



Faith

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Focus



for
Teens



Sunday
School
Services

Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Miguel A. Garcia

Stewardship and Service

“Tithes and Offerings” – January 3, 2016

Lesson – “Putting God First”

Scriptures – Proverbs 3:9; Malachi 3:10

Introduction to lesson

No one ever likes to be last. We almost always prefer to go first, whether we are waiting to buy something – everyone wants to be the first to purchase the new iPhone, and they wait in long lines to do so – or simply battling for the bathroom in the morning. In the same way, God does not like being last; our God expects to be the first person we think of in the morning and the last before we fall asleep. Isn't that fair? As we are called to be good stewards (someone who manages the affairs and wealth of someone else), we are expected to put God first, including our finances. In agricultural terms, “first fruits” refers to the very first produce from the harvest. In Old Testament times, the people were encouraged to bring of their “first fruits” to the Lord's house in order to supply the needs of the priests that ministered there. In today's world, many do not live in an agricultural society. Instead, they have other types of jobs. But regardless, all of us can still give God of the very first we possess. When speaking of finances, we mean anything that comes into our hands. We should “honor our Lord with our substance, and with our first fruits” (Prov. 3:9). When speaking of the “first fruits,” we speak, of course, of tithing (giving ten percent of one's income) and offerings. We give not because we *have to* but because we are *thankful* for God's goodness and we want to be found *faithful*. If we do so, God promises to bless us in a great way. Malachi 3:10 gives us a clear picture of what God promises if we are faithful: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now wherewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” Put God first!

Key Verse: “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase” (Proverbs 3:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why is it important for God to be first in all areas?
- ✚ Do you think tithing is important? Why?
- ✚ How much does God ask from us?
- ✚ Think of an example of someone who did not give God the “first fruits?”

Think about it: Our God is not unjust; he doesn't ask for all of our money and leave us with nothing; but he asks us to have faith and be faithful in giving him 10% of our income (\$1 out of every \$10). Considering everything the Lord gives us each day, is this too much to ask? Of course not! So let us not give the Lord our leftovers, but rather give him of our very first. He will surely bless you for your faith and obedience.

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Stewardship and Service

“Tithes and Offerings” – January 10, 2016

Lesson – “Abraham’s Example”

Scriptures – Hebrews 7:4; Genesis 14:18-20

Introduction to lesson

In the Scriptures we are taught to pay tithes and give offerings. God himself instituted tithing and giving to support the ministry of his house. Abraham is known in the Bible as the “Father of faith” (He. 11:8-11), a man that pleased God by his faith and obedience. Abraham is an awesome example of not only faithfulness in obedience and pleasing God, but also of faithfulness in giving. Genesis 14:18-20 relates the story of Abraham coming back from a battle after rescuing his nephew Lot. God gave him a great victory over his enemies. When Abraham came back, he was met by a man named Melchizedek, “the priest of the most high God,” (v. 18). This priest of God celebrated his great victory. Abraham then blessed the Lord by paying tithes (ten percent) to God’s priest of all the things he brought back from the battle (v. 20; He. 7:1-2). This act by Abraham was pleasing to the Lord, and later the Lord instituted it under the law. When we put God first paying our tithes (ten percent) and giving our offerings, we are making sure we show God who is first in our lives. Let us follow the example of Abraham, who gave tithes and pleased the Lord, even before there was a law to do this. Practice tithing and giving, not because you *have to* but out of a grateful heart.

Key Verse: “Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils” (Hebrews 7:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What was the attitude Abraham showed in paying his tithes?
- ✚ To whom did Abraham pay tithes?
- ✚ Why did Abraham pay tithes to Melchizedek? (v. 20)
- ✚ As a group, discuss the importance of paying tithes and giving offerings?

Think about it: Melchizedek is a type and shadow of Christ (He. 7:21; Ps 110:4). So Abraham’s example of tithing shows how we tithe and give offerings to God (Christ) rather than to men. Today, we give to God by bringing our tithes and offerings into the church in support of the ministers and ministries that carry out the mission of Christ in the world. As we faithfully tithe and give, let’s consider how much God has blessed us and provided for us.

