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Zion Assembly Church of God

The Mission of the Church

“Missions as Vocation” – January 1, 2012

Lesson – “Jesus – Missionary Extraordinaire”

Scriptures – Mark 2:14-17

Introduction to lesson

Do you understand the mission and purpose of the church? Understanding our mission depends on our understanding the mission of Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus illustrates the mission of the church. He is our pattern and example. Therefore, we should strive to be like him. Why did Jesus come into this world? Toward what purpose did he work? What did he seek to accomplish? If we want to be successful in fulfilling our mission, then we must understand his mission and then pattern our mission after him.

Key Verse: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Who was Levi? What was his occupation? (v. 14)
- ✚ How did people look at publicans (tax collectors)? Hint: Look at the word associated with publican. (v. 15)
- ✚ What did Jesus call Levi (Matthew) to do? (v. 14)
- ✚ In this story, where was Jesus dining (eating)? (v. 15)
- ✚ What people were dining with Jesus and his disciples? (v. 15)
- ✚ How did the religious leaders react to Jesus, when he ate and visited with people of questionable reputation? (v. 16)
- ✚ Jesus corrected their wrong attitude. Let us consider what he said in response to them. Who truly needs a doctor? (v. 17)
- ✚ Why do we need Jesus in our lives?
- ✚ What must sinners (sin-sick people) do in order to follow Jesus? (v. 17)
- ✚ Considering the call of Levi and the way that Jesus reached out to the publicans and sinners, what was his mission and purpose?

Think about it: Clearly, the religious leaders of Jesus’ day did not understand the reason that he came into the world. The Bible teaches, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Jesus came calling sinners to repentance. We all need to be saved from our sins. We all need Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees (the Jewish religious leaders) could not see that even they needed to be saved. But this was the very mission and purpose of Jesus Christ – he came to seek and to save the lost. Thus, the mission of the church should follow Christ’s pattern. Let us commit our lives to seeking and saving the lost which need to be saved by Jesus Christ.

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The Mission of the Church

“Missions as Vocation” – January 8, 2012

Lesson – “Our Missionary Mandate”

Scriptures – Matthew 28:16-20

Introduction to lesson

The last three verses of Matthew’s gospel are called the “Great Commission.” In these verses, Jesus placed the great responsibility of his mission on his church. This commission was not an option, but rather it was mandatory – a commandment given by God. This command that Jesus gave to his eleven disciples (apostles) is now given to us. His “Great Commission” is our missionary mandate. We have the awesome responsibility and privilege of taking Christ’s gospel and truth to the world. In today’s lesson, let’s take a look at the responsibilities of the “Great Commission.”

Key Verse: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What had Jesus received from the Father? (v. 18)
- ✚ What are the limits of Jesus’ power (authority)? (v. 18)
- ✚ Why is Jesus’ power (authority) important to us? Why do we need his power and authority?
- ✚ What is our first responsibility in the “Great Commission?” (v. 19)
- ✚ As we go into all of the world, what is our main responsibility? (v. 19)
- ✚ When we teach and reach people with the gospel, what then should we do “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?” (v. 19)
- ✚ What is our final responsibility in the “Great Commission?” (v. 20)
- ✚ Have we fulfilled the “Great Commission” if we teach some of God’s Word, but we neglect to teach the whole truth? (v. 20)
- ✚ How do we know that the church will complete the “Great Commission?” (v. 20)

Think about it: Jesus is counting on us to fulfill his “Great Commission.” He has entrusted us with the command of going, teaching, and reaching the world with the truth he has given us. Being saved and knowing Jesus Christ as our personal Savior is a great privilege. While many have heard and had the opportunity to follow Jesus, many others still need a true witness of our eternal hope and salvation. Moreover, multitudes need to hear the whole truth – the “all things” that Jesus commanded. Therefore, we must know the Word of God ourselves, in order to teach his Word to others. This is an important part of fulfilling our missionary mandate. Let us all be true witnesses for Christ.

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The Mission of the Church

“Missions as Vocation” – January 15, 2012

Lesson – “Our Unique Mission”

Scriptures – John 17:14-18

Introduction to lesson

What is the purpose of the church in the world? Another way of asking this question is, “What is the unique mission of the church?” Of course, we exist for the purpose of reaching the lost and saving sinners. But how do we make a real difference and impact the world for Christ? What is Christ calling us to be and to do in the world? Have you ever seen someone profess to be a Christian, but then the person acts in such a way that contradicts his testimony? When our actions do not match our testimony, our mission is ineffective. In John 17:14-18, Jesus was praying to his Father for his disciples. Let’s see what he prayed for you and me.

Key Verse: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Remember that Jesus is praying to the Father (God). What had Jesus given to his disciples? (v. 14)
- ✚ What did the disciples experience as a result of receiving God’s Word? (v. 14)
- ✚ How did receiving the Word of God change their lives? (v. 14)
- ✚ When we follow after Jesus Christ, does God want us to be cut off from the world around us? Does the Lord want us to withdraw from everyone and everything in this world? (v. 15)
- ✚ From what does Jesus want to protect us and keep us? (v. 15)
- ✚ Why are we not of the world? What makes us not of this world? (v. 16)
- ✚ Jesus prayed for God to sanctify us (set us apart). How (with what) does God sanctify his people? (v. 17)
- ✚ What does Jesus Christ want us to do with the truth of God’s Word? Where does Jesus want to take us? (v. 18)
- ✚ Whose missionary example are we following? (v. 18)

Think about it: The Word of God, the Bible, is God’s truth. God’s people are sanctified (set apart and made holy) through the truth and sent into the world with the truth. Being sanctified and being sent explain the mission of the church. We are called to be different from the world and that difference is our witness. We do not just speak our message, but we live out our message before the world. The truth we speak to the world actually sanctifies us and sets us apart from sin and ungodliness. So, the world can see the power of God’s truth at work in our lives. When we truly live out what we profess, then we truly impact the world for Christ. We have this unique mission.

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The Mission of the Church

“Missions as Vocation” – January 22, 2012

Lesson – “Answering the Missionary Call”

Scriptures – Mark 1:14-20

Introduction to lesson

When your parent calls for you, what do you do? Do you pretend you don't hear? Do you hide out? Do you ignore the call? If you love and respect your parent, then you answer the call promptly. Besides, if you don't answer, you'll probably get yourself in lots of trouble. God's call to his children is clear. We have a missionary call – to follow Jesus and reach the lost with his gospel (“good news”) of salvation. In today's lesson, we'll see how the disciples answered the missionary call of Christ.

Key Verse: “And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him” (Mark 1:18).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Based on the ministry of Jesus Christ, what is the mission of the church? (v. 14)
- ✚ The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of Jesus Christ in our lives. How should we respond to the message of Jesus Christ? (v. 15)
- ✚ When Jesus saw Simon (Peter) and Andrew, what were they doing? What was their business? (v. 16)
- ✚ What two things did Jesus say to them, when he called them? (v. 17)
- ✚ What does it mean to “become fishers of men?”
- ✚ When Jesus called them, how long did it take them to make up their mind? (v. 18)
- ✚ What did they have to do (forsake) to follow Jesus? (v. 18)
- ✚ Next, who did Jesus see, and what were they doing? What was their business? (v. 19)
- ✚ When they followed after Jesus, who did they leave behind? What did they forsake? (v. 20)
- ✚ Do you think it was easy to leave everything behind in order to follow after Jesus?

Think about it: We all must answer the call of God by saying “yes” to Jesus Christ. Ignoring his call is the same as saying “no!” His call is simple: “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). To follow Jesus and fulfill his call, we must not allow anything to stand in our way. No doubt, following Jesus and answering his missionary call will require us to surrender our lives to him. Have you accepted his missionary call as your own personal call from the Lord? Are you willing to “fish” and “catch” lost souls for Jesus Christ? The mission of the church begins when we answer this call from the Lord.

