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Focus



for
Teens

Sunday
School
Services

Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Trevor Graves

Christ and the Church

“Preaching Christ” – January 4, 2015

Lesson – “The Ultimate Goal”

Scriptures – Ephesians 4:10-15

Introduction to lesson

Olympic athletes train for years in hopes of winning a gold medal. Many times they begin training under the age of ten. They begin training without the physical maturity and skills necessary to compete in the Olympics. But in time, their muscles develop, their skills are sharpened, and they reach their fullest potential. Our Christian life is comparable to the life of an Olympian. We should also be striving to become spiritually stronger and more effective at doing the will of God until we reach full maturity in Christ. This full maturity in Christ is called Christian perfection. In today’s lesson, we will learn how preaching Christ leads to the ultimate goal of perfection for God’s church.

Key Verse: “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Co. 1:28).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Read Ephesians 4:10-15
- + What do you think apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are supposed to do? (v. 11)
- + Why did God give some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers? (v. 12)
- + What do you think is meant by the phrase “edifying the body of Christ?”
- + What is God’s ultimate goal for all of us? (v. 13)
- + What can happen to us if we spiritually remain children? (v. 14)
- + How can we grow up into Christ in all things? (v. 15)

Think about it: God’s aim for the church is clearly perfection in Christ. God wants all of us to become fully mature in him. Preaching the word (preaching Christ) is God’s method to make “the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Ti. 3:17). Each one of us can reach this goal of perfection only if we continue to allow God’s word to renew our minds and shape our lives. Just like an Olympian must follow the directions of their coach, so we must be “doers of the word” following the head of the church, Jesus Christ. It is also important to remember that God has gifted leaders in the church to communicate the word of God for the perfecting of the saints. As God uses our leaders to train us in the word, each one of us can grow to become fully mature in Christ until we all come in the unity of the faith unto a perfect man.

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Christ and the Church

“Preaching Christ” – January 11, 2015

Lesson – “Warning and Instruction”

Scriptures – Mt. 3:1-12; Mt. 4:17; Ac. 2:36-38

Introduction to lesson

There are many churches today that only preach a positive message. They avoid preaching about God’s judgment and wrath against sin, and most neglect to hold each other accountable to God’s standards of right and wrong. Why do some do this? Perhaps, they choose not to address certain issues because doing so makes people feel uncomfortable. Do you think staying positive and making people feel good about their lives is really preaching Christ? In today’s lesson, we will examine a few examples of preachers from the Bible to see if this method of “positive” preaching is the right way to preach Christ.

Key Verse: “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Co. 1:28).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Read Matthew 3:1-12. Do you think John’s preaching made people feel comfortable? Why or why not?
- ✚ What exactly did John say that would have made people feel uncomfortable?
- ✚ When Jesus began preaching, how was His message like John the Baptist’s message? (Mt. 4:17)
- ✚ Read Acts 2:36-38. When Peter was preaching Christ on the day of Pentecost, what did he say that exposed their sinfulness? (v. 36)
- ✚ How did those listening to Peter feel in their hearts? (v. 37)

Think about it: If we are truly preaching Christ, our message will not always be a “feel good” message. Neither will our message lead people to do what seems right in their own eyes. In the book of Colossians, the Apostle Paul referred to Christ and wrote, “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom.” Warning and teaching are therefore essential in preaching Christ. Remember, to preach Christ is to preach the Scriptures. And the scriptures reveal sin and God’s judgment. Our preaching then must include warning to sinners and backsliders. The Scriptures also give specific directions for the people of God to follow. Our preaching therefore must include instruction for God’s people. So then, the right way to preach and tell others about Christ includes warning and instruction.

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Christ and the Church

“Preaching Christ” – January 18, 2015

Lesson – “The Whole Counsel of God”

Scriptures – Ac. 20:26-31; 2 Ti. 3:16-17

Introduction to lesson

Jesus Christ and all he has done for us is the central message of the church. If we are to communicate this message, we must certainly declare his sinless life, death on the cross for our sins, and resurrection from the dead on the third day. However, if we stopped there, those who hear our message would not understand much about who Jesus is nor would they understand the great significance of what He has done for us. Therefore, there is much more to preaching Christ than telling the main events of his life here on earth. In today’s lesson, we will see how to properly preach Christ as we examine Paul’s farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus.

Key Verse: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Ti. 3:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Read Acts 20:26-31. What is the meaning of the phrase “pure from the blood of all men?” (v. 26)
- + How much of God’s counsel did Paul declare to the elders of Ephesus? (v. 27)
- + Paul instructed the elders to “take heed” and “feed the church of God.” What do you think these phrases mean? (v. 28)
- + Why were Paul’s instructions in verse 28 so important? (vv. 29-30)
- + Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. How much Scripture came from God? (v. 16)
- + What was God’s purpose in giving us all Scripture? (v. 17)

Think about it: At its core, the gospel of Christ is very simple, yet there is more to preaching Christ than telling the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. We cannot properly preach Christ unless we preach everything that God has inspired to be written concerning him. In other words, to preach Christ is to preach all the Scriptures. The Scriptures have been given to us from God so that we may truly understand all of his purposes for sending Christ to live, die, and rise again. The Scriptures are full of many doctrines that clarify more about who Jesus is and what he has done for us. Conviction, repentance, justification, regeneration, sanctification, Holy Ghost baptism, spiritual gifts, the perfection and rapture of the church, and many other truths are all part of God’s whole counsel. Let’s get into the Scriptures, so that we can know and share the whole counsel of God.

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Christ and the Church

“Preaching Christ” – January 25, 2015

Lesson – “Laboring and Striving”

Scriptures – Co. 1:28-29; 2 Ti. 2:15; Ep. 6:10-12;
Jn. 15:18-21; 2 Co. 11:23-27

Introduction to lesson

This month we have learned that warning, instruction and declaring the whole counsel of God are necessary to properly preach Christ. We have also learned the ultimate goal of preaching Christ is that we all reach perfection in him. If we are to reach this goal, it will take more than just preaching sermons, teaching Sunday School, and witnessing to friends. The truth is we can do all of these activities and not make the impact God desires for us to make. In today’s lesson, we will learn about the commitment and perseverance needed for preaching Christ effectively and reaching the goal of perfection.

Key Verse: “Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Co. 1:29).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How did the apostle Paul strive when laboring to preach Christ? (Co. 1:28-29)
- ✚ What do you think we should do to study effectively? (2 Ti. 2:15)
- ✚ What does the word “workman” tell us about studying? (2 Ti. 2:15)
- ✚ Why should we put on the whole armor of God? (Ep. 6:11)
- ✚ What do you think it means to “wrestle” against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness? (Ep. 6:12)
- ✚ As we labor and strive to preach Christ, what will we encounter from the world? (Jn. 15:18-21; 2 Co. 11:23-27)

Think about it: Preaching Christ requires continual laboring and striving. It will take our best effort in praying and studying God’s word if we expect to effectively preach Christ. It will also take struggling and fighting against satanic forces which are constantly working against us to deceive. Although we may not labor and strive to the same degree as the apostle Paul, we must all follow his example of laboring and striving according to God’s working. If we humbly give ourselves to God in prayer and studying His word, he will work in us in a mighty way making our laboring and striving effective. Through our praying, studying, ministering, and warring against the enemy, we will be victorious through the power of God. As you seek to preach Christ, remember, it’s not going to be easy; but through God’s help the ultimate goal of perfection can and will be accomplished.

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Writer: Zachary Snyder

Christ and the Church

“The Message of Christ” – February 1, 2015

Lesson – “Wisdom and Knowledge of God”

Scriptures – Colossians 2:3

Introduction to lesson

The apostle Paul wrote to the local congregation in Colosse in order to encourage them in their Christian faith. The basis upon which he wrote was that all knowledge and wisdom comes from and originates in Jesus Christ. If we want to understand God and his creation, that is, if we want to understand spiritual and physical matters, we must be rooted securely in Christ. In this lesson we will consider Jesus Christ – the wisdom and knowledge of God, and the sure foundation of Zion Assembly Church of God.

Key Verse: “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ When dealing with wisdom and knowledge, why is it necessary and essential to believe that Jesus Christ is God revealed in the flesh? (Jn. 1:1, 14; 5:17-19; 10:30, 36-38; 14:1-9)
- ✚ Can we understand the mysteries of the Bible without knowing Christ personally through the born again experience? (Co. 2:2, 3; Jn. 14:6; 5:39, Ac. 8:26-35)
- ✚ Can we correctly understand spiritual and physical matters without the person of the Holy Spirit? Is our human intelligence alone sufficient to give us wisdom and knowledge? What happens to human knowledge when people cast off the knowledge of God? (Ro. 11:33; 1 Co. 2:9-10; Ro. 1:21-22, 28)

Think about it: Two thousand years have come and gone since the life of Christ upon this earth. During that time there have been many preachers, teachers, writers, theologians, and others that have added much insight and clearer understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. However, the wisdom and knowledge God contained in Christ is of such spiritual depth that “tongue nor pen” could ever fully reveal its depth; the wisdom and knowledge of God surpasses any and all human intelligence. It cannot be exhausted by attending Sunday School for the rest of your life, by earning a doctorate degree, or by sitting under a lifetime of anointed preaching! But the wisdom and knowledge of God is revealed in the life of an individual believer by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the abiding Holy Spirit and by continually growing in that spiritual relationship. We will never exhaust the wisdom and knowledge of God, but we can definitely know his wisdom and knowledge in Jesus Christ.

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Christ and the Church

“The Message of Christ” – February 8, 2015

Lesson – “By Divine Revelation”

Scriptures – Colossians 2:6; Matthew 16:13-18

Introduction to lesson

In the Bible, the apostles were blessed to have heard, touched, and seen the “Son of Man.” It is no wonder that they believed and were willing to follow! They were also eye-witness to his miracles and life-changing message! But to believe that Jesus was the savior, deliverer, sanctifier, and the revelation of God in the flesh didn’t come by mere human deduction, but rather by divine revelation. That is, this understanding came by divine origin--- revealed by the “Father of lights.”

Key Verse: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Colossians 2:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Who is Jesus? What do the descriptions used by Peter and the others reveal about him? (Mt. 16:13-18)
- + How did Peter and the other disciples obtain this knowledge? (Mt. 16: 17, 18; Ga. 1:11-24; Jn. 6:44; 14:26)
- + Can Jesus be revealed by any other means (ministers, “counselors” in the General Assembly, teachers, etc.)? (2 Ti. 3:14, 15; Co. 1:7, 8; 2:5, 6)

Think about it: Human intelligence doesn’t allow you to understand Christ fully. Multitudes of people do their best to learn Scripture and obtain the wisdom and knowledge of God without a divine experience. In Matthew chapter 16, we see that Jesus desired those that followed him to have and maintain a proper understanding of who he is as revealed by the Spirit of God. This is important because the apostles were the leaders of the church of God and would be instrumental in promoting the cause of Christ. The church wouldn’t be able to properly carry out the Great Commission without a supernatural revelation! Without it, any man could come after Jesus was gone, claiming to be the Christ, and deceive them, if their belief and understanding of Christ were merely intellectual. After the church received their revelation of Christ and their empowerment of the Holy Spirit, they were ready to go into the world and turn it upside down for God. However, even though men and women labored mightily to preach the gospel, bring forth a great harvest of souls, and build the church of God, it was God that gave the increase. Truly, one person ploughs, another sows, another waters, but it is always God that blesses our efforts, revealing Christ by his Spirit and giving the increase!

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Christ and the Church

“The Message of Christ” – February 15, 2015

Lesson – “Focusing On Christ”

Scriptures – Col. 2:6-7; Mt. 22:37-38

Introduction to lesson

One of the great disappointments that parents can experience is when their child, whom they have loved, cared for, and provided for since the day he was born, “loves” them only because of what he is able to get from his parents. We sometimes refer to this as being a “spoiled brat.” Such children see their parents as a means to attain things. But loving parents desire to be loved in return, not merely because of what they give and do, but rather for who they are in their relationship with their child. The Bible clearly states that we are to love and honor our father and mother (Mk. 7: 9-13) simply because they ARE our father and mother, if for no other reason. They should hold a special place in our hearts because of who they are. This is also true of Christ. He loved us and gave his life for us so that we could have relationship and fellowship with God. He desires for us to love him in return. In following Christ, we should focus on building up our loving relationship with him.

Key Verse: “Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col. 2:7).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Do you show your parents your love unconditionally?
- + Would your affection and appreciation diminish if you never received another “thing” from them from this point on?
- + Do you show the Lord that he is first in your life, not merely because of the things you may receive from him, but because of who he is (Lord and Savior) in your life?

Think about it: Today’s Christianity has turned the gospel of Christ into a marketing scheme. Instead of promoting the person of Christ as being the Savior of souls and the Lord of all, false prophets “sell” Christ as a genie – whatever you want from Christ can be received if you’ll only believe in him. Therefore, instead of preaching Christ and his work on the cross (salvation, sanctification, healing, and so on), they preach a Christ who will give you your wildest dreams! This is exactly what the New Testament warned against (2 Pe. 2:1-3) – stressing that Christ and his doctrine should be the central focus of everything in the church. To preach anything contrary to Christ and his doctrine is the same as preaching antichrist. To preach and teach any so-called gospel other than Christ is merely “dead” religion, because the life of the true gospel is missing. Our lives and the message that we declare in Zion Assembly Church of God will be empowered and blessed, only if Christ is first and foremost. Let’s keep the main point the main point – Jesus is Lord and Savior. Let’s love the Lord will all that is within us and focus our message on him.