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Stewardship and Service

“Tithes and Offerings” – January 17, 2016

Lesson – “Be a Giver”

Scriptures – Acts 20:35; John 3:16; Luke 6:38

Introduction to lesson

Scripture shows us just how important giving is to the Lord our God. For example, John 3:16 says, “*For God So loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son . . .*” It is truly incredible to understand how much he gave so that you and I could be saved and have eternal life. According to Scripture, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). To benefit more from giving than from receiving sounds absurd and ridiculous. We often like the idea of receiving gifts on Christmas morning more than giving gifts. It is human nature, I suppose, to feel that way. However, Jesus Christ calls us to be givers. Moreover, we should not be “stingy” or “tightfisted” in our giving to him. Instead, we are called to give freely (without restraints or reservation) of our substance for the work of the ministers and the ministry of the church. Put it this way; one of the ways the church buildings you and I attend for service stay open is through your and my giving. Matthew 10:8 reminds us that “*freely ye have received, freely give.*” We should always remember that we invest eternally in souls and store up treasures in heaven through financially supporting the mission and ministry of the church. Remember that God knows what you have given. As a matter of fact, Luke 6:38 says, “*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.*” Let me encourage you, no matter what stage you are at in your life (e.g. a young teenager, a college student, or an employee) give unto the Lord because his blessings are out of this world!

Key Verse: “. . . It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ Why is it better to give than to receive?
- ✦ What are some of the ways you and I can give?
- ✦ Finish this sentence, “Freely ye have received, freely _____.” What do you think this means?
- ✦ Can you think of any ways God has given to us?
- ✦ What does giving “freely” mean?

Think about it: If we were all receivers and not givers, what kind of a world would this be? Imagine everyone sitting around waiting to receive handouts. We would never have anything to help us fulfill the mission of the church. However, in the church it’s exciting to know that we can all have a part in the Great Commission by giving. We might not be the ones preaching in other countries or continents, but it’s good to know we can help spread the gospel by our giving.

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Stewardship and Service

“Tithes and Offerings” – January 24, 2016

Lesson – “The Joy of Giving”

Scriptures – 2 Co. 9:7-8; Lu. 21:1-4; Ro. 12:6-8

Introduction to lesson

The word “joy” can be defined as “a feeling of great happiness” or “a source or cause of great happiness” (Webster’s Dictionary). As disciples of Jesus Christ, we should find joy in doing what brings him joy – seeing souls saved. This can and is being done by your faithful giving. We should feel joy that our giving is going to reach souls all around the world, bearing in mind that we are “co-laborers” with Christ in this great work when we joyfully give. We should also remember that giving is a special gift. In Romans 12:6-8, the apostle Paul wrote, “Having then gifts differing . . . he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.” There are people around us that in giving they feel fulfilled in their ministry in the church; they find great joy in doing so without restrictions, even if it is the last “mite” they have (Luke 21:1-4). There have been young people, just like you, who have given what they have to the Lord with great joy, and the Lord has blessed them. Paul instructs his readers to give with “simplicity.” This word can mean “sincerely” or “liberally.” We should give with a right motivation, not looking to receive, but always striving to be a blessing to the Lord and his body. We are encouraged in Matthew 6:1-4 not to give to impress but to give unto the Lord. Anytime we give with right motives we will receive joy, knowing that we have done what pleases and honors the Lord. This should bring us great joy!

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 Co. 9:7).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What is the right attitude in giving? (Mt. 6:1-4)
- ✚ We should give to God according to what? (2 Co. 9:7)
- ✚ Describe joy?
- ✚ Finish the sentence: “God loves a _____ giver.”
- ✚ Name one of the reasons why giving is important?

Think about it: God has blessed us far beyond our imagination and in so many wonderful ways. One of the main ways is by giving us eternal life. Don’t you think that we should show the Lord some love and gratitude by our faithful giving? Let us therefore give cheerfully and with a right heart (motive).

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Stewardship and Service

“Stewardship of Life” – January 31, 2016

Lesson – “All”

Scriptures – Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

Introduction to lesson

The Bible says, “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We belong to God 100%. If our body and our spirit belong to God, then every area of our lives should also belong to him. Today, we are talking about the stewardship of life. A steward is a servant and caretaker of another man’s goods. As Christians and servants of the Lord, we are to be God’s faithful stewards realizing that all we have and all we are belong to him. We therefore should not try to keep anything back from God; but instead, we should surrender ourselves completely to him and serve him wholeheartedly. In today’s lesson, we will consider the story of the poor widow as an example of holding nothing back and giving all to God.

Key Verse: “For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had” (Luke 21:4).

Questions to Discuss: (Mark 12:41-44)

- ✚ What did Jesus observe as he sat in the temple? (v. 41)
- ✚ What caught Jesus’ attention? (vv. 41-42)
- ✚ Was her offering worth much? Why or why not? (vv. 42-43)
- ✚ Why was her offering worth more than all the others (vv.43-44)
- ✚ What lessons do we learn from the widow’s example?

Think about it: Two mites would be like two pennies today. The poor widow’s offering was as small as an offering could possibly be – like almost giving nothing at all. Probably, few would have given any thought to her giving – it would have gone unnoticed. If they did notice, they probably shook their heads and thought her gift was pitiful and inadequate. Yet Jesus highly honored her gift because she was giving her all. Others were giving much larger amounts, but she was “emptying her pockets.” The widow’s example reminds us that God is looking on the heart, and not the outward appearance of things (1 Sa. 16:7). He knows when we are sold out to him and when we’re not. But we should remember that stewardship is not just about money; it’s about all of life. We should give 100% of our lives to God and serve him with our all.

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Stewardship and Service

“Stewardship of Life” – February 7, 2016

Lesson – “Finances”

Scriptures – Luke 16:19-31

Introduction to lesson

Life is costly! Almost everything we do requires money. For this reason, we spend most of our lives working hard to earn it. In other words, we earn, we spend; we earn, we spend; we earn, we spend. Get the idea? Making money to meet the costly demands of living is a large part of our lives. If Jesus Christ is truly Lord of our lives, then he also should be Lord of our finances (our earning and spending). As Christians, our finances say something important about our commitment to Christ. Our finances actually reflect our priorities in life. Whether we have little or much, how we handle our finances and spend our money say something significant about our values and commitments. Does God really care how we earn and spend money? He does because he cares about our values and commitments. As followers of Christ, we need to value the things that God values and be committed to the things important to him.

Key Verse: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Co. 9:8).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What were the differences between the rich man and Lazarus? (vv. 19-21)
- ✚ What was their final outcome when they died? (vv. 22-23)
- ✚ What was the rich man’s experience in hell? (v. 24)
- ✚ How did his riches influence his eternal outcome? (v. 25)
- ✚ How did the rich man use his money during his life? (v. 19)
- ✚ Were the rich man’s priorities and values the same as God’s? Did he use his money in ways that were pleasing to God?
- ✚ How could he have used his wealth to please the Lord?

Think about it: Some people think that their financial blessings are only for them. They earned it, so it’s only right to spend it on themselves and the things they wish. But the Bible says something different about our financial blessings. Certainly, God blesses us. When writing about stewardship, Paul explained, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you . . . always having all sufficiency in all things” (2 Co. 9:8). God blesses us and gives us what we need, but not only for ourselves. Paul continued, “That ye . . . may abound to every good work” (v. 8). God financially blesses us so that we can do good works for him and others. We should use our finances to please the Lord.

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Stewardship and Service

“Stewardship of Life” – February 14, 2016

Lesson – “Time”

Scriptures – Matthew 20:1-8

Introduction to lesson

Before we begin this lesson, take a few deep breaths and just relax. Now consider this. In the next 60 seconds, you will lose one minute of your life! Think about it – one minute! Maybe 60 seconds doesn't sound like much, but minutes eventually add up to hours. Each day, we have only 24 hours to work, rest, and play, and then it's gone, forever. We don't get it back, and there are no do-overs. Time is valuable because it's so limited. In the Bible, James explained that life is sort of like vapor (steam) that we see one moment but then it quickly vanishes (James 4:15). Time moves quickly. For all of us, time is running out; we only have a limited number of days upon this earth. Just for this reason alone, time is precious and valuable to all of us. So we need to be good stewards of our time, using it wisely in ways that honor the Lord. In today's lesson, the Bible says something important about how we use our time.

Key Verse: “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- + When did the householder go out to hire laborers for his vineyard? (vv. 1-2)
- + Around the third hour of the day (9 a.m.), what did the householder find in the marketplace? And what did he do? (vv. 3-4)
- + Throughout the day, at noon, at 3 p.m., and at 5 p.m. (the eleventh hour of the day), what did the householder do? (vv. 5-7)
- + Consider verses 1-6. How long was the work day?
- + What does idle mean? What did the householder do with idle people?
- + What did the householder do at the end of the work day? (v. 8)
- + On a practical level, what lessons do we learn from this story?

Think about it: The example Jesus gave us in the parable teaches us that God wants us to be diligent workers for him. We should be attending to his business (Lu. 2:49; Jn. 5:17). We should be busy in the work of the Lord, even working up to the last (eleventh) hour (Jn. 9:4)! Procrastination (putting off one's responsibilities – waiting until later – wasting time) actually works against God's purpose in us. Jesus Christ came with an urgency to fulfill his Father's will and to finish the work his Father sent him to do (Jn. 4:34). He did not waste time, but he used every moment of his life to glorify God. We should do the same (Ep. 5:16)!

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Stewardship and Service

“Stewardship of Life” – February 21, 2016

Lesson – “Abilities”

Scriptures – Exodus 31:1-11

Introduction to lesson

Sometimes, we can think of the church only as a place of preaching, teaching, worship, and praying, while ignoring the practical, hands-on side of the church and its ministries. Although the spiritual ministries of the church are extremely important, the church is also very practical. Serving the Lord in the church may also include carpentry, cooking, office skills, cleaning, and so on. What are you good at doing? Do you know your personal abilities and strengths? Teachers and mentors often try to draw out and develop the talents and abilities of their pupils in order to help them excel to the top. God wants you to reach your highest potential. Everyone needs to know his strong points – what he/she is good at doing – and seek to develop and use them for the glory of God. This is being a good steward of our God-given abilities.

Key Verse: “And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wisehearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it” (Exodus 36:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- + What did God do with Bazaleel? (vv. 1-2)
- + With what did God fill him? (v. 3)
- + What kind of ability did God give to Bazaleel? (vv. 4-5)
- + Was Bazaleel a priest (a son of Aaron) or a Levite (minister) in God’s house? (v. 2)
- + The Lord also gave Aholiab the same kind of calling and ability to work for the house of the Lord. Was Aholiab a member of the priestly tribe (v. 6)
- + These two men were not ministers in God’s house in the strict sense, but they performed a great ministry for God’s house. What did they do? (vv. 7-11)
- + How did these two men accomplish such a huge task as this? (see Exodus 35:29-35, noting verse 34)

Think about it: No one person can do everything. God called Bazaleel to work for him and gave him the ability that he needed to get the job done. But he also called Aholiab to be his assistant. Moreover, he gave these two men the ability to teach their skills to others. God gave all the workers the practical knowhow to get the job done. When God calls his people to any task, he will supply them with the necessary abilities to fulfill it. God has given all of us certain abilities (gifts, talents, skills). But we do not excel in these abilities until we use them; and as we do, these abilities are developed and perfected in us. Every child of God should seek to understand his God-given abilities and then use them to glorify God.

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Stewardship and Service

“Stewardship of Life” – February 28, 2016

Lesson – “Influence”

Scriptures – 1 Timothy 4:12-16

Introduction to lesson

Every person has some level of influence on others, good or bad. Each one of us has people in our lives that we talk to, hang around, and do activities together. This is our circle of influence. For example, a student’s classmates are his circle of influence. His family is a part of his circle of influence. His neighbors also are a part of his circle. The question that each one of us should ask is not, “Do I have a circle of influence?” or “Who is my circle of influence?” but rather, “Am I being a positive influence on others?” For example, in school an influential student can either disrupt the classroom or he can help other students learn more by being an eager learner and a role model student himself. If we are truly a Christian, then we should use our influence positively for Christ.

Key Verse: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Can a young person be a Christian example to others? (v. 12)
- + What kind of example should we be? Explain. (v. 12)
- + What should we do to prepare ourselves to be good examples to others? (vv. 13-14)
- + When we devote ourselves to reading the Bible, encouraging others in the faith, telling others about Jesus Christ and his truth, and building up ourselves in the Lord, how will this impact others who are watching us? (vv. 14-15)
- + How will our faithfulness to Christ influence others? (v. 16)

Think about it: Our greatest influence over others is our example. What kind of Christian should we want to be? We should desire to be someone others can revere and look up to. As we mature and grow in the Lord, we should prepare ourselves to be leaders. This does not necessarily mean holding a position in the church. Rather, we should seek to provide leadership by being godly role-models and examples, in order for other people to follow our faith. We can make an eternal difference in the lives of those around us. We should therefore do our very best to influence others for Christ. Being a good influence on others is one way to be a good steward and servant of God.

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Stewardship and Service

Stewardship Parables – March 6, 2016

Lesson – “The Talents”

Scriptures – Matthew 25:14-30, Romans 14:11-12

Introduction to lesson

In this parable, Jesus teaches us the importance of properly using the talents given to us. Although he literally uses money (i.e. a talent is a coin) as the object of this parable, the lesson applies to all abilities, gifts, and assets given to us by the Lord. The servants were given a certain amount of money according to their abilities. However, not all the servants used their talents the way the master intended. In the same way the master gave talents to his servants, God gives us talents (abilities). As servants and stewards in God’s house, he gives us a portion of “his goods.” The Lord expects us to use all we have received from him for his glory and honor. If we are lazy or afraid to use our gifts, God may take them away and give them to someone who will use them. So let’s do our best to use and increase his gifts for the glory and honor of God.

Key Verse: “His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mt. 25:23).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why did the master give different amounts of talents to each of his servants? Matthew 25:15
- ✚ What did the servants who were given five and two talents do with their money? Matthew 25:16-17
- ✚ How do you think they were able to double their money?
- ✚ What did the master say to the servant who had been given one talent and what was his punishment? Matthew 25:26-27

Think about it: Clearly, the Lord expects us to use all we have received from him (financial success, spiritual gifts, educational achievements, skills, natural ability, etc.) for his glory and honor. According to the parable, we are responsible for what we do with the portion of goods we have received from the Lord. Therefore, we will all give an account of our individual service to him. (Romans 14:11-12) Will we be found faithful? A faithful servant is hard-working and diligently uses his talents to increase his Lord’s goods.

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Stewardship and Service

Stewardship Parables – March 13, 2016

Lesson – “Faithful and Wise”

Scriptures – Matthew 24:42-51; Titus 1:16

Introduction to lesson

In this parable, a servant was given the responsibility of caring for the household and the other servants while his master was away. However, instead of being faithful to his responsibilities, he chose to live for his own desires. He was not anticipating the return of his master, and therefore, was unfaithful in his service! A wise and faithful servant fulfills all that is expected of him, and he fully accepts and carries out his responsibilities. He anticipates his lord’s return and works faithfully until he comes. Our Lord is coming again! Jesus assured us that faithful service will be rewarded while unfaithful service will bring eternal punishment. It will be a glorious day when Jesus returns for those who are found ready but a dreadful day for those who are not prepared at his coming. Heaven is reserved for faithful stewards and servants of the Lord. The Lord has called us into faithful service. As servants of the Lord, we should seek to understand and fulfill the call of God in our lives, using every means that God has provided for us.

Key Verse: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Co. 4:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- + When is the Lord coming back? Mt. 24:42-44
- + Do you understand what is expected of you and do you accept the responsibility? vv. 45-46
- + What is the reward of a faithful servant? v. 47
- + What is the reward of an unfaithful servant? vv. 48-51

Think about it: Jesus discussed the fact that he will come again at an unexpected time when people are not ready for him (Mt. 24:36, 42, 44, 50). For this reason, he urged his followers to be ready and watchful for his coming. Moreover, Jesus taught his disciples that our actions reveal what we truly believe. Those who obey God will be rewarded when Jesus comes again; whereas those who disobey God, even if they confess Christ, prove themselves to be unfaithful and hypocrites by their own actions. Paul wrote, “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him” (Tit. 1:16). Each day, we have decisions to make, and these decisions will determine where we spend eternity.

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Stewardship and Service

Stewardship Parables – March 20, 2016

Lesson – “The Unjust Steward”

Scriptures – Luke 16:1-13, Eph. 4:1

Introduction to lesson

In this parable, we read about a steward who was given the responsibility of handling the business affairs of his owner. We learn that the steward had carelessly handled the money of his master. The master had people who owned him money, so he asked the steward to give an account of his work. This made the steward very nervous, for he feared he would be fired if the master found out what he was doing. He asked himself, “What shall I do” (v. 3)? So the steward devised a plan to ensure he would not be left without a place to stay. He decided to negotiate some business deals for his own benefit. He offered to discount the debts of his master’s business partners in return for their friendship and future considerations. Likewise, we are encouraged to build relationships with people of wealth and influence, but not like this steward. The steward was unjust and unfaithful in his actions. But as good stewards, we need to demonstrate faithfulness at home, at school, in sports, and in the community, as well as in the church.

Key Verse: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10).

Questions to Discuss:

- + What is a steward? (Lu. 16:1-2)
- + Were the actions of the steward just or unjust? Explain. (vv. 1, 8)
- + As his stewards, what does God expect from us? (Ep.4:1)
- + Does everyone have a testimony (or witness)?

Think about it: Faithfulness is always a characteristic of good stewardship. Faithfulness means being trustworthy and consistent in every area of our lives. If we are unfaithful in the smaller (i.e. easier, more manageable) things, we will surely fall short in the greater and more demanding responsibilities God has given us. If we cannot be trusted with worldly business, how can we be trusted with the business of God? As good stewards, we need to demonstrate faithfulness at home, at school, on the job, in the community, and in the church. Our witness goes everywhere we go. Peter said, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready ALWAYS to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Pe. 3:15). What does your testimony say about you? Are you a just or unjust steward with what God has given you?

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Writer: Byron Harris

Stewardship and Service

Stewardship Parables – March 27, 2016

Lesson – “Unprofitable Servants”

Scriptures – Luke 17:1-10, Col. 3:23-24

Introduction to lesson

The title of this lesson, “Unprofitable Servant,” gives a sense of negativity. However, in the context of the Scriptures, Jesus is teaching us that unprofitable means something good and positive. It addresses our attitude as followers of Christ. Our attitude and actions speak volumes of us as Christians. Luke 17:1-5 teaches that we should have a forgiving heart and humble attitude toward our neighbor. Of course, our attitude toward others flows from our perspective and attitude toward God. How do you see yourself before God? Christ’s example was to demonstrate that we should have an attitude of humble service toward God. We are all servants of the Lord. The responsibility of a servant is not to please himself, but the Lord. Our first obligation is to serve the Lord in everything we do, and then likewise, to serve others. After all, God owes us nothing, but we owe everything to him. We are eternally indebted to Christ for the price he paid for our salvation. Without Christ and the love he bestowed on us, we are nothing. Everything we do should be done to bring glory and honor to God. Do you see yourself as an unprofitable servant of the Lord?

Key Verse: “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ As servants, are we subject to God in everything? Lu. 17:7
- ✚ How much effort should be made for the Master? v. 8
- ✚ Should we expect immediate praise or compensation for our obedience and service to the Lord? v. 9
- ✚ Why is the servant unprofitable? v. 10
- ✚ What is expected of us? v. 10

Think about it: God promises us rewards (blessings), but our service for the Lord should not be contingent upon receiving. As servants of Christ, we serve him because we love him. It is no longer about our desires, for he has given us more than we deserve already. He has given us the gift of salvation and everlasting life. Nevertheless, because God does reward his servants, it is good for his servants to seek his rewards. However, we must maintain the correct attitude and desire. Paul wrote, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24).

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Doctrine of Sin

What Is Sin? – April 3, 2016

Lesson- "The Root of Sin"

Scriptures- Ge. 2:15-17; Ge. 3:1-6; Ro. 5:19; Ro. 7:14-25; 6:6; Ga.5:24-25; Ro. 8:1-2, 12-13

Introduction to the Lesson: Today's lesson addresses the sin every human (after Adam and Eve) was born with: *original sin*. What is the origin of humanity's sin? Every human being on the face of the earth is born a sinner. Human sin can be traced back to the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve yielded to the temptation of Satan. Let us explore "the root of sin."

Key Verse: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Ro. 7:23).

Questions to Discuss:

- ❖ What is "original sin?"
- ❖ To whom is "original sin" given?
- ❖ Why is "original sin" within human beings at birth?
- ❖ What is a good definition of sin? How would you explain this in simple terms to your friends that know nothing about the Bible or Christianity?

Think About It: Adam and Eve were created in the image of God for his own pleasure (Ge. 1:26-28; Re. 4:11). When God created them, he told them that they had the authority ("dominion") over every living thing upon the earth. They were given a special home (Garden of Eden) that was perfect for taking care of God's creation and one another (Ge. 1:26, 28; 2:8, 15). Every detail was provided by God; it was absolutely perfect (1:31)! Everything in the garden was for their enjoyment, except for one tree. God instructed them clearly not to eat from it. In fact, God was so intent on this command that he gave them an ultimatum: "Eat it, and die" (2:16-17). It was God's one ban for humans. His commandment was non-negotiable; he expected Adam and Eve to comply with his one command. But along came Satan in the form of a serpent. The Bible states, "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (3:1). Eve listened to the serpent and was deceived by Satan, eating the forbidden fruit. When she gave the fruit to her husband, Adam also ate the fruit which God had commanded them not to eat (vv. 4-6, 17). Through their disobedience and rebellion against the word of God, we learn a great lesson. We should never listen to anyone who contradicts (goes against) the Word of God. Through their disobedience and rebellion to God's commandment, they reaped the penalty of death. Adam and Eve experienced the horrible birth of sin within them (vv. 7-11). The apostle Paul declared, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Ro. 5:19). Paul taught that the root of all human sinfulness originated in the Garden of Eden with Adam's transgression and disobedience. Through Adam's disobedience, sin is passed to all people. Because of this we are made sinners. Paul described this principle of sin as "the law of sin" (Ro. 7:21, 23, 25). It is a principle that dominates the human race. Because of one man's disobedience, fallen humanity is subject to this law of sin, bringing forth fruit unto death (Ro. 6:6, 7:5).

Conclusion: Sin is a deadly principle existing in the human race from which we must be delivered through Jesus Christ (Ro. 6:17-18). Through the sanctification of the Spirit, we are delivered from the power of the law of sin so that we should no longer be the servants of sin (Ro. 6:6; 8:1-2, 12-13; Ga.5:24-25).

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Doctrine of Sin

What Is Sin? – April 10, 2016

Lesson- "Willful Disobedience & the Christian"

Scriptures- Ro. 2:11-16; Ep. 5:1-7; Col. 3:5-10; 1 Jn. 2:1-6; 3:2-9; 5:17-18; Ro. 14:23; He. 10:26; Ja. 4:17; Ph. 2:9-13

Introduction to the Lesson: As Christians, are we still supposed to sin a little every day? If so, why did Jesus teach that he came to set us free from sin (Jn. 8:34-36)? If we are indeed free from sin, should we continue to sin in some ways? If we continue to sin in certain ways, are we truly free from it? Are we free from sin only in the sense that we are forgiven, or do we actually have freedom from sin – from the power and corruption of it? In this lesson, we will deal with these questions and more from the perspective of *willful disobedience and the Christian*.

Key Verse: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- ❖ Does God allow the Christian to willfully sin every day? Does he expect better?
- ❖ What would be some differences between imperfections and willful sin?
- ❖ What is an advocate?

Think About It: There should be no doubt in our minds that one day the sinful works of every sinner will be judged by God. The apostle Paul taught that all sinners, both those who have known right and wrong from the Scriptures and those who have not, will be judged without partiality. Sinners who carry out sinful desires through disobedient and rebellious actions will be judged by the Righteous Judge, Jesus Christ (Ro. 2:11-16). However, our Lord came to free us from sin and its judgment (Jn. 8:36). If we read John's writing and define sin by it, we see that true Christians do not sin a little every day. Now John isn't necessarily talking about our imperfections in comparison with Christ, but rather our willful disobedience to the commandments and will of God (1 Jn. 2:3-4). While we have an advocate with the Father (Jesus Christ) if we sin, nevertheless we must not sin, because sinning is offensive and disappointing to our Savior (vv. 1-2). In fact, if we are a true Christian, we cannot sin a little every day and be happy, because sinning opposes the knowledge of Christ (1 Jn. 3:2-6). In other words, sinning is not the way of life for the true Christian. How can we ever be called out of sin, if we are hopelessly doomed to sin daily? Again, sinning in the life of the Christian should be understood as willful disobedience and rebellion, for these are the root of all sin (Mt. 22:36-40; