to be around, and why?
 3. When a person who has offended you tries to apologize, what attitude do you have?
 4. Have you apologized to someone for something you have said or done? How did that person respond?

Allow about five minutes for the students to respond and another five for them to share their responses. It is suggested that no corrections be made while students share their responses. With the development of the lesson, students will expand their answers.

Tolerance is a basic need for human coexistence. But cultural, ideological, social, political, gender and creed differences cause frictions that, when not treated with love and respect, tend to end in arguments, divisions and anger.

Ask: What does the Bible recommend for resolving conflicts? How can one cope with the differences one has with others? The Bible gives some clues in this regard that will be analyzed in this lesson.

1. Key #1: listen before you speak

James reminds his readers to be ready to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19). When a conflict arises, people often express their version of events and take for granted that “their” version is “the” right version. A few consider asking others first what happened. Few really want to know the motives behind the actions that sparked the argument. The figure of the conflict mediator arises as a necessity to try to settle disputes between two parties, trying to make them heard and reach an agreement. According to the Association of Mediators for the Elderly and their Environment (AMNE), a mediator seeks effective communication between the two parties, understand the needs and interests of the other, and clarify situations that may have been overlooked, among other points (Consulted June 28, 2014 from <http://amme-mediacion.org/funciones-del-mediador/>).

To achieve this, it is essential to know how to listen. The other person also has a version and wants to be heard. Probably in the problem in question, there are circumstances that others do not know. It could be that the conflict happened because of cultural or social differences or misunderstandings. In this regard, the recommendation of James in 1:19 is clear: Listen before you speak. This implies being willing to let the other speak first. But, what happens when “the offended” is so angry that they do not want to listen to the other, or even see them?

2. Key #2: Beware of Anger

“...human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” says James 1:20. There is a popular phrase that says: “He who gets angry loses.” When people get angry, they get confused, and say and do things that they later regret. Unfortunately, some of those actions or words have irreversible consequences. Acting while angry can lead to outbursts that end in offenses, physical assaults, or immoral acts.

Ask: Are there any groups of people who are especially difficult for you to deal with? Why is it so difficult for you to put up with that group of people? How much do you know about them? Do you know their history, their problems, the reasons that lead them to act, dress, speak in that way?

Is there an attitude that you do not tolerate? Can you think of any legitimate reason for that attitude that you dislike?

A common way of explaining this is “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes”, but when people are angry they are unable to do so. Therefore, before letting anger cloud understanding, one must seek to understand the reasons that lead others to act as they do.

Colossians 3:8 says: “But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language...” If one acts out of anger, one will most likely act irrationally, and far from fixing the problem, this will only add fuel to the fire. So when one feels so angry that one cannot control the situation, it is time to ask the Holy Spirit to help one and fill one with love.

3. Key #3: clothe yourself in love

Colossians 3:12-14 says: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of

you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

It is impossible to tolerate your neighbor if there is no love. The apostle Paul knew that differences between people cause great divisions. That is why he recommended that the Colossians love each other, be kind to each other, and be patient. In order to cope despite differences, one must above all clothe oneself with love. And when the love of God fills one, one is able to forgive offenses, to be patient and listen before speaking.

Of course, it is not about allowing oneself to be disrespected or hurt, but rather about allowing oneself to be filled by the Spirit of God and allowing him to work in one, in order for one to respond with love and patience to difficult situations. The last part of verse 13 puts the finger on the wound: “Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Ouch!

“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds

and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12). When God’s people clothe themselves in love, God is glorified.

Review/Application:

According to the Bible verses used in class, answer the following:

1. What should you do among unbelievers? (1 Peter 2:12).
2. What should everyone be ready for? (James 1:19).
3. Why should they clothe themselves with compassion, humility, kindness and patience? (Colossians 3:12-13).
4. What does anger not produce? (James 1:20).
5. What is the perfect bond? (Colossians 3:14).

Challenge:

During the week, think about some people who are difficult to tolerate or with whom you have had a conflict. Pray this week for those people or that situation and ask God to give you love to approach them and/ or give them the opportunity to explain what happened. Your youth leader or another adult may need to mediate.

Objective: That students learn to face conflicts with friends wisely.

Memory Verse: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”
Romans 12:18

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Pictures of piranha fish or shark on paper, tape or something else to make the sides of the river, materials to transport of various sizes and weights, ropes to cross the river with.
- **Instructions:** Divide the class into two groups. Explain that they have to cross a river full of flesh-eating piranhas/sharks and transport certain merchandise from one shore to the other, but the only way to do it is by crossing the river (which will be shown using the tape) on the ropes. Remind them to keep their balance on the way over while transporting the material to the other shore, and on the way back when they return to look for new materials (always staying on the rope). There may be several paths to cross (place multiple ropes), but the only rule for doing so is that they must not take their feet off the rope while crossing the river. Everyone has to get to the opposite shore carrying material. Each member of the group will transport their chosen material and place it where indicated. If the place where they meet is large, both groups can do it simultaneously, or one group at a time.

This dynamic will end when everyone has passed over the river, or if there are few students, when each group has transported everything assigned to the other shore.

When finished, ask: Which materials were the easiest to transport? Did you help others get across? Did you feel anger or frustration at any time? If you did it again, would you do it the same way?

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years)

- **Materials:** A list of 10 materials necessary to be rescued on the moon, and which must be hidden somewhere in the enclosure.
- **Instructions:** Divide the class into two groups. Tell one of the groups that they should read the list of materials lost on the moon, first individually, and then as a group. Then they must make a list and decide which of the five materials will be rescued.

Tell the second group that they will observe the following characteristics of the group that is playing:

- People in the group who lead the meeting.
- People whose comments are ignored.
- How the group makes decisions.
- Observe the atmosphere of the meeting (positive atmosphere, possible verbal aggressions, etc.). The second group in general must observe the difficulties that the group has in reaching an agreement.

At the end of the exercise, with the whole group together, reflect on the results obtained and observed. This dynamic is a technique to see how the group works together, the interaction that occurs, how conflict is detected and dealt with, roles, etc.

Conflicts between people are frequent and are part of daily reality. Going through conflicts with friends, schoolmates or perhaps with the family, can be a frustrating experience and can sometimes be emotionally destabilizing because of lack of knowledge on how to deal with them.

In this lesson, the issue of conflict will be dealt with and how to direct conflicts towards a healthy experience that allows one to grow in the Christian relationships.

1. What is conflict?

Conflict occurs when two or more values, perspectives or opinions are contradictory by nature or cannot be reconciled; or it when the pursuit of objectives are incompatible by different people or groups. So conflict can occur when one's values and perspectives are threatened. It also occurs in violent or non-violent processes of social change when there are different positions in groups that try to work together, but find themselves unable to reach an agreement between the parties that are debating an issue, and finally try to impose their criteria over another or others. Everyone knows where this situation ends.

2. Facing conflicts wisely

Ask: How does God wants one to deal with conflict? Follow some guidelines below.

One of the first things to consider in times of conflict is establishing a relationship of love and trust with God as your primary relationship (James 4:1-10). The Bible constantly emphasizes that the key to success in relationships with other people is a successful relationship with God. Therefore, failure in relationship with others is a symptom of an absent or deficient relationship with God (vs. 6-10).

The God of the Bible is the only one who can meet one's need for security, direction, purpose, forgiveness, etc. He is both loving and sovereign. (Romans 15:1-2; Galatians 5:13-16; Ephesians 4:22-26). Something very important is how one loves others instead of how they love one (James 3:17-18). It is vital to focus not on what cannot be controlled (how others treat us), but on what can be controlled (how one treats others). As one does this, God's Spirit guarantees one His peace, hope, and joy, even if others do not respond the same way.

3. Growing up in conflict

In 1 Peter 3:8-9, the Apostle Peter presents five key aspects that one can learn to develop in any conflict: (1) Harmony, by seeking the same goals; (2) Compassion, responding to the needs of others; (3) Love, by seeing and treating others as brothers and sisters; (4) Mercy, by being sensitive in affection and interest; and (5) Humility, by seeking to encourage others and rejoice in the triumphs of others.

Another area that one must develop is prayer. Commonly in one's daily relationships, one verbally hurts people or is hurt by them. Peter, recalling Jesus' teachings to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), encouraged believers to respond with prayer on behalf of those who offend them. To avoid conflict, one must resist the tendency to hurt those who hurt one. Instead of reacting angrily, let us pray for those people.

Review/Application:

Ask students to make a list of situations where they may be in conflict with friends. Then ask them to write down what they can do about it. For a better understanding, see the table below that presents two examples.

CONFLICTS	WHAT CAN I DO?
Jealousy	Pray and trust the other person.
Jokes that other people do not like	Ask for forgiveness and do not tell those jokes again.

Challenge:

Think about the attitudes or personality traits that cause conflict with your friends. Make the decision to change and pray to God in the days to come for help. Then share your progress in our next class.

Objective: That students understand the importance of bringing their friends to Christ.

Memory Verse: “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus ...” John 1:45

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Index cards with the Bible verses from the instructions section printed on them.
- **Instructions:** Organize the students into small groups of three, and give them the index cards with the Bible verses on them (Job 2:11; Proverbs 17:17; Proverbs 18:24; Proverbs 27:10; Matthew 18:19; John 15:13; John 15:14). Ask them to read the verses and write on their paper what they discover about friendship from the verses. Have each group share what their discoveries with the class.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Index cards and pencils; Blackboard and chalk or large sheet of paper and markers.
- **Instructions:** Ask the students to sit in a semicircle. Then distribute the index cards and pencils. Ask them to write the meaning of the word “friend”. When they are finished, ask them to share what they wrote. Then write on the board (or large sheet of paper) the definitions that you consider most relevant. Give the students time to discuss and give their opinions.

Generally, one talk about everything with friends: work, celebrations, concerns and seek together some solutions to certain problems. However, there is are opportunities to speak to them about Jesus Christ and His blessed Word. At times, one may be hesitant or perhaps afraid to tell them about Jesus because one is not sue how they will react; but despite everything, it is one’s duty to do so. Today, friendship will be discussed in the light of John 1:35-51.

1. Jesus Christ loves our friends

One’s friends are part of the human race whom the Lord Jesus loves and wants to reach with His saving power. All people are included in His love and grace, for God loves them and wants to transform them.

If one’s friends do not know Jesus, they are slaves of sin and need to be free (John 8:34). No matter what condition they are in (vices, theft, sexual immorality, wickedness), the Lord loves them just as they are and has all the power to set them free.

The weight of sin that Jesus bore on His body and Spirit while hanging on the cross was also for them. There was the blessed Redeemer, bathing the tree of Golgotha with his blood, thus providing the effective remedy for the sins of all.

The apostle John in his first letter says it like this: “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2).

The Lord knows that if one’s friends continue on their current path, they are heading for eternal damnation. Without Jesus Christ, there is no way to obtain salvation (Romans 3:23-24).

2. Friends should seek and follow Jesus Christ

A. They need to hear about Him

John, an apostle of the Lord, recorded John the Baptist's powerful statement about Jesus (John 1:36). Two of his disciples heard the powerful words, and as a result they decided to follow Jesus (v. 37). Ask: What does it mean to follow Jesus? It means denying oneself and allowing the Lord to occupy the first place in One's life; it is being willing to suffer for Him and abandon everything in order to continuously offer Him love and faithfulness. Ask: What does it mean for me today to deny myself? (Luke 14:26-27).

B. They need to do an honest search

Friends need to be aware and convinced of their need for God and to undertake their search sincerely and urgently. They also need to know that if they seek him, they will find him, for the Holy Spirit will help them. This is part of the ministry that He performs (John 16:8). When Jesus saw that the two disciples of John the Baptist were following him (John 1:35-42), he asked them: "What do you want?" (v. 38). Their answers showed that they were not looking for things, but for a person. The two disciples wanted to know Jesus and be with Him (John 1:39).

C. You need to share it with others

The Gospel according to John mentions one of the men who heard John the Baptist became a disciple of Jesus, and later became an apostle. This indicates that the work of John the Baptist was not a vain person. He prepared the man to follow Jesus. This is an example of productive discipleship. Andrew began his ministry of sharing Jesus with others. He started in his own home with one of his closest relatives (John 1:41). Andrew gave the message to his brother, but also, "he brought him to Jesus." The Lord looked at him with love and changed his name to Cephas, that is, Peter (v. 42).

3. Our friends need our help

Jesus met Philip and invited him to follow him (John 1:43). Next step, Philip proceeded to share his faith. Nathanael was the person with whom He spoke and communicated the good news. The person He was talking about was exactly the one the Scriptures were talking about (v. 45). Philip had to deal with the skepticism of Nathanael who was not easily convinced but Philip was not discouraged; he invited his friend to come see for himself (v.46-49).

So, the greatest and best good we can do for our friends is to share Christ with them.

Review/Application: Organize the students into small groups and have them read the following scriptures: Job 2:11; Proverbs 17:17; 27:10; John 15: 13. Then have them write the scriptures they were given in the left column; and in the right column, the teaching given by each of the passages.

BIBLE VERSE

TEACHING

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| • Job 2:11 | Friends arrive to console and comfort. |
| • Proverbs 17:17 | A friend loves at all times. |
| • Proverbs 27:10 | We must not leave our friends. |
| • John 15:13 | Laying down your life for a friend is the greatest love. |

Challenge:

Find friends and form a visiting group from your local church and go visit your friends, tell them about Christ, and invite them to receive him into their hearts as Savior and Lord. Or you can also write down your ideas on ways to share Jesus with your friends. Tell them to your classmates and start practicing them.

Objective: That students understand that forgiveness is a commandment, not an option.

Memory Verse: "... if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14-15

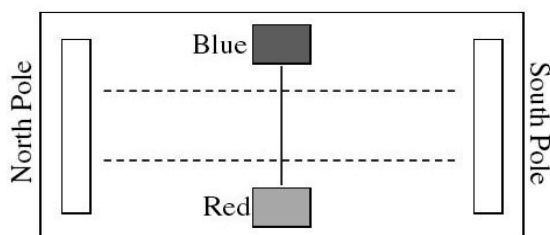
Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Papers, markers, and sticky paper tape.
- **Instructions:** Write opposite words on the paper, but only one word per paper (for example: Love-Hate, Cold-Hot, Refrigerator- Oven, etc.). Then draw a dividing line in the middle of the room and place the papers on a table, mixing them beforehand. Also, with sticky paper tape, make a diagram on the floor like the picture below, and divide the students into two groups. Each group must line up behind the center line (red or blue depending on the team). Then point out that on the count of three, the first person in line for each group should run to the north pole and grab a piece of paper, and immediately afterward, run to the south pole and find the corresponding opposite word (for example, the distribution of words in each pole can be the following: Love, Cold and Refrigerator must go in the north pole. Hate, Hot and Oven must go in the south pole). The first group to find all the opposite words will win.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** A device to play music (radio, Ipod, phone, etc.), soft instrumental music, sheets of paper, and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Prepare the room with a very solemn atmosphere. Then ask students to enter the room silently. When everyone is seated, ask them to reflect on their lives. Ask them if they have ever been hurt or disappointed by another person (be it a boyfriend, a parent, a family member, etc.). Hand out sheets of paper and pencils, and ask them to write down the names of the people who hurt them in a very personal way, and also to write how they felt at the moment of disappointment and how they feel about that person now. Assure them that they will keep those papers and that they will not be read in public.

At the end of class, ask your students to pray to God and forgive these people. Then tell them to put away or tear up the papers as they see fit.



1. Background to Joseph's story

Joseph's parents were Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 37-44). Joseph was his dad's favorite. He had ten half-brothers who sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelites, and he was taken as a slave to Egypt. There he suffered loneliness as he was forced to spend a long time away from his family. He was also the victim of slander and lies, and was imprisoned without cause. Finally, under God's faithfulness, Joseph's life took a turn for the better. Pharaoh had a dream, and Joseph, with God's guidance, interpreted it, and that's how he became the "second-in-command" of all of Egypt. God blessed Joseph, so everything he touched was prosperous. Joseph had to face his feelings of bitterness, desires for revenge, and unforgiveness in order to be able to achieve the fullness of all that God had prepared for him and his descendants.

Like Joseph, everyone has faced difficult times. everyone has been struck by blows of life, many of them coming from loved ones.

2. Forgiveness, a commandment

In the story of Joseph, forgiveness was a noteworthy thing (Genesis 45:1-8). In Genesis 44:18-33 there is evidence of the true repentance by Joseph's brothers. Unlike when they sold Joseph, when they met again they took into account the feelings of their father, Jacob. They had learned their lesson.

Genesis 45:1-2 reveals a powerful truth to us. Joseph did not want to divulge the sin of his brothers in public. Joseph dealt privately with the offense and offered forgiveness to his family members privately. When one has been hurt by others, one has to take into consideration this reaction/step very seriously. These days, it is easy to air the "dirty laundry" of the "brothers and sisters" through social media.

Joseph realized that his brothers were scared when he revealed who he was, and instead of "putting his finger on their sore" and emphasizing the pain and hurt, Joseph asked them to come closer to him (vs. 4-6). It is evident that Joseph had indeed forgiven his brothers. In Genesis 45:7-8 Joseph decided to focus on God's purpose rather than on his pain or feelings of vengeance. So, God gave Joseph the strength to forgive his brothers. Joseph's blameless life in the midst of adversity brought about the fulfillment of God's plan. When the time came to reunite with his family and save them from hunger, Joseph forgave his brothers and made room for God's plan to continue to be fulfilled in the formation and preservation of the people of Israel.

3. How do I offer forgiveness?

Ask: What if the offender is not interested in forgiveness? Remember that you are not forgiving for the other person's welfare only, but forgiving because it is God's commandment and it is necessary for your happiness, spiritual and emotional freedom. Forgiveness is a commandment from God that will bring freedom into your life (Matthew 6:9-15).

Review/Application:

Give the students some time to look up the following verses and write what they say about forgiveness.

1 John 1:9, Ephesians 1:7 (Forgiveness comes from God.) Matthew 18:21-22 (We must forgive); Mark 11:25; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13 (We must forgive as God forgave us.)

Challenge:

Read the Lord's Prayer three times (Matthew 6:9-15). Think about the people who have hurt you. Make a list of the ways you can offer forgiveness.

Now make a list of the people you have hurt. List some things you can do to show them your repentance.

Objective: That students understand that in Jesus Christ is their best friend.

Memory Verse: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Materials:** Newspapers.
- **Instructions:** Place pages of newspaper on the floor. When the students arrive, instruct them to imagine that they are on a ship that has begun to sink and that the newspaper represents boats at sea that can save them. But they have to follow the orders they are given. When they hear “The boats can save 4”, they must stand on the sheets of paper in groups of 4; the people who don’t find a “place in the boats” will “drown.” The number that can be “saved” will vary according to the order given by the one who runs the game (“the boats can save” 3 or 6 or 2... etc).

When you finish the activity, have your students comment on how they felt when they didn’t find a place in the “boat,” or how they felt when they were unable to “save” their friends.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Music player.
- **Instructions:** Invite the students to form two circles (one inside the other) with the same number of people, and ask them to look at each other. Then put on background music. Next, ask them to wave at the person they are facing, say their name, what they like to do, and what they like to eat. Then give the signal for them to turn the circles each in the opposite direction, and then stop. In this way, they will be in front of another person. Then ask them to hug each other and answer the same questions that they answered earlier to the other person. Then have the circles move again, and ask them to greet each other with their feet, then answer the questions. Move circles again, then greet with their elbows, shoulders, etc. In the end, they must give their own applications and conclusions.

Question: How many times do you say, when referring to someone, that he or she is your best friend? Or how many times have you said to someone directly: “You’re my best friend?” Surely numerous times. Having friends is wonderful; it is something special. Friends share with each other: walk together, exchange ideas; and have things in common. But one must bear in mind that friends may fail one at some point, just as one may fails them. One is and will be human, and humans tend to fail. Some people say that “man’s best friend is the dog.” Ask: What do you think? (Allow the students to discuss this.) Today’s lesson is about someone who is a friend whom one can certainly call “my best friend.” Once one has Jesus in our hearts and He becomes the best friend, but one needs to take into account the following aspects.

1. Abide in Him

In John 15:1-17 the result of that close relationship is shown and it is the production of abundant fruit that satisfies the expectation of the Father. Study further what John 15:5 has to say.

Jesus clarifies who He is by saying: “I am the vine,” but he also points out who we are: “you are the branches.” The idea is that we, understanding that we are the branches, do the following:

A. Abide in Christ and He in us

Abiding in Christ is a vital union that exists between Christians and Jesus Christ. The word “abide” means to “remain”, which means “stay.” The fact that the branches are the ones that fall off the vine and the vine remains where it is, shows that Christ never leaves us. But rather it is people who walk away from Him, in other words: the branch falls off. Every Christian is inseparably linked to Christ in all areas of their life. So, obey his Word (it has instructions on how to live); offer Him deep adoration and praise; and submit to His authority. Abiding in Christ is evidence of genuine salvation. People who remain in Christ have genuine faith; they are the ones who will stay, will not withdraw, deny or abandon Christ. The true disciples of Jesus are those who continue to live out what the Word commands (John 8:31).

B. Bear much fruit

By abiding in Him, one will bear much fruit and recognize that without Him one can do nothing of real importance (John 15:5). Just like the branch, one is attached to the vine to bear fruit. One can be a disciple who makes other disciples. This fruit will allow one to speak about Him with freedom and security. If one abide in Him and His words abide in one, one can ask for whatever and it will be done (John 15:7).

2. We will be loved by Him

Christ has a model of love and that model of love is His Father. As His Father loves Him, he loves us (John 17:23-26) and invites us to abide in His love (John 15:9-11). If we abide in Him, His joy will be in us. John 15:13 says: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” It is impressive how Jesus shows Himself as a faithful friend and His love for us.

3. His love is universal

As humanity’s best friend, Christ invites us to love one another as He has loved us (John 15:12). This expression: “Love each other,” translates a verb in the present tense, describing a constant, enduring attitude and action. Jesus not only commands us to love each other, but also specifies the quality of love that must exist between us: “...as I have loved you.”

Christ wants to be humanity’s best friend. He teaches us that the joy of fellowship among believers is one of God’s great gifts.

If our best friend loves humanity, then we must love humans too. We love people because we have known the greatest thing: God’s love. So, we must share Christ, our best friend. That is love!

Make Christ your best friend. He loves you and has shown it by going to the cross for you and for the whole world. I invite you to say today with certainty: “Jesus Christ is faithful to me; He gives me His power. Jesus Christ is my solace, my perfect peace.”

Review/Application:

Ask your students to answer the following questions:

Who is a friend? How should friends be? What is a vine? What are the branches? Mention the qualities of Jesus as your best friend.

Challenge:

During the week, reflect on the type of relationship you have with Jesus, if he really is your best friend and if you stick with him. Likewise, I suggest that you plan a visit to someone this week and share your best friend Jesus with them. God wants to use you for the good of others who need to know him.

Objective: For the students to discover what true friendship is

Memory Verse: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”
John 15:13

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years)

- **Instructions:** Begin by asking the youth how many friends they have on Facebook. Then ask the following questions:
 - Of all your friends on Facebook . . .
 - How many do you talk to regularly?
 - How many of them have you seen more than once?
 - Who would you go to rescue if their car ran out of petrol on the freeway?
 - How many would you donate a kidney to?
 - Would you give your life for some of your Facebook friends?
 - The word “friend” is used very loosely in these days. One often does not have a real awareness of what it means to be a true friend.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Distribute a pencil and paper to each student. Then ask each young person to write two truths and a lie about themselves on the paper. For example: Truths: I was born in Puerto Rico; I grew up in the United States. Lie: I lived in Mexico. When everyone has written them down on their papers, ask each student to read their three sentences. The other students will try to say which of the three sentences is not true.

In these days, people have the tendency of calling someone a “friend” when in reality that person is an “acquaintance”, about whom very little is known. Today, people do not take the time to make themselves known and to plant deep friendships.

However, there are well-known phrases about friendship, such as:

- “Friends are the family you choose.”
- “A friend is one who knows all your faults and loves you despite them.”

1. A Friend

The word “friend” is used very loosely these days. The popularity of social media has caused people classify anyone hardly known as a “friend.” One must stop to analyze in depth the meaning of that word.

Ask: What does the Bible say about friendship? Does the Word of God provide us with an example of true friendship without limits?

In 1 Samuel 18:1 the account of how two young men, Jonathan and David, became friends. They were from two very different “worlds” and they met under unusual circumstances.

Jonathan was born a prince of Israel. His father was King Saul. He was raised in the palace and was exposed to the best teachings and training in the country. As the eldest son, Jonathan was the first in line to inherit the

kinship of Israel. On the other hand, David's life was very different from Jonathan's. David was born in the town of Bethlehem. He was the youngest of eight siblings. Likewise, David was the shepherd of his father's sheep. But David's humble background did not prevent him from having great qualities. He had a right heart before God and was a courageous boy who was not afraid to face those who threatened his sheep (1 Samuel 17:34-36). It was this courage that caused these two very different boys to meet. It happened when David killed Goliath and won the victory for Israel. 1 Samuel 17:57 tells us that David was still clutching Goliath's head when he appeared before King Saul. That is when Jonathan and David met. It was such an impressive gathering that their souls were linked from that moment on (1 Samuel 18:1).

From this story, we can learn several things: 1) Friends can come from different backgrounds. 2) There are common qualities that unite friends. 3) To have a genuine friendship, there has to be a depth of heart and soul.

2. Characteristics of a friendship without limits

The account of the friendship between Jonathan and David is detailed in seven chapters of the Bible (1 Samuel 19-24). Encourage the students to read all seven chapters over the next week.

In these chapters are five exemplary characteristics of a true friendship, a friendship without limits.

- **LOVE:** Love was the basis of the friendship between Jonathan and David. Between these two young men there was neither envy nor jealousy. From the beginning, the two of them let love reign between them (1 Samuel 20:17). So strong was Jonathan's love for David that even he risked his life by interceding for David's with his father (1 Samuel 20:32). Jonathan never clung to his position as prince or tried to manipulate David.
- **COMMITMENT:** Jonathan and David were men of their word. At various points in history, we see how they made covenants with each other (1 Samuel 18:3, 20:16, 23:18). Jonathan and David were committed to their friendship. They did not allow circumstances or other people to interfere with their relationship.
- **RESPECT:** From the beginning, Jonathan recognized God's call on David's life (1 Samuel 18:4). See (1 Samuel 23:17). In a friendship, respect is paramount, especially when there are changes in growth. As young people grow, changes will occur in their lives. One may be accepted to a better university, while the other friend is left behind. It is important that young people learn to respect each other rather than envy each other because of the changes in their lives.
- **CONFIDENCE:** Jonathan and David lived through very difficult times but the friendship of those two young men was so deep that they were not afraid to trust each other openly (1 Samuel 20:41).
- **LOYALTY:** Because of his loyalty to Jonathan, David extended mercy and kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son. See 2 Samuel 9.

Review/Application:

Acrostic - Allow time for your students to assign a quality of a friend to each letter of the word friend. Example:

- F - Faithful
- R - Respectful
- I - Intentional
- E - Enduring
- N - Never-ending
- D - Devoted

Challenge:

It is time to examine ourselves. Today we explored the different characteristics that come with true friendship without limits. Consider your life and the friendships you make. Take some time to write down some of the characteristics you should be working on.

Objective: For the students to understand the causes of migration and become aware of the social problems experienced by migrants.

Memory Verse: “Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.” Exodus 22:21

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Paper and pencils
- **Instructions:** Instruct students to divide their paper into 3 columns. Title the first column “What I Know”, the second column “What I Hope to Learn” and the third column “What I Learned”. Instruct students to fill out the first two columns before starting the lesson. Then start the lesson. Keep in mind that students will initially work on only the first two columns; and at the end of the class, they will finish the third column.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to answer the following questions with the first thing that comes to mind: What does migration mean? Why do people migrate? What is globalization? What do you think is the relationship between globalization and migration, if there is one?

Allow about five minutes for them to respond and another five for them to share their responses.

This exercise is not about seeking deep answers, but about making a baseline diagnosis on the issue of migration. Therefore, do not make any corrections. With the development of the lesson, the students will expand their answers. At the end of the lesson, they will be able to fill out the worksheet and review their answers from the beginning.

Ask: How many of you know people who have left their places of origin to go to work or seek a better life elsewhere? Allow time for students to share some responses. This is part of the migration phenomenon. Most likely at school, at work, among neighbors and / or brothers or sisters of the church or the students themselves, there are people who, for various reasons, have left their places of origin and have settled here; or perhaps some of the class members are migrants or children of migrants. Today’s lesson is about migration, how globalization has fostered its development, and what the mission of the church is in the face of this phenomenon.

1. Migratory movements

Migratory movements can occur within the same country, or from one country to another. In general, they are due to economic, political, ideological or security reasons, among others. In the book of Genesis there are examples of migrants, such as Terah (Genesis 11:31), Abraham (Genesis 12:1), and Jacob and his family (Genesis 29:1, 46:1-34).

It is important to note that there is a difference between migration and forced displacement. The destruction of Israel (and its capital Samaria) at the hands of the Assyrians (2 Kings 18:9-12) and that of Judah (and its capital Jerusalem) at the hands of the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:1-12; 2 Chronicles 36:17-21) with their subsequent

deportation, rather than a migration, is considered a forced displacement, since the people were forced to leave Palestine as a result of an armed battle.

Migration, on the other hand, although it has in most cases economic deterioration and the consequent need to improve living conditions, is considered a voluntary act in which people decide to leave their place of origin. Thus, migration gave rise to nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and was an important part of the cultural melting pot in places such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, among others.

2. Globalization and migratory movements

International migrations increased after the Industrial Revolution when a large sector of European society became impoverished and it was necessary to seek a better economic future in other lands. It was then that globalization took place. For the purposes of this lesson, globalization will be defined as the harmony between nations and their economic, technological, cultural and social interdependence. Thus, globalization has contributed to people changing their residence seeking to improve their living conditions.

Consequently, people of different nations, languages and cultures (or subcultures) come into direct contact when they coincide in the same region. This causes people to modify part of their traditions and customs in the new environment that surrounds them and incorporate cultural elements typical of their new place of residence.

3. The mission of the church in the face of migratory movements

The church is called to be an instrument of God in the restoration of people by opening its doors and ministering to those in need. The church can be a place that migrants call home. There are churches that decide to establish soup kitchens for migrants, and others create collection centers to help the already established shelters. There are also congregations that have special presentations at Christmas or Easter in migrant shelters; while others specialize in migration issues to help heal the conditions of vulnerability. Most open their doors and present the message of salvation and restoration. We can all put ourselves in the place of migrants. After all, we ourselves (who make up the church), or our ancestors, also migrated from elsewhere and have found a place that we now call home, and one day we'll travel to our eternal home.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to decipher the hidden word by unscrambling the letters and write the definition in their own words.

- Niloboglazita: Globalization: (The harmony between nations and their economic, technological, cultural and social interdependence.)
- Tiendyti: Identity: (This is the name given to the set of characteristics of a person or group that differentiates them from others.)
- Nasomiliatsi: Assimilation: (Incorporate what is learned with previous knowledge.)
- Clurteu: Culture: (Ways of life, customs, knowledge, artistic, scientific and industrial development from a certain time, social group, place, etc.)

Challenge:

During the week, develop a work plan that your church can implement on behalf of migrants. Talk to your pastor about the needs of your community and what the church can do about immigration.

Objective: For the students to learn how to choose the media content that is best for them.

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

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard, several youth magazines, scissors, newspapers and adhesive tape.
- **Instructions:** Divide the class into groups of four and ask students to review magazines and newspapers and cut out the sections that stand out to them the most. Then have them post them on the board to display to the whole class, mentioning why those clippings caught their attention.

This activity helps students identify the information they choose and learn to differentiate if it is useful or not. Ask: Do your clippings and information provide you with something necessary?

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** 10cm x 10cm colored paper and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Ask each student to write on a piece of colored paper the name of a radio or television program that they like to watch or listen to, or the name of a website they like to visit.

Then, collect all the pieces of paper and randomly take one, read it, and ask the class to explain what the program is about. As you finish reading the slips, ask the class the following: Which of these programs build us up and help us to be better? And which ones harm us, or only entertain us without contributing anything good?

The media influences the way people act and think, and can change the way they know and understand the reality around them. For example, when one analyses the most popular television programs such as animated series, dramas, reality shows, etc., one will notice that several of the people that one knows act just like those in the programs or speak with expressions from there or dress like their characters, because undoubtedly, their lives are being influenced by the content. In other words, their way of thinking or acting is being modified, and therefore, the reality they live is affected.

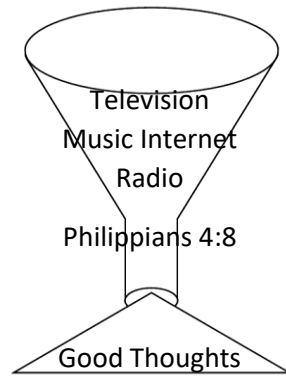
The media, that is radio and television programs, is 80% entertainment and 20% information. So, since the largest percentage is entertaining, it is logical that some programs are attractive, enjoyable and occupy a lot of time regardless of whether they are beneficial or not. Ask: How many hours do you watch television, or listen to music, or are on the Internet, every day? Does this content benefit you, does it make you a better person? How does it contribute to the growth of your life?

Adolescents and young people are exposed to the media all the time and are a favorite point of attack since they are the largest number of consumers. For this reason, it is important for one to learn how to filter or choose what one sees, hears or reads so that one's personality is properly formed and is not harmed by the negative content of the media. To achieve this, one must apply these three guidelines that come from God's Word:

1. Think on the best

Not everything is bad and not everything is good. But if the media influences thinking and modifies the way that one perceives reality, one must filter its content. But, how can one filter what they offer us? Well, by applying the filter of Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

The media can deliver many messages and diversity of content; but one must apply this rule of thought (read it 2 or 3 times).



The Bible advises one to guard one’s thoughts. Many doctors say that people get sick more from thoughts than from other factors such as biological or dietary factors. So God was wise to say that one should be aware of ones thoughts. Everything that enters one’s mind must be true, honest, just, pure, virtuous, worthy of praise, etc. To be a better person, choose and think what Philippians 4: 8 commands.

2. Preserve the best

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22: “...but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.” Examining means discerning, discriminating, differentiating, distinguishing between good and bad. The Word requires one to examine everything that comes: a program, a song, an image, content, etc. It must be examined so that one can distinguish whether it is good or not, whether it blesses or leads one away from the truth. Ask: So what are you going to do with horror movies, violent series, lyrics that induce debauchery, sensual or pornographic images, etc. You must seriously consider abstaining from them.

3. Do the best

Colossians 4:5 says: “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.” The Bible advises that one’s way of living must be wise, not only when one is alone, but when in the presence of others. One has great responsibility to be a good example and witness at all times. The media can be used for one’s benefit; but one must always examine and select well the content one chooses. In this way, one’s mind will remain healthy and one’s behavior will be good thanks. Do not forget that one’s choices have an impact and can hinder or be a testimony to others.

Review/Application:

Ask the students to answer the following questions in their own words:

1. What does God want us to think about? (Philippians 4:8)
2. How should I spend my time?
3. Of all the content in the memory verse, what am I doing well and what do I need to improve?

Challenge:

Our challenge this week is to analyze the programs we watch, the music we listen to, the pages we browse, and get rid of the content that is useless. What do you think, can we do that?

Objective: That the students understand how their Christian identity separates them from the world.

Memory Verse: “...so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.” Philippians 2:15

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** A considerable amount of candles (could be the ones used for a birthday cake) and matches, battery-operated lanterns / flashlights.
- **Instructions:** Have the items turned on/lit, as well as the electric or natural light in your classroom, before your students arrive. After welcoming them, let them know that you want to do an experiment and turn off the light switch. Divide the class into two groups and ask one group to role-play a situation where a Christian is a light and another group role-plays a situation where a Christian is not a light.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk or large paper and pencil.
- **Instructions:** Ask the students to help you come up with a description or definition for the word “identity”. To do this, have this definition according to the Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity>) as a reference: “who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others.” Then ask them about how God influences the development of the human identity.

The word “luminaries” has the connotation of being something that has the ability to shine or give light. Generally, this word is used in reference to the stars in the sky. In an astronomy class, it is said that stars do not really have their own light, but rather strongly reflect sunlight. That is why during the day, when sunlight is very bright, the stars in the sky are invisible, but at dusk and in full darkness, the stars can be seen with a glance, and their light is bright and remarkable in the midst of all the night darkness. In Philippians 2:15, Paul called the Christians living in Philippi “lights” because their love was something that shone amid the wickedness and hatred of those around them. This lesson focuses on light and how Christians can be lights too!

In the dictionary, the word “identity” is defined as a set of characteristics of a person that makes them different from other people. Identity includes physical characteristics, such as fingerprints that are unique to each person, as well as emotional, psychological, and intellectual characteristics. In the same way, there are spiritual and moral characteristics that separate and mark a person as a son or daughter of God, and the absence of such characteristics indicates otherwise. A life of a Christian believer must bear the marks of Christian identity, and this will be the only way to make a difference in a world where these characteristics are sometimes difficult to find. In doing so, one’s life will point the way to Jesus.

1. An identity that gives freedom

In Galatians 5:1-5 Paul wrote about a very special freedom, and compared it to the sad condition of slavery. In his message, he reminded the Galatians that life without Jesus is a life of slavery to sin.

There are people who suffer the consequences of a vice (pornography or gambling), the consequences of substance addiction (drugs or alcohol), the consequences of crime (time in prison), the consequences of impulsive decisions (an unplanned pregnancy), etc. To this list of consequences, it is necessary to add the emotional consequences that a person may suffer, such as depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, irritability, and other conflicts that can affect personality and interpersonal relationships.

As a young person, one must recognize that one will face situations that can easily trap and leave one as a slave for a long time; perhaps with greater consequences than one can imagine. Jesus died to set one free from all the tricks of evil and so that one can have every freedom to reject sin.

2. An identity that gives us security

In today's second study passage (1 John 2:18-28), the Apostle John wrote to Christians about the importance of recognizing Jesus as the one sent by God to provide salvation.

In the midst of a world where insecurity abounds and affects the lives of many young people, the young Christian can make a difference. Today, insecurity leads young people who suffer from it to make decisions based on fear. For example, there are young people who participate in smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol who are driven mainly by the fear that if they do not participate, they will not be accepted as part of the group of friends. In the same way, insecurity leads young people to participate in having sex for fear of losing a dating relationship and feeling alone. In contrast to the above, Christian identity gives one wonderful security in God's active and eternal love!

3. An identity that makes us different

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians who lived in Philippi and gave them a recommendation which is found in Philippians 2:15. He wrote about the role they played in the society in which they lived, and encouraged them to make a difference.

Many times, non-Christian youth will feel envy, jealousy, or even hatred toward Christian youth who work to do things according to God's plan, and those feelings will lead them to harass the Christian youth or influence him to change. However, it is very important to remember that God understands what one goes through and is there to help. Do not let your light stop shining!

Review/Application:

Ask your students to think of practical ways they can make a difference in their daily lives.

SITUATION	YOUR DIFFERENT RESPONSE
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HOME/FAMILY	Example: Respond with respect/Be helpful
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SCHOOL	Example: Work to get good grades.
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JOB/WITH FRIENDS	Example: Do not participate in negative activities.
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Challenge:

Remember that you can make a big difference in the way you live your life. How can God help you do this? God has big plans for your life (Jeremiah 29:11), and He wants to give you all the power you need so you can make it happen. The important thing is that you depend on Him every day and that you obey Him in everything. Stay tuned this week for circumstances in which you can make a difference and share with the class the next time we meet together. God will not leave you alone.

Objective: That the students recognize that the Christian message is, on many occasions, contrary to cultural practices.

Memory Verse: “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Pencils, colors, erasers and white sheets of paper.
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to draw a picture of Jesus as they imagine Him to be, mostly based on their readings about Him.

The idea is that they see a Jesus much more “human” than the one seen in the films.

As they finish the activity, show them a drawing previously found by you showing Jesus sweaty (because he walked all the time), somewhat dirty (he always walked on the dusty streets), skinny (from fasting), haggard (from prayers), disheveled and with his hair and skin tanned by the sun (they can be figures of different people with those characteristics; and if you cannot get drawings, put up posters that say the characteristics mentioned).

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk.
- **Instructions:** Ask your students to come to the board and write the characteristics that should identify a Christian.

Remind them that many of the characteristics are not physical, but ethical. Christians make a difference in the midst of a society that promotes anti-Christian values.

Jesus Christ, the only Lord one follows, is not someone most people are comfortable with these days. His sayings, for example, are not funny phrases to copy and paste on a wall; his parables are not children’s stories that entertain ... Our Lord is, in addition to many things, a master of the counterculture. His life and his teachings reflect that: He challenged established traditions, religious habits, He did not conform to custom and thus confronts the way people are living today.

1. Different people

Unlike other teachers of the time, Jesus did not choose the best students of the Mosaic Law. Rather, He searched the streets and unlikely places for whom He wanted to call. These people did not have good social references and were not wonderful role models, but He called them anyway.

It is funny in the Bible, it is clear that God used all His children to do different things: Paul preached the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15); Peter changed his racial prejudices (Acts 11:15-18); a former prostitute became part of God’s people (Joshua 2:12-14); Jacob’s name was changed (Genesis 35:9-11); and, among many other things, the early Christians did not aspire to material things but gave part of what they had to help each other (Acts 2:42-47).

2. In favor of a different culture

The criticism that many Christian authors have made of today's church of Christ is that the church is just a little "subculture"; that is to say, a small cultural note in the middle of the great cultural context that the church is surrounded by. This makes the church a religious expression of the same culture. The reason for this criticism is that the church does not make any difference with respect to the practices that many people do that offend God, who has already expressed His will in His written Word. For instance: non-Christians steal money from companies, many Christians also steal money; some people miss (bunk) their classes at school, many Christians also do so; young people lie about things, many young Christians do so as well; people fight, so do Christians; So many people are irresponsible at work, many Christians are also. Christians do not make a difference! Paul told his spiritual son that the Spirit of God "gives us power, love and self-discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7). If it is God who has done this, then surely Christians can and should live differently to other people. Attention! It is not about being fanatics and opposing everything; but rather to affirm the values of the Kingdom of God in the midst of cultural issues that offend God.

3. A Christian culture

Christian should separate themselves from the rest of the world by living right in God's eyes in the midst of this culture:

When everyone imitates the dress and speech of singers and celebrities, Christians should imitate the way in which Christ loved people. When everyone is late to work or school, Christians must be on time; when people disagree and the discussion ends in an argument, Christians should express their point of view with love and try to understand the perspective of others. When some people do not fulfill their obligations at school or work, Christians are responsible for everything. When people live in homes where insults reign, Christians homes should be peaceful because there the peace of God reigns. When many get angry and hold a grudge against other people, Christians dare to ask for forgiveness and forgive. When people seek to fulfill only their own interests, Christians seek to help the interests of others to be realized as well. (Allow more ideas from the students.)

Jesus Christ calls His followers to be renewed every day in thoughts and actions. Today is restoration day! If one has been absorbed by today's culture, today one can make a vow before God to be a Christian, a person who live and promote a life that pleases and honors God and benefits those around one.

Review/Application:

Based on the example below, ask the students to list four cultural values that the world promotes and compare them with those that God has gave Christians to live by in the Bible.

CULTURAL VALUE	BIBLICAL PASSAGE	VALUED BY THE KINGDOM OF GOD
Ambition	Luke	Generosity
1		
2		
3		
4		

Challenge:

This week, watch your life and make an effort to do things that honor God and benefit those around you.

Objective: That students clearly understand that integrity cannot go hand in hand with corruption as an ally.

Memory Verse: “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.” Titus 1:15

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Paper and pencils.
- **Instruction:** Ask the students to make a list of what they identify as corruption in the family, in the church, in society or nation, and also in themselves. After finishing the list, ask them to read it and make some comments.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Six sashes or signs that identify six students who will play the following characters: a policeman, a teacher, a politician, a Christian, a doctor, and a judge.
- **Instructions:** Each character will introduce themselves to the other students. Then the students will ask the characters about the corruption in the institution they represent. As you conclude this activity, under your direction as a teacher, make a list of the most relevant aspects of corruption seen in society today.

There is corruption all over the world. However, it should be mentioned that the level of corruption in each country is not the same. There are places in the world where corruption has reached practically all sectors and people, regardless of their social, economic, religious or intellectual

condition. Faced with all of that, God has called His disciples to be upright. But ... how can one be whole in the midst of a corrupt world? One needs to understand this integrity-corruption contradiction.

1. God's Purpose for Man: Integrity

The Bible affirms that God created man in his image and likeness. This means that human beings were created righteous, incorrupt, full of love and goodness, holy and pure, but sin changed everything and much of God's image in mankind is not seen anymore.

A. What is integrity?

The Cambridge dictionary says about “integrity”: “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change; the quality of being whole and complete”. Whole means: “a complete thing; all of something” (Cambridge Dictionary.org).

Integrity, then, has three characteristics:

1. **Applied to the spiritual sense**, it means that Christ's presence is of such a nature that one's life of holiness is real and is seen in words, attitudes, deeds, and healthy relationships with others (1 Timothy 4:12). God wants one to surrender one's entire lives to Him and serve Him fully.
2. **Sexually pure**. This is not only in relation to girls but to all guys as well. A Christian of integrity is one whose sexual life strictly adheres to God's command. One should not be too intimate with the opposite

sex or indulge in sexual immorality (fornication, adultery), homosexuality, or any sexual perversion (1 Corinthians 6:9).

3. **Honorable.** The person of integrity is someone who can be trusted because they are righteous (Psalm 37:35-37). Righteousness is possible for those who have a source of righteousness in their hearts; that source is Christ. The person of integrity is not thinking only of themselves, but also about others.

B. Some Biblical Expressions About Integrity

1. He who worships God walks in integrity in the midst of his house (Psalm 101:2).
2. In order to be whole (upright), it's necessary to learn the righteous judgments of God (Psalm 119:7).
3. Those who live with integrity can walk, travel, etc. confidently (Proverbs 10:9).
4. A father who is upright passes on happiness to his children (Proverbs 20:7).
5. Church leaders should teach with integrity and be examples of it to others (Titus 2:7).

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2. A case of corruption in the first century church

Luke tells a story of what happened in Samaria with the man known as Simon “the magician” (Acts 8:14-25).

This case gives better understanding of what is happening now in the church context.

A. What is corruption?

According to Dictionary.com, “corruption” is: “the act of corrupting or state of being corrupt; moral perversion; depravity; perversion of integrity; corrupt or dishonest proceedings; debasement or alteration, as of language or a text.” (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/corrupting?s=t>).

In the spiritual sense, corruption alters or twists the Word of God, the commandments of God, Christian doctrine and the behavior that corresponds to a Christian.

B. Signs of corruption in Simon “the magician”

Simon “the magician” corrupted and wanted to corrupt the following:

- a. He corrupted decent work (Acts 8:9-11). By making use of magical arts, he earned money contrary to the will of God.
- b. He corrupted people’s minds (Acts 8:10). He made people believe that what he did was done by the power of God. Tremendous falsehood: Attributing the actions of the devil to God.
- c. He wanted to corrupt the gospel and the giving of the Holy Spirit (vs. 18-19). This man thought that he had discovered a more productive source to raise money.

Living with integrity in the midst of a corrupt world is a challenge for Christians. Any area of life can be corrupted. One must obey God and live pure, that is, rightly before the Lord and thus contribute to the transformation of humanity into the image of Christ.

Review/Application: Allow time for the students to respond. The answers are found in the lesson.

1. In what ways was Simon corrupted according to Acts 8: 9-19? _____

Acts 8:9-11 _____ Acts 8:10 _____ Acts 8:18-19 _____

2. What do the following passages teach you about integrity?

Psalm 15:1-2 _____ Psalm 33:1 _____ Psalm 101:2 _____

Challenge:

During the week, pay attention to any instances of corruption you hear about or see around you or in the media, and think about what Bible teachings you would tell those involved. Share these at the next class.

Objective: That students examine their behavior and form responsible character in every area of their lives.

Memory Verse: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” Colossians 3:23

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Prepare two separate sets of 8cm x 6cm letters that spell the word “responsibility”.
- **Instructions:** Form one or two groups, depending on the number of students. Then give them separate sets of letters (the letters must be in a mess) so they can form the word “responsibility”.

After about five minutes, or if they take less time better, ask the group that finished first to write a short definition of the word in question. Ask the other group to prepare an example that illustrates that word.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Sheets of white paper and pens.
- **Instructions:** Hand out individual sheets of paper and pens to the students, and tell them that each one should write down five important things that they do during the day from when they get up to when to go to bed.

Ask: What motivates you to do all the things you wrote down. When someone says the word “responsibility,” ask: how do you define that word.

To conclude, mention that later everyone will write a definition of this word.

1. The demand for responsibility: Commitment

The first ingredient in building a responsible character is commitment. And this is a serious problem in many adolescents and young people, because they do not see through their commitments, and therefore, they are not responsible. However, many of them long for privileges. So, one wonder how they will have privileges if they do not make and keep commitments in their lives.

Young Joshua is a practical example of commitment. Because commitment demands sacrifice, he took on every challenge with great responsibility. One of the first challenges he had to face was his appointment as leader of the tribe of Ephraim. He was chosen because of his mature character from among all of his tribe to go along with eleven other leaders of the other tribes as a spy into the land of Canaan (Numbers 13). After forty days of arduous work in enemy lands and with many dangers of death, they returned and gave an account to Moses. But Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who bravely enforced his efforts.

Do you remember the meaning of responsible? Earlier, it was mentioned that the responsible person is that person who fulfills their obligations and pays attention to what they do or decide. Thus, the story of Joshua shows the three decisive steps that helped him act responsibly: He left, he saw the land of Canaan, and he returned with the desire to conquer. Actually, Moses did not send them to see whether or not they could conquer it. Joshua and Caleb understood that they went to spy on Canaan to develop a strategy of conquest. When faced with a challenge, it is easy to throw in the towel. Ask: Have you ever heard the phrase: “He who doesn’t risk

wins nothing”? In reality, Joshua took the risk with faith and commitment; therefore, he was later able to enter the Promised Land.

If one wants to achieve great things in life, one needs to take responsibility. The first thing is to start each day with commitment and a fighting spirit, and faith in the mighty name of Christ. Ask: Are you studying? Do you have a job? Do you have projects? Those are commitments to which you must be accountable and faithfully abide by.

2. The fruit of responsibility: Authority

Responsibility begins when one is very young. At every stage of physical growth, one has to learn the habit of being responsible. Responsibility is a discipline that will pay off and pay off when one focuses on practicing it. God said to Joshua: “Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River...” (Joshua 1:2). This command was nothing more than a confirmation of what he had previously heard through Moses (Numbers 27:18, 19, 22-23). The people had witnessed this commission made to Joshua; furthermore, they already knew the responsible character of Joshua. Therefore, they believed that he was capable of leading them to the Promised Land. So much so that at Joshua’s first command (Joshua 1:10-15), the people responded to his authority by saying: “Whatever you have commanded us we’ll do” (Joshua 1:16-17).

When one acts responsibly, one will also see privileges open. If one studies or works responsibly, one will also see the fruits of one’s effort.

3. The Foundation of Responsibility: Your Spiritual Discipline

Joshua’s constant dedication, his persistent character and his continued worship developed in him a courageous and responsible heart. The writer of the book of Exodus reveals that Moses’ “young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent” where they met with God (Exodus 33:11b). His search for God and his consecration to God was total, and by this he understood that responsibility is a principle of the character of the child of God. So a person who claims to be a child of God must demonstrate it in their responsible character.

Joshua helps one to understand that one’s commitment to God is essential to fulfilling one’s responsibilities. Spiritual discipline not only helps one to be responsible, it encourages one to achieve goals. One should imitate the responsible character of Joshua and then one will see those same ingredients forged in one’s lives. The crown that Joshua won for his responsibility was the acceptance of God and his example which endures in minds and hearts through so many centuries.

Review/Application:

Help your students reflect on the following personal questions:

1. What are the three ingredients of responsibility? (The demand is commitment, the fruit is authority, and its foundation is spiritual discipline.)
2. Do you think Joshua’s life inspires you to increase your being responsible? Yes or no, and how?
3. Are you one of those who waits for someone to tell you what to do, or do you take initiative? Explain.
4. Have you failed at something for lack of taking responsibility? If so, do you feel challenged to fight? Explain. (It is good to encourage them to take their challenges seriously).
5. According to Joshua’s life, what is the secret to building responsible character?

Challenge:

Andrea Jiménez says: “You do not grow up when you change your size, you grow up when you fit your responsibilities.” Are you one of those who grows up but remains irresponsible? Or are you one of those who grows up according to their responsibilities? Make a decision today with the help of Christ.

Objective: That the students understand that they must live honestly.

Memory Verse: “For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.” 2 Corinthians 8:21

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Colored pencils, papers, scissors, cardboard, glue, magazines. The more different materials you have for this activity, the better the creativity.
- **Instructions:** Prepare the materials and divide the class into two or three groups depending on the number of students. The exercise is to express oneself “honestly” using available materials. Encourage them to be creative.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** A table game (uno, cards, scrabble, dominos, etc.).
- **Instructions:** Choose a table game that most can play and that is not long. Before class begins, talk with a student and explain the activity: the rules are the same for everyone until the teacher changes them rules on purpose to favor him/ her (the student arranged with before class). During the game, this student will cheat, some obvious and some not so obvious. Observe the reactions of the other students. Finish the activity before the whole group is upset; and at the end, ask them: What happened during the game? Was someone cheating? How did you feel when you saw someone cheating? Has everyone behaved honestly? Ask those who did not cheat to raise their hands.

Through this activity, the students will be able to see how other people behave dishonorably (cheating) or honestly (not cheating).

At school, they always gave us compulsory readings and one of them was, “El Lazarillo de Tormes” (The Guide of Tormes) (the author is not known exactly). In this book, the life of a child, Lázaro of Tormes, who was born surrounded by poverty is told. His father dies while Lázaro is still a small child, and due to their dire situation, his mother put him in the service of a blind man. A particular part of the story is very interesting: when Lázaro and the blind man share a bunch of grapes.

A grape seller gives the blind man and Lázaro a bunch of grapes as alms. They both agree that they would both eat equal amounts: One would eat one and then the other would eat one, each eating only one grape at a time. So they began to eat the bunch, one grape each at a time; but in the next turn, the blind man began to take two grapes at a time. Seeing this, Lázaro did the same and even began to eat three grapes at the same time.

At the end of the bunch of grapes, the blind man said: “Lázaro... I swear to God that you have eaten the grapes three at a time.”

“I did not,” Lázaro said, “but why do you suspect that?”

The clever blind man replied: “Do you know how I know that you ate three at a time? Because I ate two at a time and you kept quiet.”

In other words, Lázaro did not complain or say anything when he saw that the blind man was taking two grapes at the same time; instead, he decided to take three grapes at a time. Both Lázaro and the blind man put honesty

aside, and not only that, but Lázaro ended up looking out for his own good instead of doing things honestly. In this scene, Lázaro thought that he had gotten away with it, but in truth, the blind man had realized what had happened. This can also happen to anyone who thinks that nobody will notice the “little things” that one does or says. But this is a lie. When one does this, one deceives oneself because in the end everything is exposed: “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13). This verse reveals that the first to know everything is Christ.

In the Gospel according to Luke, there is a story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) who was a tax collector. Tax collectors had a bad reputation since they tended to cheat or extort money from people to get more profit. For this reason, Zacchaeus was not the most loved man in the place, rather he was one of the most despised. When Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was in Jericho (v. 1) and wanted to meet him or at least see him. Christ impacted his life and later this man sought to be honest and upright.

1. Christ impacts lives

When Zacchaeus knew that Jesus was in his city, he looked for a way to get closer to Him. He climbed a sycamore tree to get a better view of him. Jesus saw him and called him by his name. The fact that Jesus called him by his name, without even knowing him, and also told him that he was going to his house impacted the life of this tax collector.

Ask: Do you remember the time Jesus impacted your life? The truth is that when Christ says: “I’m going to your house” to one, He is saying that He wants to enter one’s life and it is at that moment when all things change (2 Corinthians 5:17).

2. Being honest and upright

The moment Christ comes into someone’s life and confirms to one all the wrong done, this should bring a change in one, just as it did to Zacchaeus. The Holy Spirit indicates the way in which one can live honestly.

In the story of Zacchaeus, Jesus came into his life and changed his lifestyle. Zacchaeus went from being the deceiver, thief, and extortioner, to being an honest man who wanted to help the poor and give back all that he had stolen.

Review/Application:

Allow students to give their own personal responses to the following questions: Could people read you by seeing your attitudes? Would they see honesty in your life? Think of examples where you can act honestly. Example: Return change if a cashier gives me too much.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |

Challenge:

Do I act honestly at my school, at home, in the store, in the supermarket, etc.?

Have I allowed Christ to be reflected in my life? If my life was a book, would I let people read today’s chapter or last week’s chapter? Think about the attitudes you should allow the Holy Spirit to change in your life. Each morning this week, remind yourself: “People will be reading today’s chapter of my life ... what will they read?” and then at night: “What did others read in today’s chapter of this day?”

Objective: That the students learn that honesty is an indispensable characteristic pleases God and brings light to others.

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

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Instructions:** Divide the class into two groups and ask one group to act out a situation in which an honest person acts for one minute. And ask the other group to dramatize a situation in which they see how a dishonest person acts. Then allow students to comment on what was done.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk.
- **Instructions:** Make two columns on the board and in one column write the word Honesty and in the other Dishonesty. Then ask students to tell what those words suggest to them. Write everything they say in the appropriate column. At the end, write a definition for each of the words mentioned.

In a distant town, the king summoned all the young men to a private audience with him where he would give them an important message. Many young people attended and the king told them: “I am going to give each one of you a different seed, after six months you will have to bring me the plant that has grown in a pot, and the most beautiful plant will win my daughter’s hand.” This was done, but there was a young man who planted his seed and it did not germinate; meanwhile, all the other young people in the kingdom kept talking and showing the beautiful plants and flowers they had planted in their pots. Six months came and all the young people began to parade towards the castle with beautiful plants. The young man whose seed had not germinated was too sad to the point of not even wanting to go to the palace. But his mother insisted that he should go, as he was a participant and he should be there. Finally, he paraded last to the palace with his empty flowerpot.

All the young people burst out laughing and mocked him when they saw. At that moment, the uproar was interrupted by the entrance of the king; as everyone made their respective bows while the king walked among all the pots admiring the plants. After the inspection, the king also called his daughter, and he called the young man who brought his empty pot; Astonished, everyone waited for the explanation of that action. The king then said: “This is the new heir to the throne and he will marry my daughter, for all of you were given an infertile seed, and you all tried to deceive me by planting other plants; but this young man had the courage to present himself and show his empty pot, being sincere, loyal and courageous are qualities that a future king must have and that my daughter deserves.” (<http://www.encinardemamre.com/premium/az/h/honesty.htm> # The fox and the monkey disputing over their nobility).

By not having God in their lives, people live trying to satisfy themselves no matter how they achieve it. God, through his Word, requires that his children are honest to do his will and thus be light to the world.

1. Honesty

According to dictionary.com, “honest” means the following: “honorable in principles, intentions, and actions; upright and fair:” (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/honest?s=t>).

For the Christian, honesty is an attitude and an aptitude. Attitude: a feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this. Aptitude: a natural ability or skill

The Bible says in Philippians 2:13: “God who works in you to will and to act ...” How wonderful! God has given us the attitude and the aptitude to be able to live honestly, unlike others who, because of the sin that dwells in them, do not have the capacity to do so.

2. Honesty in the Bible

Write on a board or on a large piece of paper the phrases mentioned below without the biblical quote. Designate one verse per person to be read aloud. After each has read their assigned verse, ask them to match it to the phrase that they think best fits what the verse says.

- a) “I must be honest to be light to those who live in darkness” (Philippians 2:15).
- b) “I must be honest so that my praise will be pleasing to God” (Psalms 33:1).
- c) “I must be honest to maintain unity within the Christian community” (Ephesians 4:25).
- d) “I must be honest to be a good servant of God” (1 Timothy 3:8).

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3. Daniel, an example of honesty

A. Daniel’s honesty in the face of temptation

Daniel was a young man who was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon (Daniel 1). There, he along with other young men was selected to serve the king. All of them were ordered to eat the king’s food, but Daniel and three of his friends refused. Daniel did not want to sin against God since they were under Jewish law, which prohibited those foods. So he preferred to keep the law, despite being outside his homeland, because he knew that this would please God. Daniel was probably tempted to eat the king’s food, but his desire to please God was greater than his desire to taste the food.

B. Daniel’s honesty in the face of adversity

Daniel lived honestly his entire life; no one could accuse him of anything wrong (Daniel 6:4). But despite that, his enemies managed to capture him and throw him into the lions’ den. One must be aware that despite one’s good testimony, the world will always look for something to accuse one of. However, that should not stop one from continue to live honestly. Whatever happens, one must know that one will always win with God on one’s side.

C. Daniel’s honesty, rewarded by God

After each of the difficult episodes in Daniel’s life, he was always victorious. Daniel was a man who lived a life of integrity and righteousness in every sense. That is because he never strayed from God. Daniel 6:10 says that Daniel prayed to God three times a day. This confirms that he was a man of prayer and was consecrated to God; for that reason, Daniel was able to be faithful in the most difficult moments of his life.

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to respond to the following:

Define the word “honesty” in your own words. Do you think it is easy to be honest in today’s world? Have you had experiences where people were not honest with you? Mention 2 or 3 examples of honesty and 2 or 3 of dishonesty that you’ve experienced recently.

Challenge:

Daniel was a man who never denied who he was and who he believed in. Likewise, you must be the same person on the street as you are in church. Be courageous to stand up for your faith and stand firm, even if it seems like you are going against the grain. Show your friends, neighbors, family, etc. that you are the child of a holy God and that you live honestly, making a difference. How will this decision affect your life today? Meditate on it during the week and share with your class at the next meeting.

Objective: Remind students that part of the Christian life is to be humble.

Memory Verse: “He must become greater; I must become less.” John 3:30

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Paper and colored pencils.
- **Instructions:** Distribute sheets of paper to the students and ask them to draw something that they think exemplifies “humility.” Then allow each one to show their drawing and for the rest of the class to interpret it. Then each person can explain what they drew and why. Allow time for everyone to participate.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Sheets of white paper (one for each of your students).
- **Instructions:** Ask the students to make an acrostic with the word “humility” (use each letter to form a phrase or word).

The stage of adolescent and youth is characterized by an overwhelming, exploring self and also a stage in which arrogance, pride and vanity often rise up. For this reason, the advice of the Apostle Peter where he addresses young people to clothe themselves with humility (1 Peter 5:5) is applicable today.

According to dictionary.com, “humility” is: “the quality or condition of being humble; modest opinion or estimate of one’s own importance, rank, etc.”

The entire Bible encourages and urges people to be humble. A person’s identity must be built on the basis of humility. Study the life of John the Baptist as an example of humility.

1. John the Baptist was not a know-it-all

When John the Baptist began his ministry, the people of Jerusalem and all of Judea came out to ask for the forgiveness of their sins and to be baptized (Matthew 3:5). In the Gospel according to Luke, it is recorded three times they asked him: “What should we do?” (Luke 3:10, 12, 14). This shows that for the Jewish people, John the Baptist was a wise, a person to whom people came with their concerns.

However, in his personal opinion, he did not see himself that way. In Matthew 11:2-3, he causes us to understand that he, humanly, had questions to resolve regarding Jesus. On one occasion, he actually sent two of his disciples to personally ask Jesus if He was the Messiah. Which shows that John the Baptist needed to know even more about Jesus Christ.

Even as one grows in the things of the Lord, one will always need to know more about Jesus, for no one can ever reach the fullness of knowledge about Jesus. Even though John had been very close to Jesus since they were both in the womb (Luke 1:41-44), having baptized Him, he never believed he knew everything about Jesus. When John the Baptist sent the question, he was not showing unbelief. Rather, he was looking for a specific clarification of Jesus’ redemptive purpose. After all, he was in prison for the sake of Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus referred to the humility of John

A. What did you go out to the wilderness to see?

The place where John developed his ministry was the desert (Matthew 3:1). Today, some or many preachers would not choose a desert as their office for work. John the Baptist was not interested in a comfortable place

where he would develop his ministry; what interested him was preaching in the name of God. His ministry was endorsed by God. Therefore, people even went to the desert to hear him preach the Word (Matthew 11:7).

B. A reed swayed by the wind?

A reed is equal to something flimsy, weak and delicate, and implies that such a person is easy to break, or that he is fearful or cowardly. John the Baptist was not a reed swayed by the wind. He was strong in the exposition of his message, reliable in his testimony and stable in his call. He even paid with his own life for the consequences of his message. He renounced cowardice by not betraying his ideal Master.

C. A man dressed in fine clothes?

John the Baptist looked for a natural garment, that is, he did not worry much about what he would wear, since it was not his priority (Matthew 3:4); Actually, what John was most concerned about was the garment of spiritual anointing so that he could bear witness to Jesus Christ (John 1:6-7). Today, young people are looking more for clothing brands to show their vanity. However, the humble in spirit will seek to consecrate their heart beyond what they can wear.

D. A prophet?

In the Gospel of John 1:19-21, there is a testimony by John the Baptist when priests and Levites asked him who he was. For this reason, with this fourth question, Jesus wanted to make it very clear who John the Baptist really was (Matthew 11:9). In today's religious world many people call themselves "anointed"; but John the Baptist teaches that it is better to let the Master himself give his opinion about one.

John did not recognize himself as a prophet, but Jesus said that he was more than a prophet (Matthew 11:9). There is no greater privilege than receiving the approval of Christ for office.

Two things made John the Baptist great, and therefore, live in humility: "...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit..." (Luke 1:15) and "...the Lord's hand was with him" (Luke 1:66). Look for these ingredients to live in humility. The words of John the Baptist stir the inner being when he says: "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30).

Review/Application:

Based on today's study, ask the students to answer the following questions:

1. What has to decrease for me to be humble? (My ego.)
2. What did the people see John the Baptist to be like? (Like a teacher and the Elijah.)
3. Why did John the Baptist send his disciples to ask Jesus a question?
4. What were the two revelations that made John the Baptist great, according to Luke 1:15, 66? (First, "...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit..." and second, "...the Lord's hand was with him...".)

Challenge:

Try to have deep conversations with God in personal prayer. During the week, ponder what on today's lesson and identify areas of your life that you have not completely surrendered to God, and confess any sins you have committed. In a spirit of prayer, ask God to purify your heart and sanctify you completely. If you think this is right for you, go see a spiritually mature person to help you in prayer for this reason.

Objective: That the students understand that it's necessary to serve the Lord while we have the opportunity.

Memory Verse: "Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Matthew 26:13

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** A ball or a stuffed animal and music.
- **Instructions:** The object must be passed from one person to another to the rhythm of the music, the sound of a tambourine, or clapping. When the sound stops, whoever has the object must tell about the most important gift they have received and who gave it to them.

Reflect on how generous people can be when giving a gift. Special emphasis will be placed on the best things that the students have done or given to God.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** A teddy bear or doll.
- **Instructions:** The teacher will tell a story. Example: "When I came today I met "Teddy" (name of the bear or the doll). He was sad and lonely, and he needs a lot of love. I told him that this group could give him a lot of love." Ask each young person to show their love for Teddy with a gesture, such as a kiss, a hug, an affectionate phrase (I love you Teddy), etc. Once everyone has shown their love for Teddy, say: "Teddy is very happy because you all love him, but now he wants to ask you one more favor. Teddy wants to give you a gift of his love: he wants you to repeat the gesture you made to Teddy to the person next to you."

Ask: What would you do if you knew that your loved one had only a few days left to live?
In life, there are opportunities that will not be repeated. If one lets them pass, one may later regret not having taken advantage of them (ex. giving a hug, a smile, timely advice, a kind word, etc.). At funerals, people often share a regret at not having done some things that they can never do again because their loved one is gone.

Read Matthew 26:1-13. Divide the class into two groups to dramatize the Bible story. In point 1, one group will role-play the religious leaders' plan and in point 2, the other group will role-play how Jesus was anointed with perfume. Then have the students analyze the attitudes of the main characters.

1. A sinister reunion

The annual celebration of Passover (Matthew 26:2), the feast in which the Jewish people celebrated their liberation from slavery in Egypt and salvation from the death of their firstborns (by smearing the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of every Hebrew family) was close. It was a party where they thanked God for His amazing deliverance.

The Lord Jesus showed one of His divine attributes, omniscience (the full knowledge of all things past, present and future) when He let His disciples know what would happen to Him during the Passover (v. 2).

The leaders of the meeting: The religious leaders came together to devise schemes to trap Jesus with deceptions and then kill him (vs. 3-4). They were very clever because they knew that Jesus had blessed many people with his miracles and they feared that by arresting Him in the middle of the Passover feast, the people would be upset. They were not concerned with justice, but rather with the disorder that might attract the cruelty of the Roman army.

Principal Priests: In the courtyard of the high priest's residence, there was a meeting of the principal priests, who were the authority on religious matters. They were respected, recognized, influential people who had been called to be intermediaries of the people before God. However, those religious leaders were far from pleasing God with their actions. How is it possible that those who should guide people's hearts to God were the enemies of the Son of God?

Elders of the town: There was also this group called the Sanhedrin, who were representatives of the main families, and together with the high priest, they could judge civil and religious matters. They represented integrity and righteousness, the promoters of justice. The high civil and religious hierarchy was not immune to wickedness and sin. Scripture rightly says: "...if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall!" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Before beginning this point, invite the second group to role-play this passage.

2. Tribute in Bethany

A. Friends in Bethany

Bethany was a village located a short distance from Jerusalem, and the Gospels show that Jesus had some friends there (Lazarus, his sisters, and Simon the leper) whom He visited when He was in that region. Influential leaders were His enemies, while Jesus found hearts willing to meet their Savior among the simple people.

B. An unforgettable gift

According to Matthew, Jesus was in the house of Simon the leper, eating with his disciples, when a woman arrived with an alabaster bottle of very expensive, pure, tuberoso perfume, and poured it on Jesus' head. Although Jesus' social status was not prominent like that of the priests or the Sanhedrin, the woman mentioned by Matthew 26 had enough esteem, respect, and gratitude for him to spend a significant sum on the perfume she poured on the Lord. That woman had to overcome many barriers to offer Jesus that gift. In addition to the criticism of those attending that dinner, Matthew adds that Jesus' disciples scolded her severely (vs. 8-9).

Right now one must reflect on what things one stopped doing for the Lord, knowing that one must do them. It is necessary to get to work, as the woman from Bethany did, because if one waits, it may become too late and one will spend the rest of one's lives regretting not doing what should have been done. Certainly God has done great things in one's life which deserve gratitude. If one knows that God requires something of one, one should not delay in doing it.

Review/Application:

Ask your students to answer the following questions:

- a). What did Jesus announce would happen at Passover?
- b). What sign of his divinity was seen when Jesus announced what would happen during Passover?
- c). What does it mean to you that respectable people in society plotted the death of Jesus?
- d). When Jesus received the perfume offering, what was the reason for his disciples' anger?
- e). What motivated the woman to give Jesus such an expensive perfume?

Challenge:

Write something you know you must do to please God:

Now make a resolution to do it this week. Do not wait! You do not know if you will have another opportunity.

Objective: That the students will review the events of Jesus' ascension and reflect on its significance.

Memory Verse: "While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven."
Luke 24:51

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Instructions:** Ask if any of the students were able to be with someone at their time of death and, if they wish, have them share what that moment of farewell was like. If not, you can ask them if they have had to say goodbye someone or participated in a farewell event. Allow them to relate details of those moments. You can make an example of yourself or remember a farewell that was done in church. Associate it with Jesus' farewell to his disciples and begin the lesson.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Blackboard and chalk, or large paper and marker(s).
- **Instructions:** On the board write in large letters the title: "The Ascension of Jesus" and ask your students to write (taking turns on the board) questions that non-believers may have about this event in Jesus' life. Reflect together on the doubts and questions that this event can cause, as well as the assurance and promises that this event means for the followers of Christ.

The authors Luke and Mark relate that after Jesus spoke with the disciples and gave His last instructions, as His physical body was raised from the earth and taken to heaven until it was no longer seen by the eyes of the disciples.

During his three years of ministry here on earth, Jesus performed many miracles. However, in the last minutes of his time here, his human and physical body literally "...was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight" (Acts 1:9) and the disciples stood watching from the ground.

1. The meaning of the ascension for Jesus

The history of the Gospels says that Jesus became a man "made of flesh and blood," just like any other human being on planet earth. He needed to sleep (Mark 4:38) and eat (Mark 14:22); he also felt sadness and wept (John 11:35); he was angry (Mark 11:15) and suffered (Luke 22:44). That same human Jesus was the one who lived among his disciples as one of the people of Nazareth. However, after being crucified and dying, Jesus was not like other people, but rose and appeared before His disciples, demonstrating the power of God, the power that conquers even death.

In the days between His resurrection and ascension to heaven, Jesus appeared to the disciples in the place where they were gathered (Luke 24:36-49) and showed them the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and asked them to eat with Him. These evidences are one more example of the human body of Jesus. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus appeared to two of his followers who were traveling to the city of Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), and spoke with them in a clear and understandable way. This same Jesus was later received into heaven. It is interesting to note that Jesus led a normal, human life in the days before his ascension to heaven. He also continued teaching his disciples the way to follow God faithfully.

It is interesting to note that this supernatural event of the ascension was experienced by Jesus with complete calm and naturalness (Luke 24:50-53; Mark 16:19-20). It is probable that Jesus was calm because He knew what was happening when He began to ascend to heaven. In John 16:16, Jesus had warned his disciples what would happen.

After being raised to heaven, Jesus was received by his Father into His heavenly dwelling; and this was because Jesus had completed His ministerial task here on earth. For Jesus, the ascension meant that He would go to enjoy the presence of His Father again and they would no longer be separated (Mark 16:19).

2. The meaning of ascension today

In the legal processes of modern society, defendants always seek to have a good lawyer who helps them before the Court and can speak to the judge for them, asking for mercy in the sentence. In the same way, Jesus can be compared to the figure of “a perfect lawyer” who loves one and intercedes with God for one when one fails and needs mercy. Thanks to Jesus who does for one what one cannot do for oneself! (Romans 8:34)

In John 16:7-8, Jesus told the disciples that His going to heaven meant that the Holy Spirit would come to be with them to help them continue the saving mission: “But the fact of the matter is that it is best for you that I go away, for if I do not, the Comforter will not come. If I do, he will—for I will send him to you” (John 16:7 TLB). It is very comforting to know that God had prepared the Holy Spirit to continue accompanying Christians after Jesus’ physical departure. God is a loving God who has everything under His perfect control. Have an attitude of gratitude for Jesus’ ascension since it marks a new stage in God’s plan in which one can enjoy His presence in a personal way in one’s heart through the Holy Spirit.

In John 14:1-4, Jesus was preparing his disciples for his departure. He encouraged them to trust and have peace, and also to retain hope of future life in the presence of God. Jesus, once again, made it clear to the disciples that His ascension was part of God’s wonderful and perfect plan.

Jesus’ ascension to heaven has a very special meaning for His followers regarding their future. Jesus’ going to heaven is a guarantee Christians of going to heaven to be in the presence of God, together with Jesus Christ. It is an unbeatable promise.

Finally, Jesus’ ascension into heaven also has a deep spiritual significance, as it did for Jesus. It continues to establish the path of access to the Father for the believer’s benefit and forgiveness with Jesus as the “intercessor.” It allows one to enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit in the present and guarantees one’s own heavenly presence with Jesus in the future in “My Father’s house...” (John 14:2). These promises are unique and faithful, and thanks to the work of Jesus, one can fully trust that they will be fulfilled.

Review/Application:

Ask the students to complete the following chart.

PROMISES OF JESUS	MY RESPONSE
“Christ Jesus who died...and is also interceding for us.” (Romans 8:34)	I can trust that Jesus wants to forgive me when I fail and sin.
“...for if I do not, the Comforter will not come. If I do, ... I will send him to you” (John 16:7 TLB)	I can trust the Holy Spirit to be with me even when circumstances are difficult.
“... I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am”. (John 14:3)	I can hope that my future, after death, will be good with Jesus.

Challenge: What is your perspective on Jesus going to heaven? What did you hear? Have you ever had questions about this event? Do not forget that God is always ready to help and guide you. By praying and reading the Bible, you will find answers and advice. Above all, remember that God has a perfect plan for your life, just as He did for Jesus. Do not hesitate to share your doubts and questions with me or other mature Christians.

Objective: That the students recognize the importance of the coming of the Holy Spirit and its aftermath on the history of the church.

Memory Verse: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** The Bible, markers of various colors and sheets of paper.
- **Instructions:** Divide the class into three groups and assign them one of the following verses: Acts 2:2, 3, or 4. Ask them to imagine what their verse describes and try to express it through a drawing. Have each group present their drawing and explain the ideas expressed in it.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Small sheets of paper that each contain the phrase “Jesus is risen” in a different language:
 1. Portuguese: Jesus ressuscitou
 2. Zulu: UJesu uvukile
 3. Spanish: Jesús ha resucitado
 4. German: Jesus ist auferstanden
 5. Italian: Gesù é risorto
 6. French: Jésus est ressuscité
- **Instructions:** Give each student a piece of paper with the indicated phrase in a different language. When instructed, they should all read their respective assigned phrase aloud several times at the same time, repeating it for several minutes.

Explain that something similar happened on the day of Pentecost, with the difference being that the people gathered spoke different languages and each understood the message expressed by the disciples.

On the day of Pentecost, something similar to our Christmas and New Years feast occurred: there was a lot of bustle as many people gathered with great joy to celebrate the first harvest. The disciples were gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem were in prayer and supplication during the celebrations. They were expecting the fulfillment of a promise made to them by Christ Jesus: The arrival of the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13). They had no idea what would happen or when, but each day they faithfully waited for the fulfillment of the promise.

The fulfillment of the promise came the day that the Holy Spirit made a spectacular entrance into the hearts and life of the church (Acts 2:2-3). That day, it literally marked a “before” and an “after” for the church. Nothing would be the same again, not for them then, not for the church today!

Pentecost was the disciples’ passage into a deep relationship with God. The presence of the Holy Spirit produced a more intimate level in the experience of their personal faith. This transformation resulted in their consecration and witness to others. During Pentecost, the gospel message began to spread throughout the world.

1. Pentecost: a great feast of gratitude

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.” (v. 1). Pentecost was a great feast. The Jews celebrated various religious holidays throughout the year that commemorated significant events. Pentecost was one of the three most important (along with the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles). During this feast, gratitude was given to God especially for the fruit of the earth and the work of each person.

The Greek word from which this is translated “Pentecost” means “fifty” because it was held the day after seven weeks after the first sheaves of wheat were harvested. God chose the feast of Pentecost to fulfill his promise made by Jesus in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;...” From that moment on, the worldwide expansion of the gospel began through the witness of the church.

2. The great miracle of Pentecost

It can be said that what happened on the day of Pentecost is the most important miracle in the history of the Christian church. The Holy Spirit came upon believers to abide permanently in them, purifying their hearts from sin and filling them with power for service. Some miraculous signs accompanied the coming of the Spirit in the upper room. Those supernatural things filled those present with astonishment. In verses 2 through 4, these three extraordinary events appeared in order of succession: “Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house...” (v.2); “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them” (v.3); “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (languages) as the Spirit enabled them.” (v. 4). The wind and fire were symbols of the powerful cleansing presence of the Holy Spirit.

Ask: Why do you think they spoke in other languages? It was a sign to unbelievers and a way to get their attention, as well as a means of communicating the gospel to outsiders. But the central miracle of Pentecost was the filling of the Holy Spirit. “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...”. The word “filled” means “fullness”, and it speaks of total consecration to God (sanctification).

3. The Pentecost message: salvation for all

Jesus gave the command to his disciples to preach the gospel to every person. This command is known as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23). The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, began the movement of expansion of the church to the whole world. The power that the Holy Spirit brought upon the church at Pentecost enabled those in the upper room to be faithful witnesses of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask: What is the result of Pentecost in your own life? Have you received that power that allows you to be a faithful witness of Jesus?

Review/Application:

Divide your students into groups and have them write the meanings of the following phrases or words. Then have them share their meanings with the class.

- Pentecost (Fulfillment of the promise.) Acts 1: 8
- Speaking in other tongues (They spoke in other languages.) Acts 2:4
- The message of salvation (Salvation through Jesus Christ is for everyone.) Acts 2:8-11
- When Pentecost came (They were all together in one place.) Acts 2:1

Challenge:

Plan personal evangelism time for the class in the neighborhood or community where your church is located. Before the activity, schedule time for group prayer to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Objective: For the students to analyze the events of the birth of Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecies.

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

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Printouts with the following Bible verses.
- **Instructions:** Organize your students into two groups. Direct each group to choose a moderator and a secretary. Next, have them read carefully and attentively the following Bible verses and identify the fulfilled prophecy related to Jesus.
 - Micah 5:2. Place of Birth (Bethlehem).
 - Isaiah 7:14. Description of mother (A virgin).
 - Isaiah 9:7. Reign on who's throne and over who's kingdom (David's).
 - Isaiah 9:1. He would live in (Galilee).
 - Hosea 11:1. He would spend time in (Egypt).

Share the conclusions with the rest of the group.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Paper, pencils or pen.
- **Instructions:** Organize your class into three groups, according to the number of students you have. Ask them to appoint a moderator and a secretary. Give each group two sheets of paper and pens. Ask them to divide a sheet into two columns. In one they'll list all the gifts they've ever received at Christmas time, in the other, the gifts they've given. The secretary will record all the group's contributions. When they've completed this part, have them read John 3:16, and answer the following questions What was God's gift to mankind? For what purpose did he give that gift? Ask them to share the answers with the other groups.

One of the wonderful stories in the Bible that impacts us the most is the one that has to do with the birth of our Lord. It's the mystery of the incarnation (John 1:14; 1 Timothy 3:16).

1. The birth of Jesus fulfilled biblical prophecy

It's impressive how the ancient prophecies that announced the arrival of the Redeemer of humanity were fully fulfilled in the person of Jesus. From the proto gospel, the first announcement about a Savior, in Genesis 3:15, until the resurrection mentioned in the Messianic Psalm 16:8-11, they were strictly observed. Nothing was left out. Everything was accomplished.

If we look at the context and the historical circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth, one might think humanly that they were just coincidences of life or history. But when we think of God as the Lord of all, whom nothing takes by surprise, and we exercise our faith, we realize that He was always in control and that He used the decree of an empire as pagan as the Roman one, to fulfill His Word and his holy purposes.

Luke, the physician and historian, gives us the details of this event (Luke 2:1-7). An edict was issued (v.

1). Legally speaking, it was a mandate or decree published with the authority of the emperor, Augustus Caesar, and therefore, it was mandatory for all the inhabitants of the empire. The decree stated that: “everyone should be registered”. “And everyone went to their own town...” (Luke 2:3-5)

“...the time came for the baby to be born...” (Luke 2:6). This has to do with Mary’s nine months of pregnancy, but also with God’s timing. Divine providence had brought them to Bethlehem, and while there, the days of his birth were fulfilled. We aren’t given the date; tradition established it as December 25, but there are no historical or biblical bases that give certainty about that.

2. A demonstration of God’s love

A. Made the incarnation possible

The incarnation of the Word, of the Son of God, expresses in an unmistakable way how God loves us. Both the Father and the Son agreed for the second person of the Trinity to become man and shed all that was of his own, of all his eternal glory, to come, live and sacrifice himself for us. We cannot separate the divine act of this incarnation from the salvific purpose that motivated it. It was so that God would have the opportunity to connect with human beings, draw near to them and save them (John 3:16).

B. It is love with purpose

The well-known text of John 3:16 teaches us of that great love of God. The heavenly Father gave up the most precious thing, his Son, to give us salvation (Romans 8:32). His purpose was to give us salvation and eternal life. “... that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God’s love made it possible for human beings to access this type of present and eternal life.

C. It is eternal love

Since the sad and unfortunate fall of mankind, and although God disciplined them by throwing them out of the garden, God continued to love them. Human beings, even in their most rebellious times, continued to be subjects of God’s love. Although He had to punish them on several occasions, He always showed them the opportunity for repentance to turn to Him. God’s rebellious people in the Old Testament knew of the greatness of the Lord’s love for them (Jeremiah 31:3).

3. A response of humanity

The person and message of Jesus must be brought to all people and places where they don’t know him. Let everyone know about Him and have the opportunity to have Him in their hearts. Let’s not skimp on time, energy, or money, doing all we can to ensure that Jesus Christ is known to people of all ages in all places.

Review/Application:

Organize your students into two groups. Have them read the following

Bible verses: Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Hosea 11:1; Isaiah 9:1-2, 11:1; Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 1:22-23, 2:5-6, 2:16-18, 2:22-23, 4:12-16. Have your students divide a sheet of paper into two columns. On the left side, place the Bible verse that contains the prophecy, and on the right side, the verse that talks about the fulfillment.

Biblical Prophecy

Fulfillment

Isaiah 7:14

Matthew 1:22-23

Micah 5:2

Matthew 2:5-6

Hosea 11:1

Matthew 2:15

Isaiah 9:1-2

Matthew 4:12-16

Isaiah 11:1

Matthew 2:22-23

Jeremiah 31:15

Matthew 2:16-18

Challenge:

Write down your thoughts on what Christmas means to your life and share them with our class the next time we meet.

Objective: For the students to consecrate their lives to the Lord in the first class of the new year.

Memory Verse: “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”. Romans 12:1

Introductory Activity (12 - 17 years).

- **Materials:** Cardstock cards (10 x 15 cm) and pencils.
- **Instructions:** Briefly explain the importance of having a “life project,” and the opportunity of being in the first class of the year. Before making any plans, one must ask the Lord for his direction so that one can be guided by him.

Ask the question: What would you like to be when you grow up, and why?

What would you like to be and do for the Lord in church?

Give the students about 5 minutes to write down their answers and then allow time for them share what they wrote.

Introductory Activity (18 - 23 years).

- **Materials:** Paper and pencil for each student.
- **Instruction:** Once paper and pencils are given to each student, they should write down their answer to: What did you plan to do at the beginning of last year? What were your personal achievements? What were your achievements at work, school, and in service to the Lord? Discuss the answers for a few minutes.

The new Year. It will be good if the young people who belong to the congregation would consecrate their lives to the Lord and those who have already done it can evaluate how they are doing.

1. Consecrate physical members (body parts)

The writer to the Hebrews wrote about the discipline of God which serves to aid the maturity of his children (Hebrews 12:5-8). Any child of God who remembers the difficult moments that they have had to live through this last year, will be able to consider that everything that they have experienced has helped them in some way to grow towards perfection and maturity in their spiritual lives. With that consideration in mind, the author of Hebrews instructs his readers to do the following:

A. Raise fallen hands

Ask: According to Hebrews 12:12a, what can we do with our hands? Lift up hands in praise God and extend them to help the needy: widows, orphans, immigrants, street children, the sick, people with disabilities, etc. With hands human development projects that benefit society in an integral way towards the full life that Jesus offers can be carried out.

B. Strengthen the knees

The exercise of walking moves one forward (Hebrews 12:12b). In order to avoid being paralyzed, it is necessary to move the legs by exercising, walking, running, jogging and dancing. How can the knees and legs be used to extend the Kingdom of God? By visiting friends who do not know Christ, visit hospitals and prisons, go to help new works or missions that are spreading in and outside the districts. When one gets involved and advances in different ministries, one sees the possibilities of service, and in the midst of service, God can call one to do missions in one’s country or to be missionaries to other cultures, beyond one’s nation.

C. Make level paths

“Make level paths for your feet” (Hebrews 12:13). Holiness should be reflected in one’s walk: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do...” (1 Peter 1:15). This verse calls followers of Christ to a different way of living (one must have a lifestyle that reflects holiness) at all times and in all places a life of integrity, not only in our relationships with Christians in church or with the congregation, but also at home, work, school, university, etc.

D. So that the weak will not leave the way

“... so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.” (Hebrews 12:13). One’s behavior can motivate others. God can help one not to be a stumbling block to one’s neighbor. One needs to ask God for help so that one can live exemplary lives and show Christ in everything one does.

2. Consecrate relationships

A. “Live in peace with everyone”

God requires that one should always take care of relationships with one’s neighbor (Luke 10:27). It is important that Christians live in peace with their fellowmen or their neighbor (Hebrews 12:13a). And the closest neighbor is in one’s home ... one’s parents and siblings ... and continues outside our house with friends, neighbors and colleagues. Sin disturbs relationships, therefore it must be ended quickly (Ephesians 4:26).

B. “Without holiness no one will see the Lord”

Continuing with relationships, holiness has to do with the condition of the Christian as a result of their relationship with God. It is vital for a Christian to have a healthy relationship with God and be always obedient to Him because that is the only way one can be holy. If one wants to see God, one has to live a holy life. It is up to the individuals to consecrate their life, as Hebrews 12:1 instructs, putting off sin.

2. Diligence and conservation

• Diligence

Once one begins the journey of life in the new way (Christian way), one must be diligent (Hebrews 12:15-16). One has to be careful how one lives. One cannot indulge in worldly things that entertain the flesh temporarily yet defile the soul. One must also assist other fellow Christian so that they do not get lost during the journey. Diligence must be accompanied by perseverance, constant monitoring and evaluation so as not to get lost along the way. This will result in being able to carry out the decisions made.

• Conservation

It is important to take care of what one has, what one has cultivated for years. The good habits, the good relationship with God and others, the life of holiness. One must be careful not to commit the same sin as Esau, who exchanged his birthright for a bowl of lentils, which the writer describes as profane. In other words, it is belittling sacred things for temporary ones. The same writer to the Hebrews says: “...how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?” Hebrews 2:3a.

At the end, remember what the Apostle Paul said: “...you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Review/Application:

Allow time for the students to answer the following questions:

1. What does it mean for you to consecrate yourself to God?
2. How could you consecrate: Your personal relationships? Yourself physically? Yourself intellectually? Yourself socially? Service to the Lord?
3. Why is monitoring and evaluation important in reaching goals?
4. How will you stick with your commitment today?

Challenge: During the week, pray that God will help you understand His plan for your life, and that from this plan, you can have clear objectives for your future. Write down the ideas that come out of this prayer time.



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