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The Mission of the Church

“Personal Evangelism” – January 29, 2012

Lesson – You Will Be Witnesses

Scriptures – Acts 1:4-9

Introduction to lesson

Today, we are beginning a study on “Personal Evangelism.” What is personal evangelism? It is sharing your testimony of Jesus Christ with others. Perhaps you may never become an evangelist who preaches the gospel from city to city, but you can do the work of an evangelist through sharing your personal witness with others. You may think, “I don’t know how to share my testimony – I don’t know what to say.” Nevertheless, Jesus promised to give us the power to be his witnesses through the Holy Ghost. Let’s study about this promise.

Key Verse: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ The disciples were to wait in Jerusalem. For what were they to wait? (v. 4)
- ✚ Was receiving this promise optional or necessary? (v. 4)
- ✚ John baptized with water. With what did Jesus promise to baptize his disciples? (v. 5)
- ✚ Just before Jesus ascended to the Father, what were his disciples thinking about? What was on their minds? (v. 6)
- ✚ Did Jesus share their concerns? What was most important to Jesus at this time? (vv. 7-8)
- ✚ What would the disciples receive when the Holy Ghost came upon them? (v. 8)
- ✚ What would they do after being baptized with the Holy Ghost? (v. 8)
- ✚ Where would they be witnesses of Christ? (v. 8)
- ✚ After Jesus gave them this promise, what happened? (v. 9)

Think about it: Jesus Christ, the Word of God, did not make a pointless promise. Just prior to his ascension, he promised the Holy Ghost because we need the Holy Ghost in order to complete his mission. As a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, God desires to baptize and fill you with Holy Ghost power (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:37-39). Thus, every born again child of God, and especially every member of the church, should seek to be baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost.

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Common Bonds” – April 1, 2012

Lesson – “A Forgetful People”

Scriptures – Exodus 16: 1-3

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever felt like others have a better life than you do? If we are not careful we can become dissatisfied with the Lord and the church and be tempted to look elsewhere for guidance and truth. Depending on our situation, we may even begin to doubt the Lord and question the very foundation of our faith. Our study today will look at the children of Israel and how they looked elsewhere for guidance and truth. They not only forgot the Lord’s promises, but also the hopeless bondage & slavery they had endured for 430 years in Egypt.

Key Verse: “And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness” (Exodus 16:2)

Questions to Discuss:

- How long had the children of Israel been out of Egypt before they started complaining? (vv. 1)
- Who started complaining about Moses and Aaron? (vv. 2)
- How had the children of Israel “altered” the memories they had of life in Egypt? (vv. 3)
- What was the physical need that caused the people to start complaining? (vv. 3)
- What were they beginning to think God’s plan for them was? (vv. 3)
- What are the dangers of just looking at our current situation in life and not remembering God’s faithfulness through trials in our past?

Think about it:

Sometimes we forget where we came from or where we could be, if it had not been for God’s grace & mercy in our lives. It’s easy sometimes to look at others around us & think, “They have it made”. But it only takes a closer look to see that without God in our lives, there is no real happiness or hope. Knowing God’s promises and remembering God’s faithfulness is one way we can avoid the pitfall of becoming “A Forgetful People”.

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Common Bonds” – April 8, 2012

Lesson – “A New Identity”

Scriptures – Exodus 19: 1-8

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever been in a group of people and wondered if you were really a part of the group or just someone they were allowing to be with them for the moment. Growing up is full of decisions and choices. Who we choose to be with and what we allow ourselves to do in life will form a part of our identity that will be recognized by others. Choosing to live for God will bring you to a cross roads. Will you commit yourself to the Lord’s commandments or choose to live out your own. What will be your identity?

Key Verse: “Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:5,6).

Questions to Discuss:

- How long had the children of Israel been out of Egypt? (vv. 1)
- What did God remind the children of Israel of? (vv. 4)
- What did God promise the children of Israel? (vv. 5-6)
- What was the requirement for the children of Israel to receive these blessings? (vv. 5)
- What did the children of Israel promise to do? (vv. 8)
- When making a promise or covenant to God, can we change our mind & still receive the blessings of God?

Think about it:

We all have the same decision to make as the children of Israel. Will we choose to covenant ourselves to God & live out a life that is pleasing to him? Will you be a part of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation? Do you want “A New Identity”?

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Righteousness in Relationships

"Common Bonds" – April 15, 2012

Lesson – "The Promise Fulfilled"

Scriptures - Matthew 21:33-46

Introduction to lesson

We have learned how God set apart the children of Israel to be His church. They were given this identity to ultimately bring salvation to the world through Jesus Christ. However, when Christ came, the Jews as a whole rejected Him. But God would still keep His promise. Christ restored and reestablished the church with a "remnant" (or part) of the Jews and opened the doors of the church to the Gentiles.

Key Verse: "And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils" Mark 3:13-15.

Questions to Discuss:

- What happened to the servants the landowner sent to receive fruit? (vv. 35, 36)
- What happened when he sent his son? (vv. 38)
- What did the hearers of the parable say would happen to the vinedressers when the landowner comes? (vv. 41)
- Who was the "stone the builders rejected"? (v. 42)
- Who is Jesus talking to when he says, "the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it"? Why did He say this? (vv. 45)

Think about it:

Christ came to the church as its Lord and savior, but he was rejected. It was at that point Israel was rejected. Yet Jesus restored the church, beginning with the 12 disciples under the terms of the New Covenant. This restoration was prophesied more than 800 years earlier through the prophets Isaiah & Micah. The time had come & "The Promise Fulfilled".

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Common Bonds” – April 22, 2012

Lesson – “An Established Purpose”

Scriptures – Matthew 16: 13-19

Introduction to lesson

We’ve seen that the Jews in the New Testament as a whole rejected Christ and therefore Christ rejected them. In turn, Jesus restored His church under the terms of the New Covenant. But what was the foundation and purpose for the newly established church, the restored “Israel of God”? This will be the focus of our discussion today.

Key Verse: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.”
Matthew 28:19, 20

Questions to Discuss:

- Why do you think Jesus first asked the disciples who other men were saying He was”? (v.13)
- Was Peter’s answer to Christ’s question correct? (v.16)
- How did Peter know the answer to His question? (v. 17)
- What is the significance of Peter’s revelation?
- Is it necessary for the church to have the same revelation, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?
- Would you agree that Peter’s divine revelation that Jesus is the Son of God, is the foundation of the church?
- What are we to do in response to this revelation?
- Why is the great commission important?

Think about it:

Peter’s divine revelation and response to Christ’s question is the very foundation of the church. Christ then follows up with the great commission as noted in the Key Verse above. Christ commands the church to teach all nations because the Gospel is for everyone. He commands them to teach men to observe “all things whatsoever” which includes the message of the church. He then reassured them that He would always be with them. Thus Christ revealed their foundation and purpose.

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Righteousness in Relationships

"Common Bonds" – April 29, 2012

Lesson – "The Blessed Hope"

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Introduction to lesson

We have learned how God set apart the children of Israel to be His church. And through the rejection of Jesus Christ, He established His church with a remnant of Jews and opened the doors of the church to the Gentile people. He then commissioned them to reach the world for Him. Christ then promises to return to rapture the church away to be with him forever.

Key Verse: "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words"

1 Thessalonians 4:17, 18.

Questions to Discuss:

- What does the Apostle Paul mean when he says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God?" (v. 50)
- What was Paul saying when he said "We shall not all sleep?" (v.51)
- How fast will we be changed? (v. 52)
- What will we be changed from and what will we be changed to? What do you think that means? (v. 53)
- Will we be burdened with the fear of death ever again? (vv. 54-57)
- How does Paul assure us that we can be part of this great event? (v. 58)
- After reading these scriptures, how does it make you feel about what's ahead for the church, nervous or excited?

Think about it:

The rapture of the church will be a time of pure joy for those that have prepared themselves to be part of this great event. Jesus promised us in John 14:3 that He will come again and take us to be with Him. It is hard to imagine how this event will unfold. Even though many in Christian circles today deny this event to be true, we can know it is true because the proof is in the Word of God. Our hope should not be put in things of this world, but the promise of eternal life with Christ is our "Blessed Hope".

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Righteousness in Relationships

"Relationships with the World" –

May 6, 2012

Lesson – *"In the World but not of the World"*

Scriptures – John 17:1-26

Introduction to lesson

The church is called to be different from the world. God requires His people to be holy and separate from the world. We are thus in the world but not of the world. Further, we are in the world to affect the lost with the transforming power of God's grace. Indeed, we are "ambassadors" of His heavenly kingdom in this world to reconcile it to God. We have been sanctified for this purpose.

Key Verse: "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" John 17:14.

Questions to Discuss:

- What was Christ doing in John chapter 17, and to whom was he speaking? (v. 1)
- What did Jesus say was eternal life? (v.3)
- Why do you believe Christ prayed for God's people to not be taken out now, but to be kept from evil? (v. 15)
- What does it mean to be sanctified? Is our sanctification important to Christ? Why? (v. 17)
- Does every believer have a ministry or work to do while in the world? (v.18)
- Through what means did Christ pray that God's people would be sanctified? (vv. 17, 19)
- What is one of the abundant themes from John chapter 17 that Christ desires for his people? (vv. 11, 21, 22, 23)

Think about it:

We should be careful to guard against forming any improper relationships with the world around us, both for our own sakes and for the sake of our witness to others. In His prayer in John 17, Jesus emphasized that the unity and holiness of the church is so "that the world may believe". Thus in order to fulfill our calling and purpose, we must be made holy and live above reproach. We have been set apart by God in this world, and we should cherish this high calling of God as a great honor.

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Righteousness in Relationships

"Relationships with the World" –

May 13, 2012

Lesson – "Not Ashamed of the Gospel"

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 1:18-27

Introduction to lesson

The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the ability to transform a sinner into a saint. It is because the Gospel has the power to create new life and provides the way to heaven that Satan and those under his influence slander it. The Gospel has no appeal to the lost because it is a plain, unsophisticated and simple message. Those who share the simple truth of Scripture are ridiculed today as in Paul's day.

Key Verse: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16.

Questions to Discuss:

- What did Paul mean by "to them that perish foolishness?" (v. 18)
- What did Paul reveal was the power of God? (v.18)
- Is the "preaching of the cross" limited to only talking about the death of Christ?
- What will happen to the wisdom of the wise? (v. 19)
- What did God use to save the people that believed? (v. 21)
- How does man's wisdom stack up against the wisdom of God? (v. 25)
- Does God only call those wise, mighty, and noble? (v. 26)
- What did God choose to confound the wise? What did He choose to confound the mighty things? (v. 27)

Think about it:

A lot of "Christians" today believe the Gospel must be changed to fit modern society. They say we are living in a different age and people must be ministered to differently. *What are your thoughts on this?* The Gospel includes the glorious hope of the unity of God's people in one body, the perfection of the church, the rapture and resurrection, the second coming of Christ, the 1000 year reign of Christ and the church on earth, and the creation of a new heavens and new earth. It is for these reasons that Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." Neither should we be ashamed today of the Gospel: it is still the "power of God unto salvation."

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Relationships with the World” –

May 20, 2012

Lesson – “The Saving Power of God”

Scriptures – 1 Peter 1:18-25

Introduction to lesson

There is no other experience that can equal the benefits of saving grace. Salvation gives one hope for today but also a more glorious future than one can imagine. We looked last week at Romans 1:16 and focused on Paul’s conviction that he was not ashamed of the Gospel. The believer who has actually been transformed by the power of the Gospel has the witness within himself and bears the fruit of righteousness.

Key Verse: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:18.

Questions to Discuss:

- Can money or status in life bring salvation? (v. 18)
- How does the blood of Christ compare with that of the sacrificial lambs in the Old Testament? (v.19)
- When do you think God realized that His Son would have to be crucified to redeem mankind? (v. 20)
- Can one believe in God apart from believing in the cross of Christ? (v. 21)
- How did Paul say we can love one another with a pure heart? (v.22)
- Explain what it means to be born again of incorruptible seed. (vv. 23, 24)
- Paul declares that God’s word is eternal (v. 25). It will last forever and will never change. If preaching the cross is the power of God, then why do so many seem to be ashamed of the Gospel of the cross?

Think about it:

The apostles’ doctrine that there is salvation only in the Gospel was drawn from Jesus’ teachings. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Peter also said, “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby men must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The world needs to know that salvation only comes through Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We must tell them that this is the saving power of God.

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Relationships with the World” –

May 27, 2012

Lesson – “An Open Book”

Scriptures – Matthew 5:14-16

Introduction to lesson

The last few lessons have focused on what the Gospel does for us—how its power transforms us inwardly and makes us new creatures in Christ. This lesson deals more particularly with how the Gospel empowers us to relate to others. You should ask yourself: Am I open in sharing my faith with others? Is God glorified in my life? We are called to be the light of the world. Is your light shining?

Key Verse: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

Questions to Discuss:

- When Christ said, “ye are the light of the world, was He talking individually or as a group? (v. 14)
- Why did Jesus compare the church to light? (v.14)
- What happens if you put something over a candle and hide it? How does this relate to us? (v. 15)
- What happens if you raise a lit candle high in a dark room? How does this relate to us? (v. 15)
- Why should our light shine before men? (v.16)
- Do we obtain our salvation by doing good works?
- True or False: Good works should be the *result* of our salvation, not the *cause* of our salvation.
- Many have said, “My walk with the Lord is just between me and God.” With what you’ve learned today, do you consider your walk with the Lord to be private and to yourself?

Think about it:

Light by definition signifies, “that which makes it possible to see.” Science tells us that light travels about 186,000 miles per second. That translates to about 671 million miles per hour. These numbers are mind-boggling. Yet Christ compared His people to light. Christ desires that our light shine before men. We are books laid open for the world to read. This responsibility should move us to greater faith and greater works. Our walk is not private, and our lives should be open for all to see.

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Christ Centered Relationships” – June 3, 2012

Lesson – “The Right Motive”

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 4:1-6

Introduction to lesson

As children of God, we are commanded to live upright before God and also before others. Since we have this high calling, we should avoid all appearance of sin and evil in our lives. But we should also be sure that our motives for doing what’s right are pure. It’s possible to have “right conduct” with “wrong motives”. Only if our hearts are truly sanctified, will our motives and conduct please the Lord.

Key Verse: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, **who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart.** Then each one’s praise will come from God”. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Questions to Discuss:

- Give some examples where people inside and outside the church can have right conduct but wrong motives.
- If the results of our actions are good. Then why is it necessary to always achieve those good results in a Godly way?
- Do you believe that as a Christian, we have a type of ministry to fulfill? If so, how will your motives affect that ministry?
- Which is more important; our outward actions, or the purity of our hearts that produce our actions? Explain.
- Finally, think about and answer these questions: If my parents didn’t bring me, would I still come to church? If the punishment of hell wasn’t real, would I still serve the Lord? Are my motives pure?

Think about it:

Obedying the teachings of Christ is important, but we must live them out with the right motives in order to please the Lord and to be effective in our witness to others. It is a true saying, “We are the only Bible many people ever read” (compare Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3). The only way for our motives to be right is for our heart to be right; and the only way for our heart to be right is to be saved, sanctified and living a holy life for God.

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Christ Centered Relationships” - June 10, 2012

Lesson – “Those Over Us”

Scriptures – Hebrews 13:7-17

Introduction to lesson

Leadership is important; in fact, leaders are essential for order, discipline, and progress. Every nation and government must have leaders. Since the church is also a nation, a “holy nation”, it too must have leaders. God calls and sets leaders over us in the church for our edification. Our role as members is to follow those whom God has set over us, not blindly, but we should follow them as they follow the Lord.

Key Verse: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

Hebrews 13:17

Questions to Discuss:

- What does Apostle Paul encourage us to do to those that “have rule over you?”
- In your own words, what does it mean to “remember” our leaders?
- In the church, explain what it means to have “authority”.
- Is all authority good? Can it ever be bad? How?
- What two things are we to do when leaders ask us to do something for the Lord? (v. 17)
- Why, according to the same verse are we to do those two things?
- Should our obedience be to the leader just because they are the leader, or should it be as that leader follows the Lord?
- True or False: Leaders are responsible for those they are leading. Explain. (v. 17)

Think about it:

In the church, leadership is vital to the function and flow of all that is accomplished in the church. Jesus ordained leaders when He established the New Testament church. He called them Apostles. So God views leadership as a necessity. Without our leaders in the church, there would be no unity in our message locally or around the world. When obeying leaders, three things should always be involved: 1) a “pure heart,” 2) a “willing mind,” and 3) a “mature judgment.” Then we can follow them in faith.

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Christ Centered Relationships” - June 17, 2012

Lesson – “Honor and Prayer for Civil Authority”

Scriptures – 1 Timothy 2:1-5

Introduction to lesson

In the previous lesson we discussed the authority of leadership in the church. Today we are going to consider civil authority in particular and the need for us to pray for political and civil rulers. Satan is especially active in tempting civil rulers to abuse their God-ordained powers, for many governors and civic leaders are unsaved and become easy prey to hinder the saints of God.

Key Verse: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”. (Romans 13:1)

Questions to Discuss:

- Define in your own words: supplications, prayers and intercessions. (v.1)
- Paul declares that these principles in addition to thanks should be given for whom? (v.1)
- Read Romans 13:1-7. Paul is dealing with civil (pubic) authority (government) here. Do you believe as a Christian it is important how we view government leaders?
- Why does Paul say we should pray for our leaders? (v.2)
- If our prayers are to bring a quiet and peaceable life, then why is there so much chaos in the world?
- If we’re praying and there is no peace, should we give up and say “what’s the use”?
- Is God concerned with the view we have of leaders? (v.3)
- What result should we desire to see through our prayers for our leaders? (v.4)

Think about it:

The Apostle Paul plainly instructs the child of God to pray for the civil rulers over them. In doing so, not only are we being obedient, but by prayer God can open the door to work through those leaders to bless His people and to bring about an easier journey for His church (Prov. 29:2). As a child of God we should refrain from being caught up in partisan politics, but instead we should pray that our leadership would follow the leading of the Holy Spirit so his actions may fall in line with the Word of God.

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Christ Centered Relationships” - June 24, 2012

Lesson – “A Friend of God”

Scriptures – John 15: 12-14

Introduction to lesson

Everyone wants to have friends. Some of us desire a best friend, one that is always there for us, no matter what. But the term *friend* in the Bible, has a deeper meaning than what we normally attach to the word. The biblical image of “friend” implies intimacy and close communion and trust. Jesus told his disciples they were his friends, “if”. Being a friend to someone, always carries a responsibility on our part, “if”, you are to remain friends. Take a closer look in today’s lesson & see if you are a “Friend of God”.

Key Verse: “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God”. (James 2:23)

Questions to Discuss:

- What is your definition of a friend?
- What are some characteristics one would have, to be considered a friend?
- Jesus commanded us to “love one another”. How can we fulfill that commandment? Is it really possible? (v.12)
- Give some examples how Christ had loved His disciples (v.12) up to this point?
- Why did Christ give this example of love and friendship? (v.13)
- Christ taught great things on love and friendship. His focus then turned to being His friend, or a friend of God. How can we achieve that? (v.14)
- If our obedience to God determines our friendship with Him, we should ask ourselves “Are we truly friends of God by obeying Him in all things”?

Think about it:

The true friend of God desires to grow ever closer to God and seeks always to please Him. Friendships between people come as a result of getting to know one another through communication. It is no different with God and His friends. One gets to know God better by prayerful communication (John 17: 20-26). But God also draws near to us through our good works that pleases Him (John 15: 4-5, 7, 8).

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Spirits of Destruction

“Adultery and Fornication” July 1, 2012

Lesson: Sensuality

Scriptures: Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18-24

Introduction to lesson

Sadly, we live in a sensual, lustful world. For example, turning on the TV can be risky, because we never know what will appear on the screen. Many shows promote sexual themes, featuring people who are scantily dressed, and who speak crude language. Sometimes, commercials can be more disturbing than the actual programs themselves. But the problem is not merely television. These days, sensuality is practically everywhere – in books and magazines, on billboards, at school, at the mall, and in clothing trends and fashions. Today, people publicly joke and laugh about sexual topics. Nothing is sacred anymore. What has happened to our society? Let’s go back to the beginning in Genesis and see if we can understand God’s perspective about sexuality.

Key Verse: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Ro. 12:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ God created human beings in what likeness? (Ge. 1:27)
- ✦ What genders (sexes) did God create? (v. 27)
- ✦ For what primary purpose did God create the two genders (sexuality)? (v. 28)
- ✦ Did God create man (the male) to be alone? (Ge. 2:18)
- ✦ What need did Adam have? (v. 18)
- ✦ Were the animals suitable for Adam’s need? (vv. 19-20)
- ✦ How did God make a companion for Adam? (vv. 21-22)
- ✦ Who brought (gave) the woman to Adam as a companion? (v. 22)
- ✦ How did Adam understand his relationship to the woman that God had given to him? (v. 23)
- ✦ What kind of relationship do husbands and wives have together? (v. 24)

Think about it:

God made two sexes (genders) for the purpose of multiplying and filling up the earth. Today, there are more than 6 billion human beings on the face of our planet Earth. When God made humans, male and female, he made woman out of man, and brought her to the man as his companion. This was the beginning of marriage. God gave one woman to one man, that the two should become one. Thus, God placed sexuality into the marriage relationship between one woman and one man; and that is where sex belongs – in the marriage relationship. When we take sexuality out of the safety of marriage, it becomes sensual, lustful, and dirty. This is what has happened to our society. But as Christians, we must not be conformed to this world.

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Spirits of Destruction

“Adultery and Fornication” July 8, 2012

Lesson: Pure Hearts

Scriptures: Mark 7:1-5; 18-23

Introduction to lesson

Do you wash your hands before you eat? It's a good, healthy habit. But it's not a sin, if you forget to wash. In Mark 7:1-5, the Jewish leaders were finding serious fault with Jesus' disciples because they ate food without first washing their hands. Washing hands was a part of their tradition in the Jewish faith. Jesus was displeased with these leaders because they placed an overemphasis on things like washing, while they ignored the more important matters of the heart. In today's lesson, we will see that sin first begins in the heart. As Christians, we need to guard our hearts against sensual desires and fleshly lusts.

Key Verse: “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matthew 12:35).

Questions to Discuss:

- # Can the things that we eat infect our bodies?
- # Can the things that we eat somehow infect (pollute) our souls (v. 18)
- # Why not? (v. 19)
- # What defiles (pollutes) the soul of a person? (v. 20)
- # Where does sin begin? Where does it come from? (v. 21)
- # What sins are at the top of the list? (vv. 21-22)
- # What kind of things defile (pollute) the soul of a person? (v. 23)
- # What must we guard and protect from sensual, fleshly desires? (vv. 21, 23)

Think about it:

Purity begins in the heart, not in external actions. We are not holy simply because our speech and actions appear holy. We are holy because our hearts are made pure through faith in the blood of Jesus. Therefore, our speech and actions will be holy, when our hearts are pure and holy (Matthew 12:35). Indeed, we live in a sensual and sinful world. Sexual words, images, and ideas bombard us. Nevertheless, as Christians, we must resist sensual temptations and keep our hearts pure. We cannot avoid temptations always, but we can turn our thoughts away from sensuality and toward the Word of God (the Bible). By reading and thinking on the truths of God's Word, our hearts are kept pure and holy.

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“Adultery and Fornication” July 15, 2012

Lesson: A Godless Society

Scriptures: Romans 1:21-28

Introduction to lesson

Sexual sins are rampant in our society – it is systemic wickedness (evil that is prominent in our culture, even a way of life). Everywhere we turn, sensual and fleshly desires are promoted, and celebrated. How wicked is our world? Youth having premarital sex, adults being unfaithful to their spouses, divorce and remarriage, and unmarried people just living together, are all common practices. In addition, prostitution, homosexuality, transvestitism, incest, and pornography, all demonstrate the destructive nature of sexual immorality in our world. In today’s lesson, we will see how a society falls into these kinds of sins.

Key Verse: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”

(Romans 1:22)

Questions to Discuss:

- # What causes the hearts and minds of people to become spiritually darkened? (v. 21)
- # What happens when people reject the knowledge of God and trust in their own wisdom? (v. 22)
- # What results from rejecting God? (v. 23)
- # How does God respond when a society rejects him? (v. 24)
- # What two things have happened to people when they give themselves to idolatry and sexual sins? (v. 25)
- # What extremely wicked lifestyle demonstrates that a society has rejected the knowledge of God? (vv. 26-27)
- # What is the conclusion of a people that completely turn away from the knowledge of God? (v. 28)

Think about it:

We are privileged to know Jesus Christ. Our relationship with him will keep us from the wickedness of this world. Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4). Truly, the world is full of wickedness; but as long as we keep our relationship with Jesus Christ, he will keep us from the wicked evils of this world. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we refuse to follow the foolish ways of this world. We will not participate in its sensual desires, because Jesus lives in us.

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“Adultery and Fornication” July 22, 2012

Lesson: Don't Be Deceived

Scriptures: Ephesians 5:3-6

Introduction to lesson

Sin is deceptive. Sexual sins do not present themselves as destructive and deadly, but rather as glamorous and fulfilling. The movie and entertainment industry have encouraged these false ideas. Rather than declaring the wickedness of pre-marital and extra-marital sex, and God's judgment against such, society at large has promoted and provided “safe-sex,” especially among teens and young adults. Physically and morally, there is no such thing. In addition to physical and spiritual problems, sex outside of marriage causes emotional and psychological devastation.

Key Verse: “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 5:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What does the apostle Paul say in regard to sexual sins? (v. 3)
- ✚ Why should these sins not be named among us? (v. 3)
- ✚ What other sins are improper for the child of God? (v. 4)
- ✚ Rather than sensual, filthy talk, what should come out of a Christian's mouth? (v. 4)
- ✚ What does Paul declare concerning the adulterers and fornicators of this world (whoremongers and unclean)? (v. 5)
- ✚ What is Paul's warning to us? (v. 6)
- ✚ How do people deceive? (v. 6)
- ✚ What is the final outcome of adulterers and fornicators (v. 6)

Think about it:

Satan is a liar. Don't be deceived by him. He is out to destroy you. He would like nothing other than to rob you of your purity and innocence. No matter what your friends may say about it, God made sex for marriage. Abstinence is the Biblically moral choice that honors both God and one's own body.

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“Adultery and Fornication” July 29, 2012

Lesson: God's Judgment

Scriptures: Luke 16:13-25

Introduction to lesson

In Luke 16:18, Jesus' prohibition against adultery appears to be out of place, at first glance. But through studying the context of verse 18, the truth becomes extremely clear. What does Jesus teach before this verse? What does Jesus teach after this verse? As we look at the whole story, we will see that God will judge adultery and fornication. Though the world around us accepts these practices, as faithful Christians, we should uphold the righteous standards of God's unchanging Word.

Key Verse: “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery” (Luke 16:18).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How many masters can a servant obey? (v. 13)
- ✚ What are the two masters that Jesus identifies? Explain. (v. 13)
- ✚ Why did the Pharisees ridicule and scoff at Jesus' teaching? (v. 14)
- ✚ What major error were the Pharisees guilty of committing? (v. 15)
- ✚ How does God feel about people when they are wrong, but profess their own righteousness? (v. 15)
- ✚ What is God's solution for sin and unrighteousness? (v. 16)
- ✚ How do we know that God' moral laws are enforced and binding for humanity? (v. 17)
- ✚ What particular sin, resulting from divorce and remarriage, did Jesus identify as the rejection of his Word (moral law)? (v. 18)
- ✚ What judgment did Jesus teach for those who reject his Word (v. 29) and rather seek to satisfy their own desires? (vv. 19-25)

Think about it: Following and obeying Jesus Christ is not always the easy choice. Lazarus is an example of those who suffer for the Truth. The god of this world (mammon) offers many pleasures, but the end is everlasting punishment. However, by faithfully serving Jesus Christ and obeying his Word, we will receive eternal life.

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Spirits of Destruction September 2, 2012

A Slanderous Spirit

Lesson – “The Slanderer”

Scriptures – Job 1:6-11; 2:1-5

Introduction to lesson

When someone attacks you with their words, how does it make you feel? Words are extremely powerful – they can either build up or tear down. Often their negative effects are long-lasting. Of course, the Bible teaches against slandering our neighbor, because it is against God’s love. Why does one person attempt to tear down the character and reputation of another? Slander is devilish (of the devil). The word “devil” in the New Testament, when referring to Satan, actually means “slanderer and accuser.” In today’s lesson, we will see how Satan seeks to slander the children of God.

Key Verse: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians. 4:29).

Questions to Discuss:

- # Why do you think Satan shows up, and why does he roam the earth? (Job 1:6-7; 1 Peter 5:8)
- # What makes Job the target of slander? (Job 1:1, 8)
- # How does Satan begin to undermine Job’s character? (Job 1:9)
- # What does Satan accuse Job of doing? (Job 1:2-3, 10-11)

NOTE: Read Job 1:12-22, then continue the discussion.

- # Does Satan give up easily? (Job 2:1-2; Luke 4:1-2)
- # How do we know that Job was a godly man? (Job 2:3)
- # How does Satan accuse Job the second time? (Job 2:4-5)

Think about it: When people speak against (slander) their neighbor, they are acting like the devil. They are working and cooperating with the enemy, who desires to tear down and destroy. As Christians, we should never tear down others with our words. We should always attempt to build up others with words of encouragement and affirmation. As the old saying goes, “If you can’t say something good, don’t say anything at all.” If we attack the character of others, not only will we be guilty of slander before God, but we will also hurt our Christian witness among those who are listening to us and watching our behavior.

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A Slanderous Spirit

Lesson – “The Tongue”

Scriptures – James 3:2-12

Introduction to lesson

In James 3:1-12, the apostle warned the saints about an unruly member of the body, the tongue. He described how the tongue can become an instrument of destruction. Sharp words can wound and cut down your neighbor. As Christians, we should praise the Lord with our mouths, and we should never tear down our neighbor with our tongues. If we surrender our tongues to slander, we not only destroy others, but even ourselves.

Key Verse: “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Pr. 21:23).

Questions to Discuss:

- # What indicates a perfect Christian? (v. 2)
- # When a Christian can keep their tongue from evil, what else does it say about them? (v. 2)
- # How do we control the movement of a horse? (v. 3)
- # How do we control the movement of a ship? (v. 4)

Note: A Christian’s tongue (his mouth) indicates the control that he has over his own body. If he can control his tongue, then he also has power over his whole body.

- # What is necessary to start a blazing fire? (v. 5)
- # **What happens when we allow our tongues to speak slander against our neighbor? (v. 6)**
- # No man can tame his unruly tongue. But who can tame the tongue and give us the power to speak good things, rather than evil? (vv. 7-8)
- # What does it mean, if blessing and cursing come out of a Christian’s mouth? (vv. 9-10)
- # If you add salt water to fresh water, what happens? Can both come out of the same source? (v. 11)
- # Does one type of fruit tree produce a different kind of fruit? For example, does an apple tree produce oranges? What does this say about a Christian and his tongue? (v. 12; see also Mt. 7:17-18, 20)

Think about it: As Christians, we should speak good things, bearing good fruit. Indeed, our tongues testify to our true selves. When we speak good things, this says that we are seeking to please the Lord in our lives. Let’s speak words of blessing to those who need to hear and see Jesus in us.

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A Slanderous Spirit

Lesson – “Enduring Slander”

Scriptures – 1 Peter 2:21-23

Introduction to lesson

When someone speaks against us, our human tendency is to defend ourselves and speak against our opponents. Of course, this reaction only stirs up more strife and conflict – a battle of insults and evil words. Why should we respond to foolish and false accusations? But even more, why should we defend ourselves by speaking such evil words? Rather than lowering ourselves to slander, the Bible teaches a completely different response to it – “Endurance.”

Key Verse: “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Peter 3:10).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Who suffered for our salvation? How did he suffer? (v. 21; read Matthew 27:27-31, 38-44)
- ✚ Being followers of Christ and his example, how should we live our lives? (v. 21)
- ✚ What example did Christ leave us? (v. 22)
- ✚ What kind of words did Christ speak? (v. 22)
- ✚ When he was spoken against, what did he do? (v. 23)
- ✚ When he suffered bad treatment, what did he do? (v. 23)
- ✚ When he was slandered and attacked by his enemies, how did he respond? (v. 23)

Think about it: Jesus endured all kinds of evil words spoken against him, yet committed no sin, leaving us his example of faithfully enduring slander. The apostle Peter wrote, “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:9). In fact, when we are spoken against, Jesus told us: “**Rejoice**, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Matthew 5:12). When you bite your tongue and endure slander, just remember: “great is your reward in heaven.”

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A Slanderous Spirit

Lesson – “Gossip and Rumors”

Scriptures – Proverbs 26:18-25

Introduction to lesson

“Hey, psssst – let me tell you a secret. Now don’t tell anybody else, but I was just told something that you will not believe. I could be wrong about this, but it’s what I heard from a very reliable source. My brother’s friend’s neighbor’s cousin was the one who heard about it. So I’m just sure it’s true.” Wait – Stop! When people talk in a secretive manner about things they’ve heard, you need to quit listening. Don’t help to spread gossip. Stop it!

Key Verse: “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people” (Leviticus 19:16).

Questions to Discuss:

Suggestion: Play the “Telephone Game” where one person whispers a secret to the next person until everyone has repeated the secret. Does the last person agree with what the first person actually said and meant?

- ✚ Is it funny to you, when someone spreads rumors and talks about you behind your back? (vv. 18-19)
- ✚ Are gossip and rumors hurtful? (v. 18)
- ✚ What happens when people spread gossip? What happens when we stop gossip? Complete this sentence: Stopping gossip is like putting out _____. (v. 20)
- ✚ What kind of people stir up strife? (v. 21)
- ✚ When we swallow (accept) gossip, is it good for us? If we spread gossip, is it good for others? (v. 22)
- ✚ Does gossip have the appearance of being evil and bad for us? Or does gossip seem attractive and good for us? (v. 23)
- ✚ When people spread gossip and rumors, can what they say be trusted? (vv. 24-25)

Think about it: People often do not think twice about spreading rumors, but they do not like to have rumors spread about them. When we hear idle talk, we should ask ourselves: 1) “Does this sound like gossip,” and 2) “Would I want others to talk about me in this way?” When we recognize gossip and slander, we should put an end to the conversation or at least change the subject to a more positive topic.

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Spirits of Destruction

Jealousy and Envy – September 30, 2012

Lesson – Envy and Strife

Scriptures – Genesis 4:1-8

Introduction to lesson

How do you feel when other people succeed? When someone makes a higher test grade than you, or when someone is better at sports than you, how do you feel toward that person? When others have success, envy provokes us to say, “It’s not fair,” or to ask, “Why them, and not me?” Envy stirs up feelings of ill-will and ultimately leads to strife and conflict. Envy causes one to work against his neighbor. In today’s lesson, we will see how envy provoked Cain to destroy his own brother.

Key Verse: “Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” (Ga. 5:26).

Questions to Discuss:

- # Describe the differences between Cain and his brother Abel? (vv. 1-2)
- # What kind of offering did Cain bring to the Lord? (v. 3)
- # What kind of offering did Abel bring to the Lord? (v. 4; Hebrews 11:4)
- # How did God respond to their offerings? (vv. 4-5)
- # How did Cain feel about the rejection of his offering? How did he feel toward Abel? (v. 5)
- # What was the Lord’s warning to Cain? (vv. 6-7)
- # Why did Cain kill Abel? (v. 8; 1 John 3:12)

Think about it: While Abel had faith in God and offered a superior sacrifice, Cain’s offering was rejected by the Lord. Cain was outraged that his offering was unacceptable, and he was also upset that Abel’s offering was acceptable to God. His jealousy and envy drove him to conflict with his brother. He did not like the fact that God was pleased with Abel. God warned Cain to do what was right and to keep himself from sin, but he did not listen. Clearly, Cain had no cause to envy Abel. Plain and simple: Cain’s offering was not pleasing to God. Instead of accepting responsibility for his own sin and failures, he placed the blame for his failures on Abel! He unleashed his bad feelings on his brother, ultimately murdering him. Where envy exists in one’s heart, strife and conflict will surely arise. Let’s be on guard against envy and strife.

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Spirits of Destruction

Jealousy and Envy – October 7, 2012

Lesson – Envy and Strife

Scriptures – Genesis 4:1-8

Introduction to lesson

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Questions to Discuss:

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- ✚ What kind of offering did Cain bring to the Lord? (v. 3)
- ✚ What kind of offering did Abel bring to the Lord? (v. 4; Hebrews 11:4)
- ✚ How did God respond to their offerings? (vv. 4-5)
- ✚ How did Cain feel about the rejection of his offering? How did he feel toward Abel? (v. 5)
- ✚ What was the Lord’s warning to Cain? (vv. 6-7)
- ✚ Why did Cain kill Abel? (v. 8; 1 John 3:12)

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Spirits of Destruction

Jealousy and Envy – October 14, 2012

Lesson – Moved with Envy

Scriptures – Genesis 37:1-11, 18-20, 27-28, 36

Introduction to lesson

In today's lesson, we will study the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob. Sometimes, people will hate you and try to hurt you simply because they are jealous of you. When envy takes over the mind of a person, jealousy controls and influences his actions. Because of their envy, Joseph's brothers despised him, plotted against him, and finally betrayed him. Although his brothers were against him, "God was with him."

Key Verse: "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him" (Acts 7:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- # Describe Joseph's relationship with his father? (vv. 1-3)
- # Describe Joseph's relationship with his brothers? (vv. 4-8)
- # Why did his brothers envy him? (vv. 9-11)
- # Because of their envy, what did they plan on doing to Joseph? (vv. 18-20)
- # What did their envy actually cause them to do to Joseph? (vv. 27-28; Acts 7:9)
- # Because of their envy, what finally happened to Joseph? (v. 36)

Think about it: Joseph's brothers were moved with envy. They plotted against him because of their extreme hatred. In selling him to the Midianites, they thought they were getting rid of him forever. But envy cannot stop God's plan in the life of a faithful servant of the Lord. Though they were working against Joseph, God was surely with him. Although their envy caused Joseph to endure many hardships in Egypt, this was the beginning of God's future plan of deliverance for Jacob and his people. In Joseph, God raised up a leader to provide for the children of Israel (Jacob). So remember, all that the devil plans against us for our destruction, God is able to turn it around for our good. When others move against us with envy, we should take courage. God is with us.

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Spirits of Destruction

Jealousy and Envy – October 21, 2012

Lesson – Envy and Rivalry

Scriptures – 1 Samuel 18:5-16

Introduction to lesson

The spirit of envy causes rivalry. When one person feels threatened by the success and attention that another receives, this causes rivalry. Have you ever had someone against you, who always opposed you, but you could not understand the reason why? If you picked the color “white,” he protested for “black.” If you answered “yes,” she replied “no!” Sometimes, envy in one’s heart is the cause of such rivalry.

Key Verse: “And Saul eyed David from that day and forward” (1 Samuel 18:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- # As a commanding officer in Saul’s army, David was full of wisdom. What was his reputation among the people? (v. 5)
- # When Saul and David returned from fighting with the Philistines, what did the women sing? (vv. 6-7)
- # Why was Saul so upset? (v. 8)
- # How did Saul feel about David after this? (v. 9)
- # What did Saul’s jealousy and envy provoke him to do? (vv. 10-11)
- # What happened to Saul’s and David’s relationship after this? (vv. 12-13)
- # Why was Saul so threatened by David? (vv. 14-16)

Think about it:

David was highly favored by God and by the people. He was their champion; but Saul could not accept David’s success. Because of Saul’s envy and wickedness, he became David’s chief rival and archenemy. He imagined that David was also against him. However, in the face of Saul’s envy and opposition, David kept a right spirit and persevered in God’s purpose and plan for his life. He never lifted up his hand against Saul. David eventually had to seek refuge from Saul in the land of the Philistines, the enemies of Israel. In fact, their rivalry was not resolved until Saul’s tragic death in a battle with the Philistines.

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Spirits of Destruction

Jealousy and Envy – October 28, 2012

Lesson – “A Self-Destructive Spirit”

Scriptures – John 11:45-53; 12:10-19

Introduction to lesson

How destructive is the spirit of jealousy and envy? We often overlook this, but it was one of the human factors that contributed to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Envy produces a lustful, greedy desire – a desire to take from others. In today’s lesson, we will see envy as an evil desire that worked behind the scenes seeking to take Jesus’ life.

Key Verse: “For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy” (Mark 15:10).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What happened after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? (John 11:45)
- ✚ What did the Pharisees and chief priests think about these things? (vv. 46-48)
- ✚ What did Caiaphas, the High Priest, suggest as a solution? What did they determine to do? (vv. 49-53)
- ✚ Who else did the chief priests want to put to death and why? (John 12:10-11)
- ✚ What happened when the people heard that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem? Describe the event. (vv. 12-16)
- ✚ What was one of the main reasons that so many people showed up to meet Jesus when he entered Jerusalem? (vv. 17-18)
- ✚ What was the Pharisees response to these events? (v. 19)

Think about it: The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day were constantly provoked to jealousy and envy as Jesus’ influence grew among the people. Rejecting him and his teachings, they worked against his rising popularity as a spiritual leader. Because of their wicked envy, they plotted to destroy Jesus, but ultimately they destroyed themselves and their own people (Matthew 27:18, 25). In A.D. 70, about forty years after these events, Jerusalem and its people were destroyed by the Romans. Envy is self-destructive. It moved the Jewish leaders against Jesus, and in turn, caused the people to become responsible for his death, bringing the judgment of God upon them all. No matter what, we should avoid envy and jealousy!

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – November 4, 2012

Lesson – Spirit of Love

Scriptures – 1 John 4:7-12

Introduction to lesson

In 1 John 4:1-6, John explains how the world has counterfeit, false spirits, called the spirit(s) of antichrist. These wicked spirits are against Jesus Christ, seeking to undermine his authority and truth. They hide among prophets or preachers who teach false doctrines. They look and talk religious, even speaking in Jesus’ name, but they are against Christ. However, God’s true church is known by the Spirit of God dwelling among the children of God. God’s church is a church of love because the Spirit of God, who lives in us and among us, is the Spirit of love.

Key Verse: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Jn. 13:35).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why should Christians love one another? (v. 7)
- ✚ Name two things that “loving one another” demonstrates? (v. 7)
- ✚ Why does love show that we know God? (v. 8)
- ✚ How do we know and understand God’s love? (v. 9; John 3:16)
- ✚ Why is it possible for us to love God? (vv. 10, 19)
- ✚ Why should we love one another? (v. 11; 1 John 3:16)
- ✚ When we love one another, what two things do people see in us? (v. 12)

Think about it: The Spirit of God’s church is the Spirit of love. When love is missing in the church, our message is “as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Co. 13:1). Our witness is not effective. But love working in the church shows the world that God’s Spirit is among us. In the world, it’s much easier to hate; but God has called us to love – even to love our enemies (Mt. 5:44). Though people cannot see God physically, they can see God’s love working in us, one to another.

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – November 11, 2012

Lesson – Spirit of Truth

Scriptures – Ephesians 5:8-13

Introduction to lesson

When Jesus Christ was brought before Pontius Pilate for judgment, he said to Pilate, “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). Pilate then asked Jesus, “What is Truth” (v. 38)? Today, the church has this same responsibility – to speak the truth of Christ to the world. Like Pontius Pilate, the world is asking, “What is truth?” In a world of religious and moral confusion, standing for God’s truth and righteousness sets us apart as God’s church.

Key Verse: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How does the Bible describe the difference between the world and the church? (v. 8)
- ✚ How should we walk? (v. 8)
- ✚ What does “walk as children of light” mean? (v. 9)
- ✚ What should the church prove (establish)? (v. 10)
- ✚ What should the church reprove (expose)? (v. 11)
- ✚ How bad are the works of darkness? (v. 12)
- ✚ We see Christ’s light in all that is good, right, and true (v. 9). What is the purpose of his light? (v. 13)

Think about it: The church is light in a dark world. We have the responsibility to speak the Word of God and to stand up for all that is good, right, and true. If we remain silent and fail to speak the truth, how will the world know the difference between right and wrong? How will they know good and bad? But as the church declares and lives Christ’s truth, we show the world that we are his church and people.

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – November 18, 2012

Lesson – Spirit of Holiness

Scriptures – Psalm 93:1-5

Introduction to lesson

Often, people think of God’s house as the building where we worship the Lord. For example, we speak about “going to church” as the place of meeting on Sundays. And this is true. However, in Ezekiel 43, God speaks of his house, not merely as a building, but as his chosen people, saying, “Show the house to the house of Israel” (v. 10). Israel had departed from the ways of God. The Lord told Ezekiel to show them what it takes to be his house and his chosen people. The Lord went on to explain that holiness is the law of God’s house. Holiness among God’s people sets them apart as his church in the world today.

Key Verse: “Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever” (Psalm 93:5).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ With what is the Lord clothed or covered? (Ps. 93:1)
- ✚ What did the Lord establish? (v. 1)
- ✚ What was established even before the world? (v. 2)
- ✚ The creation is vast and powerful. The Psalmist gives the sea and waves as an example of its might. But what is mightier and more powerful than the creation? (vv. 3-4)
- ✚ Distinct from all of his creation, what did the Lord establish on the earth? (v. 5)
- ✚ What is the unchanging principle of God’s house? (v. 5)

Think about it: God’s church is unlike anything else on the earth. His church is unlike any other people on the earth. Out of all people, nations, and governments, the church is distinctly chosen to be the house of God, the special place where the Lord abides among his people. God’s church is a holy people.

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – November 25, 2012

Lesson – Spirit of Unity

Scriptures – Genesis 11:1-9

Introduction to lesson

When traveling to other countries, you experience a whole new culture. The food and customs may be very different from your own. But one of the greatest differences is language. When you cannot speak the language, you must have a translator. There are literally thousands of languages and dialects (varieties of a single language) which are spoken in the world today. But imagine a world where only one language is spoken. No matter where you go, everyone understands you without the need of a translator. Well, that is the way it was in the beginning. In today’s lesson, we will look at the story of Babel, when God confused human language.

Key Verse: “And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (Genesis 11:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ In the land of Shinar, what was communication like among the people? (vv. 1-2)
- ✚ When they began building a city and a tower, what goal and purpose did the people have in mind? (vv. 3-4)
- ✚ When the Lord came down to see their construction, how did he describe the people? (vv. 5-6a)
- ✚ Clearly, the people were united. They were all speaking the same language, and they were working together for one main purpose. What did God say about them that shows the strength of their unity? (v. 6b)
- ✚ Though their unity was impressive, were their actions pleasing to the Lord? (vv. 7-9)
- ✚ When do you think unity among people would become displeasing to God?

Think about it: If the people of Babel were able to accomplish so much in their disobedience to God, how much more should we, as obedient Christians, be able to accomplish great things for God? In Zion Assembly Church of God, we are working to take the truth of the gospel to people of all nations. Our goal and purpose is to glorify and honor Jesus Christ. As we walk together and work together in unity, we strengthen Christ’s mission and witness in the world.

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – December 2, 2012

Lesson – Spirit of Prayer

Scriptures – Mark 11:15-17

Introduction to lesson

When people come to our church, they should find Christians who are seeking after the heart of God. They should find a church where God is real among his people. In our coming together, perhaps nothing encourages closeness to God more than prayer. While singing, giving, and preaching are important, prayer is the part of our worship that gives deeper meaning to everything we do in the house of God. Through encouraging prayer among us, people will recognize the Spirit and presence of God among us.

Key Verse: “And he taught, saying unto them, **Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves**” (Mark 11:17).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Who did Jesus cast out of the temple? (v. 15)
- ✚ What did he overthrow? (v. 15)
- ✚ What did he stop from happening? (v. 16)
- ✚ Why do we come together at church? What is the purpose of our gathering?
- ✚ Why do you think Jesus would have stopped all of the buying and selling in the temple?
- ✚ What did Jesus call the house of God? (v. 17)
- ✚ What had the people made of God’s house? (v. 17)
- ✚ What effect does a disrespectful attitude have on our worship?
- ✚ How does a prayerful attitude impact our worship?

Think about it: The church is supposed to be a place where people can meet with God – where they can hear the Word of God and experience spiritual encouragement. If we fail to respect the house of God, we undermine this purpose. But when we make the church a sacred house of prayer for God’s people, the house of God becomes a place where everyone can find hope and salvation in the Lord.

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Doctrine of the Church

“The Church Covenant” – December 9, 2012

Lesson – A Solemn Promise

Scriptures – Matthew 12:33-37

Introduction to lesson

When becoming members of Zion Assembly Church of God, believers take a verbal covenant. The covenant reads, “Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses, that you will accept this Bible as the Word of God, believe and practice its teachings rightly divided, with the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, and agree to walk together as one body in the light of the gospel to the best of your knowledge and ability?” The answer is: “I will by the grace of God.” In taking the covenant, we are promising to obey Christ and his teachings. This is a solemn promise.

Key Verse: “Wherefore putting away lying, speaking every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another” (Ep. 4:25).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How do you determine the goodness of a tree? (v. 33)
- ✚ What is the fruit of a Christian life? How do you know a true Christian?
- ✚ Because of their evil speaking, what did Jesus call the Pharisees (religious leaders)? (v. 34)
- ✚ Where is the source of our words – where do our words come from? (v. 34)
- ✚ What kind of words come out of a good heart? (v. 35)
- ✚ What kind of words come out of an evil heart? (v. 35)
- ✚ Obviously, our words are important because they reflect what is in our hearts. Give another reason our words are important? (v. 36)
- ✚ What kind of words will justify us (or prove that we are right before God) on the Day of Judgment? (v. 37)

Think about it: Clearly, our words are very important because they show what is in our hearts. Therefore, we must be responsible for what we speak. We will give an account of our words when we stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment. When we become members of the church and promise to live by the teachings of the Bible, we should be true to our word. When we become members, our answer to the covenant is: “I will by the grace of God.” Only with God’s help are we able to live by the teachings of the Bible. God knows our hearts, and he knows our desire to please him. When we sincerely desire to obey Christ, he gives us the grace and strength to be faithful to our promise.

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Doctrine of the Church

“The Church Covenant” – December 16, 2012

Lesson – “Authority of the Scriptures”

Scriptures – Matthew 4:1-11

Introduction to lesson

When we become members of the church, we accept the Bible as God’s holy Word, promising to “believe and practice its teachings rightly divided, with the New Testament as [our] rule of faith and practice, government and discipline.” In other words, the Bible gives us the principles that govern the church. Jesus Christ, our Savior, lived his life under the authority of the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 5:17-19). If our Lord and Savior lived in obedience to the principles of God’s Word, then so must we. In Zion Assembly Church of God, we commit ourselves to live under the authority and rule of the Bible. To better understand the authority of God’s Word in our lives, let’s look at the example of Jesus, when he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

Key Verse: “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Who took Jesus into the wilderness, and for what purpose? (v. 1)
- ✚ What did Jesus do for 40 days and nights? (v. 2)
- ✚ How did this affect him? (v. 2)
- ✚ Describe his first temptation. (v. 3)
- ✚ What did Jesus do in response to Satan’s temptation? Hint: “It is written.” (v. 4; Deuteronomy 8:3)
- ✚ Food is important to our lives. We must eat in order to live. But what else is just as important to our lives, especially to our eternity? (v. 4)
- ✚ Describe Jesus’ second temptation. (vv. 5-6)
- ✚ What did Jesus do in response to Satan’s temptation? Hint: “It is written.” (v. 7; De. 6:16)
- ✚ Describe Jesus’ third temptation. (vv. 8-9)
- ✚ Once again, what did Jesus do in response to Satan’s temptation? (v. 10; De. 6:13-14)

Think about it: The Word of God is powerful. Jesus was extremely hungry and, no doubt, physically weak, but he resisted Satan through the power of God’s Word. Case by case, Jesus overcame the tempter by saying, “It is written . . .” (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10). Being unsuccessful in his schemes, the devil “departed from him for a season” (Lu. 4:13; Mt. 4:11). Indeed, the Word is powerful, but in order for the church to experience the power of the Word, we must first submit to the authority of God’s Word. As we live by the Word, we also experience the power of God’s Word in our lives.

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Doctrine of the Church

“The Church Covenant” – December 23, 2012

Lesson – Walking Together

Scriptures – Ephesians 5:1-11

Introduction to lesson

In Ephesians 5:1, the apostle Paul wrote to the church, saying, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as *dear children*.” “*Dear children*” is a term of affection: children who are precious to God. Is it possible to follow God, yet **not** be his “*dear children*?” Just as children can cause grief and worry to their parents, the children of God can grieve the Lord by their wrong attitudes and actions. One thing that troubles a parent is watching their children fight each other. Another grief is watching them make bad choices – choices that will hurt them. In today’s lesson, we will learn how “*dear children*” should walk (live their lives) in a way that pleases the Lord.

Key Verse:

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” (Ephesians 5:1).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How should “dear children” walk (live their lives)? (v. 2)
- ✚ Who is our example of how we should walk in love? (v. 2)
- ✚ How did Christ show his love for us? How should we show our love for others? (v. 2; Ephesians 4:32)
- ✚ How else should “dear children” walk? (v. 8)
- ✚ What does “walk as children of light” mean? (vv. 9-10)
- ✚ In verses 3-5, the apostle Paul spoke of wicked practices and different kinds of sin. What is his warning to those who do such things? (vv. 5-6)
- ✚ What did Paul say “dear children” should do? (vv. 7, 11)

Think about it: When believers become members of the church, they agree to walk together as one. As we walk in the love of Christ, and as we walk in the light of God’s Word, we can walk together as one and please the Lord as his “dear children.”

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Doctrine of the Church

“The Church Covenant” – December 30, 2012

*Lesson – Giving Your Best
Scriptures – Galatians 6:1-5*

Introduction to lesson

Nothing can be more frustrating than doing your own work and also the work of others who fail to do their responsibilities. When you're on a team, everyone should pull their own weight – right? Imagine being on a job, but your co-workers are always goofing off. You are the only one who seems to care about getting the work done. Of course, you don't mind to help a teammate when they really need an extra hand. But a halfhearted attitude among workers will eventually lead to discontentment on the jobsite. If something doesn't change, workers will likely be fired, or you'll probably quit that job, and look for another one. Indeed, everyone must work together and give their best to have success on the job.

Key Verse:
**“For every man shall bear his own burden”
(Galatians 6:5).**

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What should we do when we see a fellow Christian fail the Lord in some way? (v. 1)
- ✚ What attitude should we have when we seek to restore? (v. 1)
- ✚ Why should we be concerned with restoring a brother or sister who fails the Lord? (v. 2)
- ✚ Should we ever feel like we are better than others or too good to help them in their time of need? (v. 3)
- ✚ Would you rather be the one who helps others, or would you rather be the one who is being helped? (v. 4)
- ✚ What did the apostle Paul say about taking responsibility for yourself? (v. 5)

Think about it: In the church, we should encourage one another and help each other. We want everyone to succeed in the faith. When we lend each other a helping hand and lift up one another, we are fulfilling the love of Christ. But ultimately, each believer in the church must live the Christian life for himself/herself. We can't do it all for each other. We must live our own lives, and take responsibility for ourselves. When we all pull our own weight, and take up our own responsibilities in obeying the Lord, the church is a successful and happy place to serve and worship God.

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