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Christ and the Church

“The Message of Christ” – February 22, 2015

Lesson – “Distinguishing Christ”

Scriptures– Co. 2:7; 2 Ti. 1:11-14; 1 Jn. 2:3;
2 Jn. 9-11

Introduction to lesson

Each of us have true friends – friends that know our middle name, our place of birth, our favorite color or team, our ambitions, and other aspects of our life. This type of relationship doesn't come overnight; it is cultivated and built upon. Mere acquaintances don't have this depth and are not able to say that they truly know us. The same is true of Christ. In last week's lesson, emphasis was made on keeping Christ first in all that we do and teach in Zion Assembly Church of God. However, to be in deep fellowship with Christ, we must know and remain truly committed to his teachings. The two (Christ and his teachings) cannot be separated. One cannot truly have a relationship with Christ and at the same time ignore his teachings. Let's consider this further.

Key Verse: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 Jn. 2:3).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ When Paul wrote to Timothy, how did he identify his ministry? What does this mean? (2 Ti. 1:11)
- ✚ Paul taught and preached and provided leadership in the church. What was his message? His message focused on whom? (v. 12)
- ✚ Paul's message was clearly focused on the person of Christ; but what did he further admonish the saints to hold to? (v. 13)
- ✚ The “sound words,” the teachings of Christ and the apostles, distinguish (clearly explain) the Christ in whom we believe. What should we do with these “sound words?” (v. 14)

Think about it: Sadly, we live in a society that often claims to be Christian, yet many people refuse to abide by the clear teachings of Christ. This has been a problem that has plagued the Christian faith from the beginning. For this reason, the New Testament writers made clear that the Christian faith was rooted and established on two principles (yet the two are actually one and the same) – Christ and his doctrine. Christ was and still remains the message, while his doctrine gives distinction and clarity to who he is. To fully comprehend Christ and to experience his power and glory, one must adhere to sound, Biblical doctrine. Zion Assembly Church of God preaches the “full gospel” message; that is, we preach the same message that Christ and the apostles preached. But it isn't “our” message or “our” teachings; it is the message of Christ himself. Lastly, the apostle John confirmed that Christ and his teachings go hand-in-hand when he said, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 Jn. 9-10).

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Christ and the Church

“The Message of Christ” – March 1, 2015

Lesson – “Beware of False Doctrines”

Scriptures– Co. 2:1-8; 1 Co. 5:6-7

Introduction to lesson:

In our previous lessons, we covered some very important truths that must be understood and fully believed in order to be true Christians. The doctrine of Christ (His Word), which the church has been commissioned to carry to the ends of the world, is a unique, powerful, and exclusive message. It is exclusive simply because no other religion in the world possesses God's truth. Also, the doctrine of Christ is countercultural; it goes against the progressive, liberal ideology and philosophies of religions, politics, education, and world governments. In fact, when we share the Gospel with others, we often contend with these worldly influences. In the world today, the spirit of the antichrist has enveloped the thoughts and intentions of the vast majority. This spirit desires to pervert the true doctrine of Christ. In reality, as we war against Satan and his kingdom, we also at times find that false doctrine creeps its way into the church through individuals influenced by the society around them. This also was a hindrance in the early church, and in order to combat it effectively, we must personally heed Paul's warning.

Key Verse: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Co. 2:8).

Questions to Discuss:

✚ In your own words, define truth and error. Using this definition, answer the following question: “If a shirt is 99% cotton and 1% polyester, would it be the truth to advertise it as being 100% cotton?”

Think about it: As you have discussed the question above, most likely you have come to a simple conclusion: For something to be true it must be 100% factual. To say something is true but taint it with the smallest portion of error causes everything that has been said to be erroneous (1 Co. 5:6-7). Paul wrote to the local church at Colosse to warn the believer. Obviously, these folks at one time had sold out to following Christ. However, Paul wasn't so much focused on their initial statement of faith but rather upon their remaining focused and committed to the unchangeable gospel message. Thus, he warned them to be fully alert at all times. He warned them to be aware of the ways that Satan would try to bring false doctrine into the church and into their personal lives. Society during Paul's day is much like today in that it was extremely progressive and liberal. The various world governments and educational systems promoted ideology and philosophy that scoffed at God and his sovereignty. The religions of the day focused primarily upon the individual with his carnal desires being most important, rather than seeking to please God through holiness and devotion. Unfortunately, this also describes our society today. The governments and political systems of the world are controlled by every work of the flesh, while the many religions of the world feed this monster. As a young person in this society, you are dealing with perversion and blatant lies on a daily basis coming from every direction possible. However, you can stand victorious if you will remain alert, consecrated to holiness, and apply the word of God to your life. Commit yourself to daily Bible study, remain faithful to church attendance and worship, honor and live according to the doctrine of Christ, and test/try the information that is presented to you (especially the spirit that is behind it). Beware of the false doctrine.

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Christ and the Church

“The Doctrine of the Church” – March 8, 2015

Lesson – “Patterned After Christ”

Scriptures – 1 Timothy 4:1-16

Introduction to lesson

Following directions is something that we all do. It seems that every school day consists of teachers telling us to go here or go there, or do this or that. It gets tiring after a while. But if we understand that the instructions are for our own good, it will help us realize that they provide a safe and productive environment for learning. If we have to go to school, we might as well learn something, right? Likewise, Christ has given us instructions on how to live and to operate in the church – His doctrine. If we follow His doctrine, we will live a life patterned after Him. He is our example. Man’s earthly instruction, if followed, will only benefit temporarily. But if we follow Christ’s instruction, we will not only benefit now but for all eternity as well.

Key Verse: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What will cause many to depart from the faith in the end times? (v.1)
- ✚ In your own words, describe what “doctrines of devils” means. (v.1)
- ✚ Describe the example Paul gives for those living this way. (v.2)
- ✚ Who are we following if we follow right doctrine? (v.6)
- ✚ Will following Christ’s doctrine always bring an easy life of comfort and rest now? (v.10)
- ✚ Explain what it means to “labour and suffer reproach”? (v.10)
- ✚ What will be the reward for those who follow Christ’s example in His doctrine? (v.16)

Think about it: Everywhere you look, you can hear many different doctrines that men say is Christ’s teaching. But the only true doctrine of Christ is what is found in the Bible. Regardless of what man says is right or wrong, it must be based on what Christ said in the Scriptures. Any doctrine not based on Christ is false doctrine. You cannot separate the words of Christ from the Christ that said them. So to truly follow Him, we must believe and practice what He said. It sounds simple doesn’t it? Yet our world is full of people that preach and practice things that are contrary to Christ’s words. Don’t be fooled. To follow Christ is to obey His doctrine.

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Christ and the Church

“The Doctrine of the Church” – March 15, 2015

Lesson – “Doctrine Interprets our Worship”

Scriptures – Matthew 15:8-9

Introduction to lesson

Most every church service will include a set aside time for “worship.” It’s at this time that we come together, sing songs, take an offering, and then the preacher preaches. That pretty much has worship wrapped up, or does it? The Bible declares that worship is a vital part in the life of the believer. Worship is not just an appointed time on a certain day of the week, but should be our mindset continually. Believe it or not, whether personal worship in our quiet time or corporate worship in church, the doctrines we believe affects our worship. It actually interprets our worship. How do you know you are worshipping the Christ of the Bible and not the world’s revelation of Christ if you do not know the doctrines he established for us to live by? Clearly, we need to know the truths of the Scriptures.

Key Verse: “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Many look at worship just as singing songs to God. But how does the Bible view worship?
- ✚ What do you think Christ was talking about when he said, “Their heart is far from me?” (v. 8)
- ✚ Is it possible to worship the Lord in vain? How would one do that?
- ✚ Why is doctrine important for worship?
- ✚ How do you think the Lord looks at worship that is not doctrine driven? Why?
- ✚ Compare and contrast the “commandments of men” and “commandments of Christ.”

Think about it: The lights are set just right in the auditorium creating a subdued mood with dazzling, multicolored lights shining against the dark stage. The musicians crank up the volume with some intense rhythm, and the worship leader starts singing as hands go up in the air with a wave of motion. Many professing Christians gravitate toward contemporary, multimedia worship experiences featuring worship teams, praise bands, and the popular hits on Christian radio. While this may be appealing, particularly to some, do they truly know whom they are worshipping. The doctrine of the church is of utmost importance because it helps us to understand whom we worship. Many worldly influences seek to compete with our allegiance to Christ. In Zion Assembly, we must therefore make certain that we safeguard the purity of our doctrine, ensuring that it all aligns with Christ completely.

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Christ and the Church

“The Doctrine of the Church” – March 22, 2015

Lesson – “Love above Doctrine Error”

Scriptures – Matthew 22:34-40; 24:4-5, 24

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever walked a tight rope or maybe rode a unicycle? The success or failure of any task like that is balance. Sometimes just walking down the street is a task within itself. Without balance, a leaning to the right or left can ultimately result in a fall. Did you know that our walk with Christ is the same way? Our message should be balanced with love and doctrine. If we place love above doctrine, we can become complacent and not sense the urgency of living a holy life. If we place doctrine above the love of Christ, we can become legalistic and turn others away from the message of salvation. Love and doctrine should be balanced. We must speak the truth of Christ’s doctrine clearly, but we must speak that truth in love.

Key Verse: “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What were the motives behind the Pharisees’ question to Christ? Why? (v. 34)
- ✚ What were the two great commandments that Christ told them? (v.37-40)
- ✚ What did Christ say hung on these two commandments? What does that mean? (v.40)
- ✚ What can happen if our message is all love but no truth in doctrine? (Mt. 24:4)
- ✚ Is it possible for false doctrine to deceive persons who call themselves Christian?
- ✚ How can someone actually convince the world they are the true Christ?
- ✚ Why would the world accept them? (Mt. 24:24)

Think about it: As the church, it is critical that we balance our message with love and doctrine. If the world’s view of love is our only focus, then we may refrain from telling others what they need to hear in order to enter heaven. Sinners will never know that their sin will send them to hell and that they need a Savior, if we withhold the truth because we are afraid that we will hurt their feelings. Many may think that preaching about sin and hell isn’t showing love. But the Bible teaches that to truly love someone is to share with them the saving message of Jesus Christ. And it must be the entire message of Jesus. He must not only be our Savior, but also our Lord in all things. We must love the Lord, live out His truths, and declare His message of love and truth.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Rick Ferrell

Christ and the Church

“The Doctrine of the Church” – March 29, 2015

Lesson – “Distinguishing the Church”

Scriptures – 2 Timothy 4:1-4

Introduction to lesson

Do you believe that God is all powerful? If not, well, you should. Our God is all powerful, and He is the Creator of the universe. If that’s the case, does He need people? I mean, if He can do it all anyway, why does he need you and me? Well, He does need people. That’s why He established the church and gave us principles to live by. You see, God saves, sanctifies, and fills you with the Holy Ghost, but it takes the church to administer the covenant for you to join the church. It also takes the church to perform the ordinances of communion, foot washing and baptizing. God gave us His word but it takes the church to provide a preacher to proclaim it publicly. So God needs his church to operate in the truth that sets her apart.

Key Verse: “For in him [*Jesus Christ*] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- + What did Paul tell Timothy that Christ would do when he appeared? (v.1)
- + To “charge” someone, as Paul does here, means to instruct with authority. Why did Paul use the term “charge”? (v.1)
- + Paul instructed Timothy to do 5 things in the church. Can you name and explain each of them? (v.2)
- + Why did Paul give these instructions to the church? (v.3)
- + What does it mean to not “endure sound doctrine”? (v.3)
- + Would you rather be told truth or a myth?
- + Why will many turn from hearing truth and begin hearing fables, or myths? (vv.3-4)

Think about it:

We are distinguishing Christ by our doctrine in the church. In proclaiming the doctrine of Christ, we preach him and his preeminence, or superiority. However, not only are we lifting up Christ and making him known, but by preaching his doctrine, the doctrine of Zion Assembly, we are making the church known as well. Doctrine is thus essential to our mission. Through distinguishing Christ by our doctrine, we also distinguish the church, his body. Paul said to “preach the Word,” and in doing so, we not only declare Christ and make him known distinctly, but we further distinguish ourselves as his church uniquely. By proclaiming the teachings of Christ, we proclaim the Christ who established those doctrines.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Pam Jones

Worship and Praise

“Understanding Worship” – April 5, 2015

Lesson – “What Is Worship”

Scriptures – Rev. 4:1-11; Ps. 73:25-26; Ps. 42:1-2

Introduction to lesson

♪♪♪“I’m about to get my worship on.”♪♪♪ – This is a statement that I hear many people saying or more like singing when they are planning on going to a church service. This statement comes from the song “Beautiful Day” by Jamie Grace. What does it mean to get our worship on? Before we can answer this question, we must first answer another question, “**WHAT IS WORSHIP?**” Worship is the feeling and expression of reverence and adoration for God. The feeling is **recognizing God’s worth**. The expression is **applying our affection** for him. Worship is giving the utmost and highest worth to the object of our affection. Worship is giving honor, glory, and power to what (who) you value the most. The Scriptures say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord” (Rev. 4:11). The Lord is worthy of our worship because he alone is our Savior (Acts 4:12). Worship is an expression of our relationship with God, our appreciation for him, and our awe of him.

Key Verse: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ To where was John taken? (Rev. 4:1-2)
- ✚ How was the glory of the Lord’s appearance described? (v. 3)
- ✚ How did the 4 beasts and 24 elders express their worship to show the worth of God? (vv. 4-11)
- ✚ Describe the worship by expression of relationship found in Psalm 73:25-26 and Psalm 42:1-2.

Project: On the top of a paper write, “I Want To Worship.” Then below that, write a statement expressing what worship is and what it means to worship God. Tell God what you are going to do starting today that honors him. This is to be an expression of your relationship, appreciation, and awe of him. When you’re finished, fold the paper up and put it in an envelope and seal it. On the envelope write your name and the date “June 28, 2015” – the date of the end of the Worship and Praise lessons. On June 28, the letters are to be opened. Let this letter remind you that worshipping God is recognizing his worth and applying your affection for him!

Think about it: ♪♪♪ “And there’s something ‘bout the way Your love shines on my face. Oh no I could never get enough of You. This feeling can’t be wrong, I’m about to get my worship on.” ♪♪♪
Worship is **recognizing God’s worth**, and like the song says, *I could never get enough of You* (God), for I value the Lord above all others for he is my everything. I get my worship on by **expressing my deepest affection for God**. The song expresses why we worship the Lord, for the Lord is the refuge that I can’t wait to get to. I can’t let a day go by without thanking the Lord for the joy that he brings to my life. So because I value God to the highest, I will sing out loud – ♪♪♪ “It’s a beautiful day, yeah yeah yeah, Such a beautiful day.” ♪♪♪ Let’s worship the Lord!!!

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Writer: Pam Jones

Worship and Praise

“Understanding Worship” – April 12, 2015

Lesson – “What is Praise”

Scriptures – Psalm 150; 145; 117; 103:1-5; Matthew 21:15-16

Introduction to lesson

LET’S JUST DO IT - LET’S CELEBRATE! A time to express and give praise; it’s a party for exalting and magnifying the achievements of one who is worthy. Praise along with cheers and applauses are expressions that show we appreciate and recognize the qualities of an excellent performance. There is no greater celebration then the party of **PRAISING GOD**. Who God is and what he does **require action to express it**. We can be thankful to God silently, but to praise God we have to do something. There are many different Hebrew words for “**PRAISE**” in the Old Testament. Each word denotes a different expression of praise.

1. “Tehillah” (tehela) – To sing our praise to God with all our hearts (Ps. 35:28).
2. “Zamar” (zamar) – To use instruments to show praise (Ps. 57:7).
3. “Shabach” (Shabak) – To Shout (Ps. 145:4).
4. “Halal” (halal) – To celebrate, go mad over, or to be foolish. This is similar to a celebration at a sporting event (Ps. 150:2).
5. “Towdah” (toda) – To extend the hands in acceptance of agreement with God’s words and promises before you see the answer (Ps. 42:4).
6. “Yadah” (yada) – To lift the hand in praise (Ps. 28:7).
7. “Sachaq” (sawqua) – To laugh (Proverbs 8:30).
8. “Guwl” (gool) – To dance or spin (Ps. 118:24).

Anytime we come together to worship the Lord, it is a celebration, and we should expect a praise-filled experience.

Key Verse: “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psalm 139:14).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Who should praise the Lord? (Ps. 117:1; 145:21; 150:6)
- ✚ Who is worthy of praise? (Ps. 117:2; 145:1-3; 150:2)
- ✚ Praise is calling to remembrance what? (Ps. 103:1-5)
- ✚ Should praise be spoken? (Ps. 145:5; Mt. 21:15-16)
- ✚ How can we praise with our body? (Ps. 47:1; 63:4)

Project: Create a small poster using at least one the Hebrew words above; then take it home and hang it in your room. Each day make this word a part of your praise to the Lord. Next week, share with the class how this praise word made a difference in your worship to the Lord.

Think about it: 🎵🎵🎵 “Let’s just praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Let’s just lift our hands toward heaven and praise the Lord” 🎵🎵🎵 (Bill Gaither, “Let’s Just Praise the Lord”). “Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful” (Psalm 147:1 - NKJV). We were created by God to praise the Lord. When opportunity comes for us to **CELEBRATE THE LORD** and give Him praise, **LET’S JUST DO IT!!!**

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Writer: Pam Jones

Worship and Praise

“Understanding Worship” – April 19, 2015

Lesson – “Worship from the Heart”

Scriptures – Mk. 7:1-7; Jn. 4:10, 14, 24; Ro. 12:1-2

Introduction to lesson

Straight from the Heart: True worshipers are those who worship from the heart, for God sees and understands the heart of an individual. When we come together to worship, we see the outward appearance and may discern the expressions of worship like singing, lifting hands, clapping, tears, and so on; but God looks at the heart. What does it mean to worship God truly from our heart? 1) God accepts worship that comes straight from the heart – a heart that has a **RIGHT RELATIONSHIP** with Jesus. **Worship must be HEARTFELT!** 2) God accepts worship that flows from the well of water springing up into everlasting life – from the Spirit that gives to us the living waters. **Worship must be SPIRITUAL!** 3) God accepts worship that comes from a life that is set apart and pleasing to him – a life that is holy and not conformed to this world. **Worship must be HOLY!**

Key Verse: “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men” (Isaiah 29:13).

Questions to Discuss:

Heartfelt Worship

- ✚ What were the Pharisees and scribes questioning Jesus about? (Mk. 7:1-5)
- ✚ What was Jesus’ answer concerning their heart? (v. 6)
- ✚ What did Jesus say about the worship of these men? (v. 7)

Spiritual Worship

- ✚ Jesus said that if we ask him, he would give us what? (Jn. 4:10)
- ✚ What is the water that he will give us? (v. 14)
- ✚ How must the true worshipers worship the Father? (v. 24)

Holy Worship

- ✚ How are we to present ourselves to the Lord? (Ro. 12:1)
- ✚ What does it mean to be conformed to this world? (v. 2)
- ✚ How can we be transformed? (v. 2)

PROJECT: Make a list of songs that are more than just a song. When you hear them, they speak to your heart, and you find yourself able to worship the Lord from the heart. Share with the class the words of the song and why you can worship the Lord with this song. Write out the name of these songs on poster board and hang them around the class room.

Think about it: 🎵🎵 “I’ll bring You more than a song for a song in itself is not what You have required. You search much deeper within through the way things appear. You’re looking into my **HEART**” 🎵🎵 (Michael W. Smith, “The Heart of Worship”). We must get back to the **heart of worship** where it is all about Jesus, not about seeking the honor and approval of men, but seeking only to please God. Our Worship must come **straight from the heart**, and if our heart has a right relationship with the Lord, worship will flow that is **HEARTFELE**, **SPIRITUAL**, and **HOLY**.

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Sunday School Services

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Worship and Praise

“Understanding Worship” – April 26, 2015

Lesson – “The Atmosphere of Worship”

Scriptures – 1 Pe. 1:15-16; He. 10:19; 2 Co. 3:17; Ga. 5:1, 13, 16; Mt. 7:7-11

Introduction to lesson

THAT WAS A COOL SERVICE! - What does it mean when you hear someone say the above statement? Was the place to cold? No! For the word “cool” in this statement means “very good, excellent, interesting, and fun.” In other words, the service had such an **ATMOSPHERE OF WORSHIP** that it was a place to experience the presence of the Almighty God. What does it take for worship leaders to create an atmosphere that produces a great worship experience in a church service? **REVERENCE** – True worshippers recognize that we are entering the house of the Lord, into the holy presence of God. **FREEDOM** – In order for there to be true worship, we must allow the Holy Ghost to direct it, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. **OPTIMISM** - In true worship, we receive encouragement, hope and strength, because we realize God’s ability to meet our needs.

Key Verse: “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (Ps. 122:1).

Questions to Discuss:

ATMOSPHERE OF REVERENCE

- ✦ What does it mean to be holy in all manner of conversation? (1 Pe. 1:15-16)
- ✦ Why can we boldly enter the Most Holy Place? (He. 10:19)

ATMOSPHERE OF FREEDOM

- ✦ Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is what? (Explain what this Scripture means personally to you. (2 Co. 3:17)
- ✦ Describe the liberty we have through Christ. (Ga. 5:1,13,16)

ATMOSPHERE OF OPTIMISM

- ✦ What is our expectation when we come to praise the Lord? (Mt. 7:7-11)
- ✦ Worship should not be gloomy, but what? (Ps. 122:1)

Project: Make a list of all the sayings, texting messages, and hash-tagging that you can think of to express how great a church service was when there was an atmosphere of worship. Vote the best one to become the Teen Class Theme for such services.

Think about it: 🎵🎵🎵 *“Let’s set the atmosphere, for a blessing. Let’s set the atmosphere, for a mighty move of God”* 🎵🎵🎵 (Kurt Carr, *“Set the Atmosphere”*). When we set an atmosphere of worship that includes reverence, freedom, and optimism, we should expect to enter into the presence of the Lord. In his presence, we find blessings, miracles, and the power of God. When we have truly been in such an atmosphere of worship, we will come away from that service, saying,
“THAT SERVICE WAS COOL, GREAT, GOOD, ETC.”
#EXCITED #LOVEIT

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Worship and Praise

“The Worship Service” – May 3, 2015

Lesson – “Music and Singing”

Scriptures – Ps. 33:1-3; 92:1-3, 34:1-3, Eph. 5:19

Introduction to lesson

In this study, Psalms 33:1-3 puts our relationship and our worship into focus. The first verse states that we should sing with joy to the Lord because we are righteous. Verse two says we should play music and sing praises to Him. The third verse says that we should sing to Him a new song. The point of these verses is that we are saved, and we have a new heart that produces a new song to the Lord. We should therefore freely sing praises and make music to the Lord. Our song is not staged with smoke and colorful lights. It is the voice of the indwelling Spirit speaking joyful praises to the Lord. We are called out of our past sins into a new light. So the question is, “Are you singing a new Song?”

Key Verse: “O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation” (Ps. 95:1).

Questions to Discuss:

- + We all enjoy good music in church. Is music by itself worship? Evaluate Matthew 6:33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” If worship includes seeking God, does music alone qualify as worship?
- + Some people don’t sing well nor can they play musical instruments. Does this mean they can’t worship God?
- + If you have musical talents, are you using your abilities for the Lord?
- + What does your heart say when you sing and make music? The Lord not only hears our performance, he listens intently to our heart.
- + Do you have a new song to sing to the Lord?
- + Are Christian bands necessarily “Christian?” We should not accept music just because it has a Christian label; we should only accept music that agrees with the Spirit and Truth of God.

Think about it: When I worship, I appreciate what Isaiah said in 12:5, “Praise the Lord in song, for he has done excellent things.” We should never be ashamed to worship the Lord in public, schools, work, and even more in church. He has blessed us in so many ways that we should be faithful in praising His Holy name throughout our day (Ps. 92:1-3). We should magnify the Lord in praise with our mouth and spirit (Ps. 34:1-3). Our voices should not be hindered by our circumstances but rather unleashed to the world. We should make known that Jesus Christ is our Savior. Paul tells us to sing: “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Ep. 5:19). There is power when the saints come together and worship the Lord in the Spirit with music and singing. He is worthy of our Praise! So, how high are your hands raised and how loud is your voice of praise?

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Worship and Praise

“The Worship Service” – May 10, 2015

Lesson – “Prayer”

Scriptures – Romans 12:12; 1 Corinthians 7:5;
Philippians 4:6; Acts 1:14

Introduction to lesson:

Prayer is communication with our heavenly Father. We cannot afford to let our relationship suffer due to non-communication. Each great revival of the Spirit must come from deeper prayer and supplication – from “the effectual, fervent prayer” of righteous believers (James 5:16; Philippians 4:6). How great is our God who hears the prayers of the righteous (Proverbs 15:8-9)! We should all desire to seek the Lord and be willing to “give ourselves in prayer” (1 Corinthians 7:5). Each believer must never cease from praying (Acts 12:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:17), but rather devote his time in spiritual prayer and fervent worship.

Key Verse: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:14).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Are we a powerful church when we pray individually or corporately? (Acts 1:14)
- ✚ Should we pray earnestly or pray occasionally about our burdens and members? (Romans 12:12)
- ✚ Are prayers during trials heard more than during non-trials?
- ✚ When do we stop praying? (Acts 12:15)
- ✚ If God hears the prayer of a righteous man, will He hear the prayer of a sinner?

Think about it: In Acts 1:14, the church gathered in prayer in one accord. They were praying for the fulfillment of the promise (Ac. 1:4-5, 8). The power of the church comes with unity and prayer. Unity overcomes social, economic, and traditional barriers. “One accord” means having the same mind and spirit, which brings forth singularity and agreement. We cannot afford to separate the church into factions or become members disassociated with one another. The strength of the church is the unity of the Spirit, not individual wisdom and personal achievements. We must rise above the desires of the world and be prayer warriors – praying in unity for the Spirit to move in the church. We must be warriors with calloused knees who have sought after and fell before the King. A. W. Tozer said, “To pray effectively we must want what God wants – that and that only is to pray in the will of God.”

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Writer: Allen Thompson

Worship and Praise

“The Worship Service” – May 17, 2015

Lesson – “The Scriptures”

Scriptures – Nehemiah 8:1-6, Psalm 119:105

Introduction to lesson

In Nehemiah 8:1-6, the people gathered together in one accord to hear the words of the Lord. They listened eagerly from morning to midday. God’s people had been separated from Him by their sins, and their sins had led them into captivity both spiritually and physically. However, this was a new day. They came together in one accord before God to worship Him. When Ezra blessed the Lord, the people stood and declared, “Amen, Amen,” while lifting their hands and worshipping the Lord with their faces to the ground. Today, many hear the words of God but fail to worship. The word is proclaimed, but there is no celebration or repentance. The Scriptures are the inspired words of God for us, so let’s celebrate this precious gift!

Key Verse: “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How precious is the Word of God to you? Before we can actually discuss the Scriptures, they must mean something to us!
- ✚ How does God’s words move you? (Neh. 8:4-6)
- ✚ Should we stand at the reading of the Word? (Neh. 8:5)
- ✚ Are you afraid to demonstrate a worshiping attitude? Are you afraid to stand, shout, lift your hands, or bow your head? If so, why?
- ✚ Like Nehemiah and Ezra, are you willing to stand in the middle of your town square and proclaim the gospel?

Think about it: Today’s society has taken the Word of God and tossed it aside. Many professing Christians haven’t even broken the spine of their Bible, let alone spent quality time in the Word. In 2 Chronicles 34:14, 18-19, the book of the Law had been lost; and the people did not care to find it. They were so caught up in their own lives that they had forgotten God. Then one day, they actually discovered the lost book of the Law in the temple. Imagine that! When it was read, the people and the king repented and turned from their wicked ways. The Word of God is powerful because it shines God’s truth upon our lives. It illuminates our walk in the Lord (Psalm 119:105). The Scriptures are God’s words, “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). However, if we do not value the precious words of God, then we will surely neglect and compromise the Truth, and eventually lose the hope and the promises of God. Instead, let us worship the Lord by reading, hearing, and keeping the truths of the Scriptures.

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Sunday School Services

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Worship and Praise

“The Worship Service” – May 24, 2015

Lesson – “Testimony and Thanks”

Scriptures – Psalm 100:4; 1 Th. 5:18; 1 Pe. 3:15

Introduction to lesson

In church, we allow people to share personal testimonies – to give witness to all God has done in their lives. Who wouldn’t give a testimony of thanks to God for delivering and redeeming them from a deadly past? One day, if we remain faithful to the finish, we will all make it to heaven and walk on streets of gold. We will hear the angels singing praises to the Lord and the people saying with one voice, “Holy, Holy, Holy!” Our testimony is a declaration of thanks to our Savior, but also a declaration to the devil that he is defeated. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says that in everything we should give thanks to the Lord. In 1 Timothy 1:12, Paul boldly declared praise and thanks to the Lord, saying, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” We should all remember to thank Jesus for all of His blessings and for all of His gifts that He has given us, offering us testimonies of praise.

Key Verse: “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Psalm 100:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How can we show thanksgiving to God? Can we possibly thank Him enough?
- ✚ What is your greatest testimony to the Lord?
- ✚ How can we declare our testimony to the Lord and to others? Are we appreciative for God’s mercy?
- ✚ Today, where would you be without the testimony of Jesus Christ?

Think about it: The Lord has done so much for each one of us. Most importantly, He has saved us and given us eternal life. For this, we can never praise and thank Him enough. We all have the same witness of salvation, yet each individual believer has his own personal testimony. We need to be ready and prepared to share our testimony with others (1 Peter 3:15). When testimony and thanksgiving comes from the heart, it is effective in touching the lives of those who hear us. To be an influential witness, we should remain thankful at all times and live a holy life pleasing to the Lord. Therefore, our attitude and lifestyle can make or break our testimony. If we want others to listen to us and respect our witness, then we must live consistent to what we profess. Our character and actions should always show Christ, so that the world will see and believe that Jesus Christ lives in us. This world needs to know that Christ is alive in his church today.

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Worship and Praise

“The Worship Service” – May 31, 2015

Lesson – “Giving”

Scriptures – 2 Co. 9:5-7; Mal. 3:10; Re. 22:12

Introduction to lesson

It is said that you cannot out-give God, and God will never stop giving to those who love and worship Him. Too often, however, giving is linked only to monetary gifts. People give in the offering plate yet fail to give their hearts to the Lord. But giving is not worship unless it comes from the heart of a true worshiper. Certainly, God wants us to honor Him in our finances. But He wants much more than our money; He wants our hearts to be surrendered to Him. After all, what good is an offering if your spiritual life is all wrong? Giving is therefore acceptable worship only when our hearts are acceptable with God. When our hearts belong to God, we will give to the Lord in every area of our lives.

Key Verse: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let Him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: For God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Should I cut tithes in order to pay bills? (Mal. 3:10)
- ✚ How much do I give in prayer? Am I consistent in my prayer life or does my praying revolve around how I feel? (Ps. 109:4)
- ✚ In Romans 12:1, Paul wrote, “present your bodies a living sacrifice.” Does this mean physically or spiritually? How does this living sacrifice affect my relationships?
- ✚ What does “to give every man according to his work” mean? (Re. 22:12)

Think about it: Our walk with God and our daily jobs have a common trend. If we give little, we will receive little; but if we give much, we will receive much! (2 Co. 9:6). When our purpose in life includes surrendering all we have to the Lord, the way we give reflects this. The desire to honor the Lord shows up in every area of our lives. This is why we pay tithes and give offerings. But some people give for the wrong reasons; and for that they are not blessed in their giving. “It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). A Christian should give because he loves the Lord and loves to give, not because he seeks a monetary reward or recognition for his giving. We are laying up treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19-20). The key verse teaches us to give, stating that God knows the purpose of our giving. He loves our gifts when presented with the RIGHT spirit. Able gave because he loved God and wanted to do what was right. He gave his best. Cain gave an unacceptable offering because his heart was not right (Ge. 4:2-7). As faithful Christians, we should always give and do what is right remembering that God will judge every one “according to his work” (Jer. 17:10, 32:19).

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Miguel A. Garcia Jr.

Worship and Praise

“Praising the Lord” – June 7, 2015

Lesson – “Bless the Lord”

Scriptures – Psalms 103:22; Psalms 34:1-2
Jer. 9:23-24; Psalms 150:2

Introduction to lesson

The question at times has been asked: “What do you give the person that has it all?” Imagine one of the wealthiest people in the world, probably worth billions of dollars; what do you give someone like that? They have the resources to buy anything they want. Here however we are not speaking of (corruptible) men, but rather the God who created all things, the almighty God! What can you give to God? He has it all; he owns it all, for he created it all. As limited as our resources are, we can bless God with something significant – with worship and praise. The psalmist wrote, “I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Ps. 34:1). In fact, he looked even deeper into himself, and he blessed the Lord with something more meaningful: “Bless the Lord, O My Soul: and **all** [every thought, my strength, and my heart] that is within me, bless His holy name” (Ps. 103:1). Blessing the Lord is not about me, what I do, or what I need, but rather it is about him and who he is. “But let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jer. 9:24). His works are perfect, therefore “praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness (Ps. 150:2).

Key Verse: “Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul” (Psalms 103:22).

Questions to Discuss:

- + According to the psalmist, what does he praise God with? (Ps. 150:1-6)
- + What does praising God with our souls mean? (Discussion)
- + Is praising God about us? Is it about the singers or preachers?
- + According to Jeremiah 9:23-24, what are the good and perfect acts of God?

Think about it: Blessing the Lord is not about us, what we want, or even what we need. Rather, it is about honoring God for his goodness and his mighty acts of perfection. We should bless the Lord wholeheartedly and without reservation. That means all of our focus, our strength and every thought (our being) should direct us to bring worship and praise to him. He is worthy of our praise!

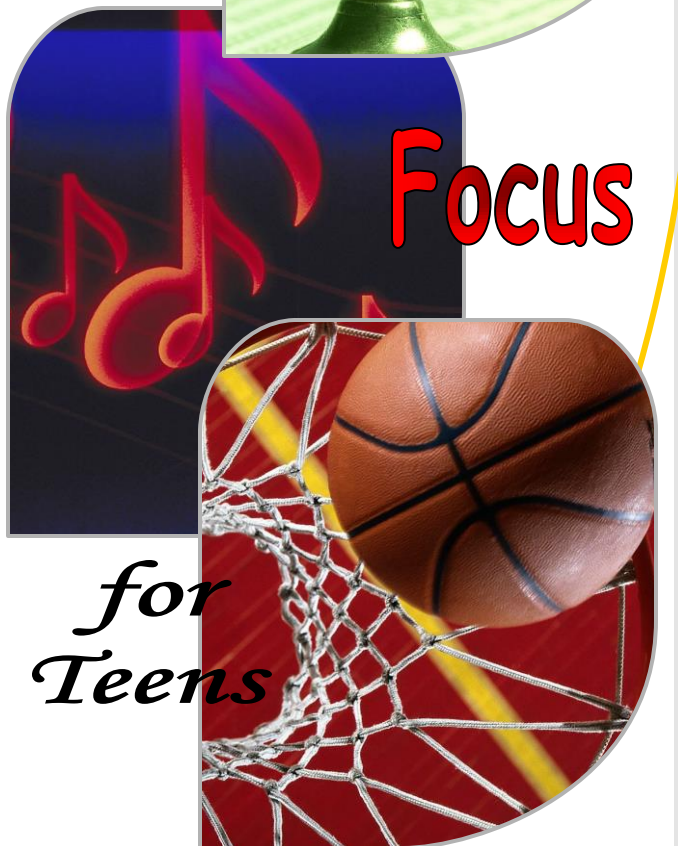
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Writer: Miguel Garcia, Jr.

Worship and Praise

“Praising the Lord” – June 14, 2015

Lesson – “Make a Joyful Noise”

Scriptures – Ps. 100:1-2; Ps. 95:1; Ps. 40:16;
Ps. 100:4

Introduction to lesson

Little Johnnie was told three times by his teacher to sit in his chair. She counted . . . “One – two – three!” But he did not want to sit. Realizing he would be in deeper trouble if he didn’t obey, he finally responded, “Fine! I’ll sit, but in my mind I am still standing up.” Sometimes, when people do what they do not want to do, they become bitter and sad. They have no joy. However, as children of God, the praise and worship that flows out of us should be with a “joyful” noise, which means showing great happiness that can only come from God. In Psalm 100:1-2, we are taught to worship God joyfully and to serve him with gladness. “Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee” (Ps. 40:16). When we come into God’s house to lift up his holy name, we should come with joy and gladness out of a willing heart that is prepared to worship and praise the Lord. And lastly, we should come with thanksgiving: “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Ps. 100:4). We must be sure that our lips are always filled with thanksgiving and not complaining. We bring praise to the Lord when our hearts are filled with gratitude.

Key Verse: “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands”
(Psalms 100:1).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What type of noise should be brought unto the Lord? (Ps. 100:1)
- ✚ Name at least one thing that should be included in our worship. (Ps. 100:1; Ps. 40:16; Ps. 100:4)
- ✚ Why should we come into God’s house with joy? (Discussion)

Think about it: God is worthy of our praise and worship. We should want to give him our very best at all times. Our best includes the best of our joy and happiness. Our best also includes our willingness to be in his house. When we come together for worship, we should be thankful. Our praises should be uplifting and faith-building, turning the hearts of the people to God. Those who come among us should be blessed by what they hear and experience. We want them to identify us as the people of God by the way we praise the Lord (Ps. 100:3).

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Worship and Praise

“Praising the Lord” – June 21, 2015

Lesson – “Celebrate Jesus”

Scriptures – Luke 2:25-32

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever wondered, why Jesus? Why do we celebrate Jesus? Why do we call on the name of Jesus? Today, we will focus on three main points to explain why we celebrate the Son of God, Jesus Christ – the name above all names! (Ph. 2:9). **First, we celebrate Christ because he is God’s salvation unto all people.** In Luke 2:25-26, the Holy Ghost revealed to Simeon that he would not die until after he saw the Christ. When Simeon saw Jesus, he said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:29-30). We celebrate Jesus because we have salvation through faith in him. **Second, we celebrate Jesus in our worship because he is the light of the world.** This same Simeon, inspired by the Holy Ghost, referred to Jesus as “A light to lighten the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32). This meant that he was the pure revelation of God’s love for lost humanity (John 3:16); and his light was never brighter than at the cross. **Third, we celebrate Jesus Christ because he is the glory of the church.** Simeon said of Jesus, “The glory of your people Israel” (Lu. 2:32); and of course, the church is the true Israel of God (Ga. 6:16). God could give no greater expression of his grace and truth than through his own Son. Jesus perfectly revealed the will of the Father to us (He. 10:7; Jn. 5:30). He spoke what the Father gave him to speak (John 8:28). He is the head of the church and savior of the body. Because of these reasons, we lift high and celebrate the Son of God in the church.

Key Verse: “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How did Simeon know who Jesus was? (Luke 2:26)
- ✚ Why is it important for us to celebrate and worship Jesus? (Discussion)

Think about it: This is an important subject because there are differing views and interpretations of who Jesus is, but we **must** have a concrete understanding of Jesus as the Son of God – not only the man Jesus, but Christ the Son of God, the Messiah. He is the true light of the world. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet wrote, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Is. 9:2), foreseeing a time when the dark world would be “lit up” by a supernatural light. Jesus is that light sent from God the Father. We now see in retrospect that his light has forever changed the world and also our paths. We are saved because we placed our faith in him. Praise Jesus!

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Worship and Praise

“Praising the Lord” – June 28, 2015

Lesson – “Exalt His Name”

Scriptures – Ps. 34:3; Ps. 8:1, 9; Ps. 113:1-3

Introduction to lesson

If you are a sports fan, then you know that in the world of sports there exists a “Hall of Fame,” a place where the names of outstanding athletes are recognized as an everlasting reminder of their feats. Great athletes, such as Jackie Robinson, are remembered for breaking the color barrier in sports. In society, there are people that are seen as venerable due to their historical importance and are held in high esteem. For example, Sir Winston Churchill, a leader who showed great courage in the face of evil during WWII, is seen as “one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th century” (Wikipedia). However, those “great” names pale in comparison to the name that is above all names (Ph. 2:9) – the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! The wonder, authority, and power of his great name are incomparable. The psalmist recognized the greatness of the name of Christ, saying, “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens” (Ps. 8:1, 9). His name is powerful and greater than any other name; he is worthy of our praise (Eph. 1:20-22). The psalmist declared, “Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord” (Ps. 113:1). As God’s church and his holy nation, it is our privilege and great responsibility to exalt the name of Jesus Christ in our worship. Solomon compared the name of the Lord to a “strong tower” providing protection for his people (Pr. 18:10). Praise the Lord!

Key Verse: “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Psalm 34:3).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ The psalmist encourages us to do two things. What are they? (Ps. 34:3)
- ✚ How important is it for us to lift high the name of Christ in our worship? (Discussion)
- ✚ Describe the word “excellent” and how that applies to Christ. (Ps. 8:1, 9)
- ✚ For how long should our praise last? (Ps. 113:1-3)

Think about it: Christ’s name should be exalted by his people. Lifting up the name of Jesus should not only be practiced when we worship together in church, but at all times. “I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Ps. 34:1). Youth, let us not grow weary in praising and lifting high the name of Jesus, for his name is greater than any other!

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Trevor Graves

Purity

“God’s Plan for Sexuality” – July 5, 2015

Lesson: “Male and Female”

Scriptures: Gen. 1:27-28; 2:22-24; Mark 10:6-8; Eph. 6:2-3

Introduction to lesson

There is a great deal of confusion today about the role of men and women when it comes to marriage and sex. Women are trying to act like men and are using their bodies in sinful ways that are simply unnatural. Likewise, men are trying to act like women, and they are lusting after other men. As a result, governments are attempting to redefine marriage to include two people of the same sex (gender). We should not be deceived by this confusion, because God’s word makes His plan very clear. In today’s lesson, we will understand that God created the woman for the man; and He designed marriage to involve only one man and one woman with each having distinct roles.

Key Verse: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen 1:27).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ How many genders did God make in the beginning? (Gen. 1:27)
- ✦ Who did God make to be a companion for man? (Gen. 2:22)
- ✦ When Jesus explained God’s plan for marriage, what genders did he say would become one flesh? (Mark 10:6-8)
- ✦ Why do you think God designed marriage only for a man and woman? (Gen. 1:28)
- ✦ When a man cleaves to his wife, who should he leave? (Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:7)
- ✦ Why do you think God designed the family with “father and mother?” (Eph. 6:2-3)

Think about it: In the beginning, God created mankind with only two genders. He created male and female. He specifically designed each gender differently to complement the other. Then God designed marriage to involve a man (male) cleaving to his wife (female). God does not make two men one flesh, nor does He make two women one flesh. God designed marriage for a man and woman. As our Creator he knows what’s best. It takes a male and a female to reproduce children; and it takes a father (male) and a mother (female) to meet the needs of their children. When men and women choose to lust after their own gender, and when governments attempt to redefine marriage, they are rejecting God’s design. When they reject God’s design, they suffer God’s judgment and cause others to suffer as well. Don’t be confused! Live according to God’s plan. After all, He is your Creator; and He wants what’s best for His creation.

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Purity

“God’s Plan for Sexuality” – July 12, 2015

Lesson – “No More Two, But One Flesh”

Scriptures – Mark 10:2-12; Malachi 2:14; Rom. 7:2-3

Introduction to lesson

Divorce is a widespread problem around us today. Married couples who promised to love each other for better or for worse until death are trying to legally end their marriage. Sadly, divorce has become common among those who profess to know Jesus Christ. After divorce, most people marry someone else as they are persuaded by friends, family, and even churches that their new marriage is a good thing. But does God excuse divorce and allow remarriage? Does God agree with those who permit divorce and encourage marrying someone new? In today's lesson, we will examine divorce and remarriage from God's point of view.

Key Verse: “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ What happens when a man cleaves to his wife? (Mark 10:7-8)
- ✦ After being joined together in marriage, can a husband and wife become two single people again? (v. 8)
- ✦ Who joins a man and woman together in marriage? (v. 9)
- ✦ Is it okay with God when people try to divide the marriage union? (v. 9)
- ✦ If a man divorces his wife and marries another, what is he doing against her? (v. 11)
- ✦ If a woman divorces her husband and marries another, what sin is she committing? (v. 12)

Think about it: Couples are not made one flesh by the minister or the government, but by God. Ministers may officiate the marriage ceremony, and governments may legally recognize the marriage relationship, but God is the one who actually joins a man and woman together when they covenant in marriage (Mal. 2:14). Since God makes them one flesh, they can no longer be two single people in God's eyes as long as they are both living. According to God's word, only death can separate the one flesh union (Rom. 7:2-3). So when a husband and wife get a divorce, they remain “one” even if the government says they are no longer married. Therefore, to marry someone else while the original spouse is still alive is committing adultery. Divorce and remarriage may be accepted by friends, family, and even churches, but we must remember, “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

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“God’s Plan for Sexuality” – July 19, 2015

Lesson – “Holy Matrimony”

Scriptures – Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Cor. 7:2, 9;
Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:11-12; Romans 7:2-3

Introduction to lesson

Do you think marriage is a big deal? How you view marriage can have a great amount of influence on your decisions in life. For example, if marriage is not that important to you, then you may decide to live with someone and be sexually active without getting married. If marriage is just something people do to show they are “in love,” then you may decide to get a divorce and find someone else, if you no longer feel “in love” with the person you married. Decisions such as these are made all the time by people who do not see the true significance of marriage. In today's lesson, we will learn that marriage is a very big deal, and those who take it lightly can get into serious trouble with God!

Key Verse: “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ Who should honor/respect marriage? (Heb. 13:4)
- ✦ If people refuse to live by God's plan for marriage, what will happen to them? (Heb. 13:4)
- ✦ Fornication (premarital sex) is a very common practice in the world today. How should Christians respond to fornication? (1Cor. 6:18)
- ✦ When people commit fornication, against what are they sinning? (1 Cor. 6:18)
- ✦ Besides fleeing fornication, what is another way a person can avoid fornication? (1 Cor. 7:2, 9)
- ✦ What happens to a man and woman when they marry? (Gen. 2:24)
- ✦ Is it okay for someone to remarry while their first husband or wife is still alive? (Mark 10:11-12; Romans 7:2-3)

Think about it: The marriage relationship was designed by God to be a lifetime commitment, not a temporary relationship based on our feelings. He also designated the marriage relationship to be the only relationship that involves sex. When people choose to be sexually active before marriage, they are committing fornication and sinning against their own bodies. Unmarried couples should either run away from fornication or get married to avoid the sin. Once they are married, the husband and the wife can enjoy intimacy with one another and have God's blessing. If the husband or wife has a romantic/sexual relationship with anyone else, he/she commits adultery. As you can see, marriage is a very big deal to God and should be respected by His creation. If we disrespect God's design for marriage by committing fornication or adultery, then God will judge us according to our sins.

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Purity

“God’s Plan for Sexuality” – July 26, 2015

Lesson – Sexual Purity

Scriptures – Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 5:22; 1 Peter 5:8;
1Thess. 4:3; Matt. 15:19; Proverbs 4:23

Introduction to lesson

We live in a world that is full of sexual temptations. These temptations may come to us through images on the internet, television, cell phones, and magazines. Sometimes the lifestyle and conversation of people around us can become a source of sexual temptation. These temptations can potentially lead us into unholy desires that can control our lifestyle. Although we cannot avoid being tempted, we can keep our lives free from sexual sins/lusts if we are careful to follow God's guidelines. In today's lesson, we will learn how to keep ourselves from committing sexual sins and how to remain pure in this fallen world.

Key Verse: “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Ephesians 5:3).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ What characteristics should never be a part of a saint's life? (Eph. 5:3)
- ✦ From what else should we keep ourselves? (1 Thess. 5:22)
- ✦ Why should Christians stay on guard and take the devil as a serious threat? (1 Peter 5:8)
- ✦ What can help us keep ourselves from fornication? (1 Thess. 4:3)
- ✦ According to Jesus, from where do sinful behaviors like fornication come? (Matt. 15:19)
- ✦ If we want to keep our behavior holy, what should we be careful to guard/keep? (Proverbs 4:23)

Think about it: As God's people, our behavior should never include sexual sins and lustful living. In fact, we should keep ourselves from every kind of evil, since we represent Jesus Christ. In order to do this, we must realize that our enemy is constantly trying to spiritually destroy us. For this reason, we must carefully watch what we do in order to make sure we don't give the devil an opportunity to overcome us. We must also realize that sinful actions come from the heart. Therefore, we need to be sure our hearts are cleansed through sanctification and that we guard our hearts from sinful desires. If our hearts are kept pure, then our lifestyle will also be pure from sexual sins as well as every other kind of sin.

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Purity

Sexual Sins – August 2, 2015

Lesson: “Works of the Flesh”

Scriptures: Ga.5:16-25; 1 Th. 4:3-4; He. 13:4; 1 Co. 6:18-20;
Jn. 15:10-11

Introduction to lesson:

Galatians 5:22-23 lists several characteristics that all Christians should possess. Notice that love is first in the list. To explain the purpose of these in the life of a believer, the apostle Paul called them “fruit of the Spirit.” However, he also wrote about rotten fruit produced by those not led by the Spirit of God. These he called “works of the flesh” (adultery and fornication being mentioned – see vv. 19-21). The word “adultery” is most often used in the Bible to define a person who is married but has sex with someone other than his or her spouse. “Fornication” is most often used to define sexual acts outside the sacred bonds of marriage, for example, premarital sex. Satan uses fornication to lure and enslave teenagers – but it is not limited to that particular age group! The Bible is very clear that these sexual sins are committed because of fleshly lusts and are considered to be works of the flesh (vv. 16, 24). Sex before marriage is birthed out of lust but never out of true love. We must know that true love is selfless while lust, which produces the “rotten fruit” of fornication, is completely selfish. Lust always takes but love always gives; lust always abuses but love always nurtures. Premarital sex damages both spiritually and emotionally by leaving those involved with lasting trust issues. It destroys self-esteem and further opens the door to other sexual sins.

Key Verse: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Does personal pleasure and self-fulfillment justify having sex before marriage? Explain your answer. (1 Th. 4:3-4)
- ✚ Does premarital sex (or sex outside of marriage) affect a person spiritually? (He. 13:4; Ep. 5:3, 6-7)
- ✚ How does the Bible describe the natural, physical body of a Christian? (1 Co. 6:18-20)
- ✚ What brings true joy and happiness in an individual’s life? (Jn. 14:21, 23; 15:10-11)

Think about it: The Lord wants us to be happy and fulfilled, but true joy and fulfillment comes from a right relationship with God. Going against God’s Word will only bring us heartaches in this life and ultimately lead us to eternal destruction. Both adultery and fornication are clearly revealed in the Scriptures as being sins in the sight of God. These sins, as with any sin, will disqualify a person from being welcomed into heaven. Therefore, every born again child of God must forsake sexual sins and pursue a righteous and holy life.

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Sexual Sins – August 9, 2015

Lesson: “Polygamy”

Scriptures: Ge. 2:24; Mk 10:6-8; Ep. 5:21-33

Introduction to lesson: The word “polygamy” refers to the practice of being married to more than one spouse at the same time. Though there are references in the Bible to men practicing polygamy (especially in the Old Testament), this clearly was not God’s original design for mankind; and it has resulted in strife and heartache. We can see God’s original design for marriage in the book of Genesis. God created Adam. He then made Eve from Adam’s rib and presented her to him in order that they should be husband and wife. On this basis, the Bible says, “Therefore shall a man [*one man*] leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife [*one woman*]; and they [*two*] shall be one flesh” (Ge. 2:24). Under the New Covenant, Jesus reconfirmed God’s commandment regarding one man and one woman for life, saying, “And they twain [*two, not three or more*] shall be one flesh” (Mk. 10:8).

Key Verse: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Ge. 2:24).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ In principle, what is the problem with having multiple spouses? What is the problem with one man being married to two or more women? (Mk. 10:8; 1 Co. 7:2)
- ✚ In practice, what is the problem with polygamy? (Ep. 5:21-33)

Think about it: When you find people participating in polygamy in the Old Testament, jealousy, strife, and heartache accompanied it. For example, Rachel and Leah were constantly competing for the attention of Jacob. The rivalry among their children eventually resulted in Leah’s children selling Rachel’s son, Joseph, as a slave (Ge. 37:18-28). David’s children from multiple marriages became involved in incest, abuse, and eventually sibling murder (2 Sa. 13:11-15, 28-29). In the Old Testament, God was apparently longsuffering in regard to the practice of polygamy, partly due to man’s inability to live a born again, sanctified life. However, when Jesus came and offered his life’s blood for our salvation and sanctification, he gave his people the ability to live up to a higher standard, commanding them to honor God’s original design for marriage (Mk. 10:2-12). Therefore, we do not accept polygamy in the fellowship of the church.

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Writer: Zachary Snyder

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Sexual Sins – August 16, 2015

Lesson: “Homosexuality & Lesbianism”

Scriptures: Mk. 10:6-7; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Ro. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 1 Co. 6:9-10

Introduction to lesson: Many governments around the world have accepted homosexuality as normal behavior. Even more troubling is the fact that churches which claim to represent Christ are also condoning these sins as well. With such confusion all around us, it is necessary for Zion Assembly to plainly teach what God commands and requires regarding sexual purity. Recently, we have been eye witness to homosexuality being propagated as “alternative” and “natural.” Moreover, those who oppose it are labeled as judgmental and intolerant. Of course, no one enjoys being labeled as such; but our teaching on these subjects is not based upon our feelings or opinions. Rather, the Scriptures teach that these behaviors are against God’s original design, against moral order and nature, and contrary to God’s commandments. In the detailed account of the creation of humanity, we find how God created the first man Adam and presented him with the first woman called Eve (Ge. 2:21- 22). The creation account in Genesis gives us God’s original design of one woman for one man as the basis for sexuality and marriage. In Mark 10:6-7, Jesus confirmed this original design and commanded men to walk in accordance with it – “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.”

Key Verse: “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What practice did God forbid in his law and how did he describe it? (Lev. 18:22)
- ✚ What was the penalty for such sin? (Lev. 20:13)
- ✚ How is homosexuality and lesbianism specifically described in Romans 1:26-27?
- ✚ What did Paul say would happen to those who practice homosexuality? (1 Co. 6:9-10; 1 Ti. 1:9-10)

Think about it: In regard to our ministering to sinners and unbelievers, we must call on all homosexuals to repent and be “born again,” so they too can be a part of God’s kingdom. In addition, because we are filled and led by the love of God, we should strongly denounce the bullying or abusing of homosexuals, lesbians, or any other sinners, for Jesus did not come to destroy lives but rather to save them (Lu. 9:55-56)! We are to love homosexuals and lesbians just as we love all sinners. However, they must repent and turn from their sins in order to inherit the kingdom of God. Clearly, it is the responsibility of the church to call all sinners to repent and be saved. We must then inform the homosexual and lesbian that God’s Word condemns their actions, and unless they repent, they cannot enter God’s kingdom.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Zachary Snyder

Purity

Sexual Sins – August 23, 2015

Lesson: “Divine Judgment”

Scriptures: Ep. 5:3-7; Heb. 13:4; Ro. 14:12; 1 Co. 6:9; Heb. 9:27; Revelation 20:11-15; Jn. 3:15-17

Introduction to lesson: In every successful government, laws are necessary to keep proper order, and without those laws there would be complete chaos. For example, speed limit laws have been enacted to prevent accidents, injuries, and deaths. Similarly, God has designed laws to protect us from eternal damnation. More specifically, he has established certain laws regarding our behavior in sexual relationships. As with human laws, breaking God’s laws comes with consequences. Unless people repent or their sexual sins, they will experience the judgment and wrath of God (Ep. 5:3-7). Pre-marital sex, homosexuality, polygamy, adultery, and so on, are all practices that God says are sinful according to his law. These sexual sins bring mental, emotional, and physical injury to all who practice them, as well as damaging the family unit and society at large. Disease and heartache (temporal consequences) have spread throughout our world simply because men have disobeyed God’s laws concerning sexual behavior. Let’s consider the eternal consequences.

Key Verse: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How will God respond to those who commit sexual sins when they come before him and give account? (Heb. 13:4; Ro. 14:12)
- ✚ We live in a day when even “Christian” organizations are permitting sexual lifestyles contrary to the Scriptures. What is the warning in God’s Word in regard to such sins? (1 Co. 6:9; Ep. 5:6)
- ✚ When will sinners face God’s certain judgment? (He. 9:27)

Think about it: Pre-marital sex, adultery, polygamy, and homosexuality (to name a few) are all sexual sins forbidden by God because they destroy lives, families, and societies. God has appointed a day of righteous judgment for those who practice these sins and have not repented (Ac. 17:31). In Revelation 20:11-15, the Bible calls God’s eternal punishment for unrepentant sinners the “second death,” and it involves being cast into the “lake of fire” to be tormented forever (v. 10). Revelation 21:8 specifically lists “whoremongers” or fornicators among those who will be cast into the lake of fire. We should not want anyone to experience God’s eternal punishment. God is love but he is also just, and he will judge sin. Have you experienced the love of God in Christ? If you know the love of God, then you know that Jesus Christ can save and radically change sinners. Jesus came that none should perish but have eternal life (Jn. 3:15). Let’s tell others the good news and turn them from eternal punishment to everlasting life (Jn. 3:16)!

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Rick Ferrell

Purity

“Biblical Marriage” – August 30, 2015

Lesson – “God Defined Marriage”

Scriptures – Mark 10:6-9

Introduction to lesson

Marriage is vastly misunderstood in our culture today. When a couple commits themselves to each other in “holy matrimony,” do they really know what they are doing? Society has changed the foundation of marriage from real love and commitment to mere affection. The error in this thinking gives way for someone to say, “I’ll be married to you as long as I love you; but, if one day I decide that I no longer love you, then I can leave you and find someone else to love.” If you think about it, that seems to be the mindset of mainstream society today. Being permanently committed to your spouse is not the norm; it seems that people feel it’s just too hard to stay committed. In this lesson, we will discover what God defines a real marriage to be.

Key Verse: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- + In the context of marriage, why did God mention “male and female?” (v. 6)
- + How long has God’s views on marriage been around? Is this important? (v. 6)
- + Will the Lord ever change views on his teachings? (Malachi 3:6)
- + Can you explain what it means to cleave? (v. 7)
- + Why do you think the Lord made “cleaving” so important in the beginning of married life?
- + Marriage is a “one flesh” relationship – the two become one. Who makes them one? (vv. 8-9)?
- + Marriage is also a covenant relationship. A covenant is a contract built upon a solemn promise. A contract is binding until it is paid in full (fulfilled). So when is the marriage covenant (contract) paid in full? (1 Co. 7:39).

Think about it:

Marriage customs may vary from culture to culture, but at its core, marriage is a covenant between an eligible man and an eligible woman to become husband and wife for life (“until death do us part”). Marriage is a divine institution ordained by God. Governments may recognize marriage, but God sets it in order. Men may perform the ceremonies, but God makes them one. The “state” cannot marry anyone, because marriage is a divine institution, not a manmade one. Therefore, the only acceptable marriage is one that is accepted in the eyes of God according to the Scriptures.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Rick Ferrell

Purity

“Biblical Marriage” – September 6, 2015

Lesson – “Till Death Do Us Part”

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; Romans 7:2-3

Introduction to lesson

Last week, we discussed God’s definition of marriage. Marriage was instituted by God and establishes a binding covenant (agreement) between a man and his wife. The marriage covenant, like any covenant made before God, must not be broken. The court house in your local community may grant a divorce, but that does not make the covenant of marriage null and void. In God’s eyes, marriage is until death. There are no exceptions. Circumstances may warrant one spouse to separate themselves from the other, but man has no authority to break or void the covenant they made with each other. This is an unpopular view in our society and also in the religious world of our day. But we fear God more than man and desire to live how He says to live.

Key Verse: “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth, but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband” (Romans 7:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- + In our Scripture reading, who gave the command? (v.10)
- + Why was it important for the Apostle Paul to mention that?
- + Why do you think society has made divorce so readily available?
- + How has this impacted our society?
- + What are one’s options if one leaves his spouse? (v.11)
- + In your own words, what does Romans 7:2 say to you? Share your thoughts with the class.
- + According to this verse, do you see any way that one can be excused from the marriage covenant before death?
- + Do you find any exceptions in verse 3?
- + Paul says in verse 3 that remarriage after getting a divorce constitutes adultery. Explain why.
- + Adultery is what in God’s eyes.
- + If adultery is sin, will sin enter heaven? (Galatians 5:19-21)

Think about it:

Zion Assembly believes the teachings of Christ: that marriage is for life. There are no exceptions to this truth. Man has tried to manipulate the truth in order to allow for sinful living both inside and outside of Christian circles. Divorce and remarriage are prevalent in our day, but God’s people must be strong and stand up to these opposing forces. Marriage is for life. That’s what the Bible teaches. It is God’s law. And God’s law cannot be changed by man. The church must speak this truth in love.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
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“Biblical Marriage” – September 13, 2015

Lesson – “God Hates Divorce”

Scriptures – Mark 10:1-12

Introduction to lesson

Divorce as we all know is very prevalent today. It’s sad to hear when friends or loved ones feel that they can no longer remain together and that divorce is the only option. Not only is divorce hurtful in one’s relationship with God, but it also provides a major blow to one’s relationships with others. Divorce affects so much more than just the two parties involved. There are families that are affected and have to work through the hurt. When children are involved, whether parents admit it or not, they are seriously affected by divorce. Statistically, they are more likely to struggle in school, suffer from poverty, indulge in alcohol and drugs, and become sexually promiscuous. Beyond that, the child has a deep inner wound he may carry for life. Based on these reasons alone, we can see why God hates divorce.

Key Verse: “For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away . . .” (Mal. 2:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- + What was the Pharisees’ motive for coming to Jesus?
- + Why were they trying to tempt him?
- + Did Moses or God permit divorce?
- + Why did he permit it?
- + What does “hardness of their hearts” mean?
- + Did Moses’ permission to divorce undo what God had already established from the beginning?
- + From what we have read today, have you seen anything that would show God’s approval of divorce?
- + Does divorce granted by the courts make void the marriage covenant (contract)? Will both parties still be held liable to the contract in God’s eyes?

Think about it:

Since 1900, the divorce rate has increased from 5% to almost 50%. Of course, the result is broken homes, families, and lives. Only marriages focused on God can turn this around. We should remember that God is the one that joins husband and wife together; man cannot justly divide this sacred union instituted by God. Certainly, because divorce is so harmful, it should be avoided if at all possible. However, if divorce occurs, the marriage vows should still be recognized (1 Co. 7:11). The divorced should seek to use what the devil intended for bad as an opportunity to serve God without distraction (1 Co. 7:35) and to set an example of fidelity and sacrifice (Ja. 5:10).

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“Biblical Marriage” – September 20, 2015

Lesson – “Why Is Remarriage after Divorce a Sin?”

Scriptures – Mark 10:11-12

Introduction to lesson

If a married couple feels they can no longer work things out, our culture has accepted the idea of getting rid of your spouse and finding another one. Many times, you will hear the reason, “Because I deserve to be happy.” Well, as sincere as that sounds, the Bible says something completely different. We have learned through our studies that marriage is a divine institution created by God. Only God teaches what can break the marriage vow (covenant). It’s not divorce, but rather death (Ro. 7:2-3). Although this may be an unpopular saying, this is what the Bible declares as truth. Because marriage is a divine institution, a divorce cannot sever the covenant. Therefore, even after the government declares a divorce, in God’s eyes the couple is still one flesh.

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:

- ✚ Is adultery sin? (Ex. 20:14; Galatians 5:19-21)
- ✚ What does it mean to “put away” your spouse?
- ✚ Does the divorce end a marriage according to God’s standards?
- ✚ Since the divorce doesn’t end a marriage, this is why remarriage causes one to commit adultery. For a married person, sexual relations outside of marriage constitute adultery. Therefore, remarriage would automatically be classified as sin. Does God forgive sin? Yes, but once forgiveness takes place, repentance will cause one to turn away from sinning and to turn unto Christ.
- ✚ Can a sinner enter heaven?
- ✚ How serious is the issue of divorce and remarriage?

Think about it:

Divorce does not end the marriage covenant in the eyes of God. A divorced person is therefore still bound to the person he/she divorced, regardless of the laws of the land. Since divorced people are still obligated to their marriage covenant and vows, remarriage after a divorce means entering into a romantic/sexual relationship with someone other than one’s spouse. Though the persons involved may not realize it, they have actually entered into a state of adultery; and adultery is sin. God forgives sin, but He will not violate His divine law. His law states that marriage is for life. His grace extends salvation to us, but we must turn from the sin and stop sinning.

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“Biblical Marriage” – September 27, 2015

Lesson – “Biblical Principles for a Fulfilling Marriage”

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Introduction to lesson

Love is an often misunderstood emotion. Many simply base love on their feelings. With that, love for someone could come and go at the drop of a hat. In order for a marriage to be complete and successful, the husband and wife should love each other with the love of God. “Agape” is the word used in the Scriptures when talking about Godly love. This type of love is not selfish but will put others needs before their own. Now that’s an idea that’s not heard much in the world today. Putting someone else before myself? Yes; this is the only way that any relationship will last a lifetime, especially marriage. God not only wants us to stay married, but he wants our marriages to be happy and fulfilling. Only when we are selfless will that be accomplished.

Key Verse: “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ How do you think the world reacts to the phrase, “I Love You?”
- ✦ Why do you think our society has a misunderstanding of what love is? Share some examples.
- ✦ Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Go through the examples that the apostle Paul gives that are true attributes of love.
- ✦ One of the most promising characteristics of Godly love is found in the first part of verse 8. What is it?
- ✦ The fact that Godly love never fails is why we know that a marriage where Godly love is flowing will also not fail.
- ✦ Name the 3 gifts that will abide forever. (v. 13)
- ✦ Of these three, which is the greatest?
- ✦ So is love important?

Think about it:

Throughout the last few weeks, we have looked at marriage through God’s eyes and what he has to say about it in his word. We have stressed the importance of recognizing the lifetime bond of marriage. This is crucial because too many see marriage as dissolvable, and, therefore, they are not committed to working on their marriages. Our marriage covenant is not simply a vow to stay together for life, but also to “love, honor, and cherish” until death do us part. I know you’re probably not at the age to even consider marriage at this time, but now is the time to understand these principles and to build the rest of your life upon them.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Byron Harris

Love

“The Basics of Love” – October 4, 2015

Lesson – “God is Love”

Scriptures – 1 John 4:7-11; Romans 5:8

Introduction to lesson

The Bible tells us that God is love. However, his love is very different from worldly love. How do we define it? The dictionary defines love as an intense affection for another person based on personal ties. Notice the key word in the dictionary definition of love is “based on.” This implies that love is conditional. We love someone when they fulfill a condition that we require before we love them. Worldly love is conditional, but God’s love is unconditional. We love based on feelings and emotions that can change from one moment to the next. However, God loves because that is his nature. “But God commanded his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” God loved us when we did not deserve it. As God’s church, we need to express this love to the world.

Key Verse: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How does God define love?
- ✚ How do we obtain God’s love?
- ✚ Do we deserve God’s love?
- ✚ How is the world’s love different from God’s love?
- ✚ What must we do to experience God’s love?

Think about it: God’s love is unconditional and is not based on feelings or emotions. He doesn’t love us because we are loveable or because we make him feel good. He loves us because God is love. He created us to have a loving relationship with him. Because of man’s sin, God sacrificed his own Son (Jesus Christ) to restore our loving relationship with him. Christ willingly died for us while we were yet sinners. His love for us has always existed, and because of that, he did all the giving and sacrificing long before we were even aware that we needed his great love. Although we cannot earn or deserve God’s love for us, we can receive his love through accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior.

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Love

“The Basics of Love” – October 11, 2015

Lesson – “God so loved”

Scriptures – 1 John 4:7-11; Revelation 2:1-7

Introduction to lesson

God loves you! His love is different from any other love. It is unconditional! God’s love is not based on conditions or circumstances. “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us...” (1 John 4:9-10). God proved his amazing love toward us by sending Jesus to die for us. God loved us first! He loved us even though we didn’t love him. This is the good news of the gospel. God loves us so much that he made a way for us to have a relationship with him. Although we do not deserve his great love, it is freely given to us. We are given a choice to accept or reject his love. Nothing can compare to the love God has shown to us and the new life that is waiting for those that love him.

Key Verse: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why does God love us?
- ✚ Who can experience God’s great love?
- ✚ What did God do to demonstrate his love for us?
- ✚ How should we respond to the love God has shown?

Think about it: Jesus tells the church of Ephesus not to forsake their first love. He tells the church to repent if they want to receive the promises of God. Although they had failed, God loved them enough to give them a second chance. There are many promises in the Bible, and it is God’s will that we receive them all. When we reject his love and the gift of his Son, we are in danger of facing eternal punishment. God sent his Son so that we could be forgiven of our sins. It is not God’s will that anyone should perish but that all would come to know him! He has prepared so much for those who love him. All of this is just because he loves us!

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Love

“The Basics of Love” – October 18, 2015

Lesson – “Love God”

Scriptures – Exodus 20; Matthew 22:34-40

Introduction to lesson

Rules are regulations or principles that govern our conduct. It doesn't matter where we go or how old we get, there will always be rules! What would happen if everyone decided they no longer needed to obey the rules? Rules and commands help keep order, safety, and peace. As Christians, there are rules that we must live by also. In Exodus 20, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The first commandment says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” We are commanded by God to place nothing before him. A Pharisee asked Jesus, “What is the greatest commandment?” He answered, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” We are reminded many times throughout the Bible that we are to love God more than anything else! When we love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, there will be no room for anything else. When we love God in this way, everything else in our lives will be pleasing as well.

Key Verse: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment” (Mark 12:30).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ What are the commandments that God expects us to live by? (Exodus 20:1-17)
- ✦ What is the greatest commandment? (Mt. 22:37)
- ✦ How much love does God require from us? (Mt 22:37)

Think about it: If you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, you will not desire to worship any other gods or to misuse God's holy name. Furthermore, because you love God with your all, you will not want to lie to others, steal from them, or to do them harm. When you truly love God, you will desire to please him and live holy every day. The point is that when we get the first commandment (i.e. “Love God”) right, the rest become second nature to us. This one commandment sums up the others. As Christians, we must make sure that our relationship with God is secure at all times. Our lives should be lived with this primary goal in mind – LOVE GOD. Each day we should seek to fulfill God's greatest commandment – to love him with all our heart, soul, and mind.

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Love

“The Basics of Love” – October 25, 2015

Lesson – “Love Your Neighbor”

Scriptures – Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-37

Introduction to lesson

Most Christians profess to love God. Yet, at times, they find it hard to love their neighbor as themselves. The term neighbor includes family, classmates, friends, and even our enemies. If we do not love all of them, can we truly say that we love God? In Luke 10:25-37, a lawyer desiring to justify himself asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus told him the story of the Good Samaritan. A man was walking to Jericho and was robbed, beaten, and left for dead. First, a priest came by and didn’t go near him. A Levite also came by and did nothing to help. Then finally a Samaritan came by, and having compassion for the man, he stopped to help him. Jesus then asked the lawyer, “Which now of these three was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?” Jesus told the lawyer to go and do likewise. As Christians, the love of God will cause us to love our neighbor. 1 John 4:7-8 tells us that if we love not one another, we know not God!

Key Verse “And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Who is your neighbor?
- + Is it possible to love God and hate other people?
- + If you were the man that was attacked while going to Jericho, how would you desire to be treated?

Think about it: Imagine the world that we live in without love. It would be a very lonely place to live. Nobody would care for anybody else, but only themselves. Unfortunately, this is a reality in many places. Jesus told us that all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Look beside you, does the person sitting next to you know that you love God. Did you tell them that you love God, or can they see that you love God just by being around you? Also, can they tell that you truly love and care about them? Love is an action word. It’s time that we put the true love of God in action for the world to see.

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Writer: Pam Jones

LOVE

“Understanding Love” – November 1, 2015

Lesson – “Keeping the Commandments”

Scriptures – 1 John 4:7-21; 1 John 5:2-3; Ro. 13:9-10

Introduction to lesson

“To every action, there is a reaction.” This statement comes from Sir Isaac Newton’s Third Law of Motion which states: “To every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction.” If my action is to pull back on a rubber band, when I let go the reaction will be that the rubber band will fly off in the opposite direction from where I was pulling it. The farther I pull back in this direction, the farther the rubber band will fly in that direction. This law of motion can be applied anywhere, even in our everyday lives and in our spiritual lives, as well. Everything we do leads to something else. The action of love brings about the greatest reactions of all. We are **COMMANDED TO LOVE**. Love is not an option, but a command (1 John 4:21). Upon receiving the command there must be **action** on our part by **KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS**. Desiring to please the Lord and following him in all things confirm that we truly love him from our hearts (John 14:21). When we love God with our all, we will keep his commandments. Thus, the fulfilling of God’s law is love (Galatians 5:14). When we engage in the action of love then we will see the **reaction** which is **FULFILLING THE LOVE OF GOD** more and more. For every action there is a reaction. Love leads to more love.

Key Verse: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Questions to Discuss:

Commaned to Love: (1 John 4:7- 8, 11-12)

- What is the source of love? (vv. 7-8)
- If God loved us what are we to do? (vv. 11-12)

Keeping the commandments: (1 John 5:2-3)

- How do we know that we love the children of God? (v. 2)
- What is the love of God? (v. 3)

Fulfilling the love of God: (Romans 13:9-10)

- How should we love others? (v. 9)
- What is love? (v. 10)

Project: Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. On the top of the paper, write “ACTIONS” on one side, and “REACTIONS” on the other side. Write down an action (e.g. “Kind Words Spoken”), and then write down what would be the reaction of said action (e.g. “A Smile and Hope”). Have both positive and negative statements listed on your paper.

Think about it: *The command has been given; the action must be taken so that the reaction can happen.*

What are Jesus’ commandments? “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mark 12:30-31). We must be filled with the love of God in Christ if we are to understand true love (agape) which comes by **KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS**.

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*Sunday
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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Pam Jones

LOVE

“Understanding Love” – November 8, 2015

Lesson – “Growth in Love”

Scriptures – Ep. 3:14-21; Ep. 4:13-15; 1 Jn. 2:5-6

Introduction to lesson

“Rooted and Grounded” – What does this statement mean?

When we read Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21, we find he prayed that we would be rooted and grounded in LOVE. What does it mean for Christians to be rooted and grounded in love? Webster defines root as “the part of the plant that grows underground, gets water from the ground, and holds the plant in place.” Likewise, Christians must be rooted in the love of Christ wherein we feed upon the Lord, are anchored in the Lord, and are supported by the Lord. The word translated “grounded” comes from an architectural term representing a strong foundation - a Christian’s foundation is upon the love of Christ. How great is this love in which we are to be rooted and grounded? It is an **UNFATHOMABLE LOVE**, a love that is incapable of being fully explored or understood. “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge . . .” (Ep.3:19). Our **GROWTH IN LOVE** is the result of being supported because we are rooted and grounded in Christ’s love. “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro . . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things” (Ep. 4:14-15). As we grow in Christ, our desire is for the love of God to be perfected. **LOVE PERFECTED** comes when we are like Christ walking in his ways; and in so doing, the love of God is perfected and fulfilled in us.

Key Verse: “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ep. 4:15).

Questions to Discuss:

Unfathomable Love (Ephesians 3:17-19)

- What will the Father give unto you? (v. 17)
- When the eyes of our understanding is enlightened what will we know? (vv. 18-19)

Growth in Love (Ephesians 4:13-15)

- What is the goal for us as shown in verse 13?
- How are we to speak the truth and why? (v. 15)

Love Perfected (1 John 2:5-6)

- If we keep His word what happens? (v. 5)

Project: Have each student draw a tree showing the roots under the ground and using what they learned in the lesson to explain what it means to be rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17).

Think about it: *Deeper, Deeper in the love of Jesus daily let me go!* Every child of God should desire to know the fullness of God’s love in his/her life. So let’s get rooted and grounded in the love of Jesus that we may know Him and walk in the teachings of his word, and that the perfect love of God be perfected in us.

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LOVE

“Understanding Love” – November 15, 2015

Lesson – “The Bond of Perfectness”

Scriptures – Colossians 3:1-17

Introduction to lesson

“WEAR IT” – This statement is found in a “Safe Boating Campaign” emphasizing wearing your life jacket to keep you safe as you enjoy boating. I grew up going boating and life jackets were a must for our safety. Before I jumped into the water, the jacket went on for my protection, no questions asked. For my very life’s sake I would **“WEAR IT!”** As the people of God, we must WEAR IT. Wear what? LOVE! Why? Because it is the perfect bond of unity which is the life of the church, so put it on. The church should be a people of love. Real lasting godly love is what the world is searching for. So that others may know God’s love, let us live **HEAVENLY-MINDED** with our focus on Christ pursuing the things of Christ and living for him (1 John 3:2). Let us be a **HOLY FELLOWSHIP** putting off the sinful deeds of this world and putting on the righteousness of Christ (Romans 13:12-14). Let us be a **PEOPLE OF LOVE**, for love is the righteous motivation for all we “do” and “don’t do” in the church. In other words, love makes the church all it should be. The mark of the church’s perfection and completion is the abounding godly love. Let’s let others see perfect harmony through the love we put on (John 13:34-35).

Key Verse: “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14).

Questions to Discuss:

Heavenly-Mindset (Colossians 3:1-4)

- What does it mean to be risen with Christ? (v. 1)
- What should we be seeking for? (vv. 1-4)

Holy Fellowship (Colossians 3:5-13)

- List all that we should put off. (vv. 5-9)
- List all that we should put on. (vv. 10-13)

People of Love (Colossians 3:14-17)

- What is to rule and dwell in our hearts? (vv. 14-17)

Project: Using sticky notes (post-it notes), have each student to write two statements about himself that are true, and one statement that is not true. Then stick the statements onto the student. The other students will attempt to guess which one is not true and must be taken off. Discuss what we as children of God must put off from our lives and what we must put on in order to show forth the true love of Jesus to others.

Think about it: *Let’s Do It!* It is time for the youth of the church to “**put off**” so that we may be able to “**put on**” – and then **“WEAR IT”** – so others may know that we are Jesus’ followers because of the love we have for one another. In turn, they will want to follow the Lord also.

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LOVE

“Understanding Love” – November 22, 2015

Lesson – “Same Love”

Scriptures – Philippians 2:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:25-26

Introduction to lesson

“WHAT UNITES US??” If we are to be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, then we must be united. So what is it that undergirds and sustains the fellowship and unity of the church (youth group)? Webster’s Dictionary defines unity as the state of being united or joined as a whole; the quality of being united into one. If unity is the state of being united then **what unites us?** What is the glue that brings us into one fellowship (one body)? First, let’s look at the physical body. What holds it together? The answer is “laminin,” which is a glycoprotein that promotes cell adhesion. In other words, laminin is like glue that holds our physical body together. Also, under a microscope, laminin is shaped like a cross. So again, what is the glue that holds the church (youth group) together? Look at the cross, and you will find it. **LOVE** undergirds and sustains the unity of the church. The same love that we received at the cross through salvation is the same love that each of us has obtained. “He [*Jesus*] humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Ph. 2:8). **HUMILITY** is what was seen on the cross through Jesus, and that same humility must be in us for there to be unity in the church (youth group). When we esteem others better than ourselves, we are showing the **LOVE AND CARE** for each other which are necessary to have unity and fellowship in the church (youth group).

Key Verse: “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Ph. 2:2).

Questions to Discuss:

Humility (Philippians 2:1-8)

- Paul stated, “Fulfil ye my joy” – How? (vv. 2-4)
- What is the mind of Christ that is to be in us? (vv. 5-8)

Love and Care (1 Corinthians 12:25-26)

- What is not to be in the body (youth group)? (v. 25)
- How are we to respond to other’s suffering & successes? (v. 26)

Project: Divide the class into three groups. Assign each group one of the questions below concerning the subject of charity (love) as seen in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Have each group share what they discovered. Questions: 1. What can a person do that will be useless or unprofitable without charity? 2. What does charity do? 3. What will cease and what will never cease?

Think about it: **“UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL!”** Godly love moves us to **HUMBLE** ourselves and to work together, rather than to pull apart. When we **LOVE AND CARE** for one another, we cannot be divided. When we (the youth group) have the “same love” for each other, we will experience the joy of lasting unity and fellowship.

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LOVE

“Understanding Love” – November 29, 2015

Lesson – “Love Not the World”

Scriptures – 1 Jn. 2:15-17; He. 11:24-26; Mk. 10:17-22

Introduction to lesson

“DECISION TIME!” It is time that we make a choice; there can be no half-way choices. Either we love God, or we love the world and its sinful system. Following Christ requires a definite decision. There can be nothing in this world that can compete with our love for God. As Christians, we cannot hold on to God with one hand and to the world with the other. At some point in our life, we will be brought to a place where it will be time to choose which direction that our future will go. Moses came to such a place in his life where it became **decision time**. He made a spiritual decision about his future direction (He. 11:24-26). The rich young ruler came to **decision time**; he choose to love the world, and in doing so, he turned away sorrowfully from following Christ (Mk. 10:17-22). When it’s **decision time**, you must choose one, and you must let go of the other. No riding the fence! God’s word tells us, “Love not the world,” for the world is a rebellious system operated by fallen humanity with priorities and practices opposed to a holy God and his will for humanity (1 John 2:15-17). The desire of our heart indicates what we actually love. What do we treasure? “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt. 6:21).

Key Verse: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jn. 2:15).

Questions to Discuss:

Your Choice (1 John 2:15-17)

- What is the result of choosing to love the world?
- What is the result of choosing to love God and do His will?

Moses’ Choice (Hebrews 11:24-26)

- What was Moses’ choice and what did he regard as greater value?
- What does the statement, “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” mean?

Rich Young Ruler’s Choice (Mark 10:17-22)

- Explain what the Rich Young Ruler’s choice was and why he choice the direction that he did.

Project: Write down on a poster board or white board the three things that are in the world as shown in 1 John 2:16 (The lust of the flesh ---The lust of the eyes --- The pride of life). Have the students to act out the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-6) expressing how the three things in the world as listed above were present in this story. Discuss how the above three can affect our walk with God today if we allow it.

Think about it: “TIMES UP” – Is it God we love, or is it the world? What is our heart’s desire? Joshua declared, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Jos. 24:15).

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Love

“Love in Action” – December 6, 2015

Lesson – “Walk in Love”

Scriptures – Eph. 5:2; Ph. 4:13-19

Introduction to lesson

The key verse suggests: 1) our pace in following Christ, and 2) the quality of our relationship with the Lord. “Walk in love” does not indicate a poor pace, but rather a pace that allows the believer to see the nature and power of God in his life. If we were to run hurrying, then we would miss important places and people that God desires us to see and experience. There was a time when I ran a race in a beautiful city. The race required my full concentration, and I was not concerned with my surroundings. Later that year, I walked with a friend in the same city and noticed the great beauty it possessed. The route was the same, but the view was quite different. The devil wishes for you to sprint through life without noticing God. He wants to limit your spiritual focus and prevent you from seeing God at work in your surroundings. As Christians, we need to walk in and experience God’s love each day. Love describes the quality of our relationship (walk) with God. Let’s consider this further.

Key Verse: “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph. 5:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Paul refers to Christ as a “sweet smelling savour” in regard to His offering and sacrifice for us. He loved us so much he was willing to die for us. Does our love and concern for others emit an odor before God? If so, what kind of odor? (Consider Philippians 4:13-19 as an example.)
- + Spiritually speaking, what attitudes and actions could cause us to smell bad to the Lord?
- + What should we do to keep our aroma pleasing to God?

Think about it: Noah’s offering was a blessing to God; Abel’s offering was righteous before the Lord; and Christ’s was a love offering before God. Each was a spiritually sweet savour before the living God demonstrating their love and obedience to Him. You know a good steakhouse because of the smell from the kitchen. However, you also know if someone is cooking a defiled meat in the kitchen. It produces an aroma that is offensive to say the least, and not worthy to eat and enjoy. Our lifestyle should reflect the spiritual pace and aroma that God desires His people to possess. We must be able to walk uprightly and speak justly before men. We must be able to live our lives as a living sacrifice that others would smell (witness) and desire to partake (worship) in its flavor. Christ has set the pace for each of us – we should walk in the love of God. As you allow the Lord to dictate the pace and flavor of your walk, you will be blessed in your life.

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LOVE

“Love in Action” – December 13, 2015

Lesson – “Serve Others”

Scriptures – 1 Co. 9:19-20; 1 Pe. 2:16-19

Introduction to lesson

Once Jesus finished His forty days and forty nights of temptation, the Scripture states that the “angels came and ministered unto him” (Mt. 4:11). Clearly, Jesus understood what it meant to have someone come to your side at a critical time and to minister to your need. This is exactly what Jesus came to do for us. His whole purpose in coming was to serve. He came down from His seat in heaven to serve those who were lost and dying. He served the poor and the helpless by love and did not seek recognition. Even though he was Lord and Master, He demonstrated being a servant when He washed the disciples’ feet. Christ is our supreme example; we should follow him. But those who are unwilling to serve others misunderstand Christ. If we fail to grasp the nature and mind of Christ, then we will not follow the Lord faithfully. Let’s be like Jesus and learn how to serve others.

Key Verse: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What does Peter mean by stating, “not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness?” What are some examples of abusing authority over individuals? 1 Peter 2:16
- ✚ Can we serve even our enemies and love them? 1 Peter 2:17-19
- ✚ Would you be willing to surrender your position in order to include someone else? Would you allow yourself to be second, even in the very thing that you are successful? 1 Corinthians 9:19
- ✚ What did Paul mean when he said, “I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews?” 1 Co. 9:20
- ✚ How should I serve my home, my school, my church, and my community?

Think about it: What happens in the church when we all have a servant’s heart and work together? When we serve together, side-by-side, we can accomplish great feats. But if we selfishly serve ourselves, then we will work against one another, only to find greater hardships. Nehemiah helped to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem because he united the people in the service of the Lord. Those assigned to a portion of the wall did not bicker or complain, but rather they faithfully labored and built the wall. They saw a greater need than themselves, and so should we. We cannot think and act like the world, and at the same time, achieve spiritual accomplishments. Today, as you consider this lesson, reflect upon the very heart within you, and then ask, “Am I a true servant of the Lord and others?”

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LOVE

“Love in Action” – December 20, 2015

Lesson – “Love Your Enemies”

Scriptures – Mt. 5:43-48

Introduction to lesson

Isn't it strange how people create their own enemies? The Samaritans were despised by the Jews. The disciples would never have talked with the woman of Samaria (Jn. 4:27), but Jesus gave her the gift of life. The common people considered Matthew, a tax collector, a cheat. However, Christ saw a pillar and writer of the love of God. A Gentile woman, considered to be little more than a dog, only wanted the crumbs that fell from the Master's table; she may have seemed unworthy, but Christ saw great faith in her (Mt. 15:25-28). Jesus saw those who were often despised and looked down on in a completely different light. He loved them. Rather than create our own enemies, we should be like Christ and love the “unlovable.” So how should we deal with people who actually work against us, despise us, and do us wrong?

Key Verse: “But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you” (Lu. 6:27).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Is it possible to forgive and forget? Can we forgive and never bring up the past again?
- + When was the last time that you forgave someone who treated you with disrespect and adversity? Was it easy to forgive? Why were you able to forgive?
- + What should we do when we love and forgive someone, but he/she continues to hurt us and work against us? (Mt. 5:44)

Think about it: Can I forget the many instances of hatred shown to me and see those who have done so as worthy? How? From the cross, Christ forgave the one who drove the nails, the one who violently placed the thorns on His head, and the ones who spit and cursed Him. He forgave because He loved. Is the love of Christ truly in our hearts? When we have been wounded and hurt, we can seek for revenge and retaliate, thinking this will settle the score. But this will never give us victory because hate is evil and corrupt, whereas, on the other hand, love and forgiveness are pure and right. The choice is ours. We can spend our entire life resentful and broken, or we can spend our entire life in peace and victory. Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: But grievous words stir up anger.” One way we can pursue a life of peace is by speaking tenderly. We should be careful with our words, so that we do not stir up contempt and conflict when trying to give the truth to our enemies. The goal of the Christian is not to prove I'm right, but rather to win my enemies to the love of Christ. Nothing can be more right than this! So love your enemies!

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LOVE

“Love in Action” – December 27, 2015

Lesson – “Speak the Truth”

Scriptures – Ephesians 4:15

Introduction to lesson

Today’s society dictates that truth depends on the individual; individuals can decide what is right and what is wrong. But this premise cannot be. If this is the case, then truth cannot be defined by anyone and has no real meaning. If truth cannot be understood and proclaimed, then individuals will be motivated to determine truth only from personal outcomes and self-dispositions. Truth is then as changing as man’s perspectives. What confusion! Clearly, truth must be built upon an authority greater than man. Indeed, truth must be established socially, economically, culturally, politically, and spiritually according to God’s standard, the Holy Scriptures, God’s Word. The Bible is the standard of truth and the authority for establishing truth principles. But we should remember that God’s truth is not harsh and cold. For God is love! Sometimes the truth is tough to give; however, we should speak the truth with lots of love so that truth will be received graciously. If we withhold God’s love, then we also distort God’s truth. Let’s speak the truth in love.

Key Verse: “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ep. 4:15)

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Who is the Spirit of Truth spoken of by John? What is his purpose? (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Jn. 16:14)
- ✚ Jesus said that He is the way, the Truth, and the life; but does the world believe that today? If not, why? (John 14:6, 17)
- ✚ We know the truth when we live according to the Scriptures and follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Should we speak the truth even if it hurts someone?
- ✚ If you tell someone the truth, but they reject it, should we judge them? Or should we encourage them in the truth with love and understanding, and continue to pray for them?

Think about it: As a believer and follower of Christ, we must understand that debating and throwing Scriptures may not be truly speaking the truth in love. Love includes helping others to see the wonderful promises of Christ and His grace and mercy. I wrote this a long time ago, “Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is being spared what you deserve. Grace is the reception of a blessing that you did not deserve.” Each of us had some form of deception that clouded our walk with God, and when the truth was unleashed by the power of Christ, our world was changed greatly. Truth has power; however, we must submit to the one who holds the authority to administer it. The power relies not on us, but rather on Christ! Submitting to God’s truth in Christ gives us the power to be witnesses and to combat the devil on his battlefield. There is no greater truth than God loves you, Christ died for your victory, and the Holy Spirit wishes to empower and lead you into the richness of the Father and the Son. “Speak to those as though this is their last day and Live as though it is your last!” Speak the truth in love!

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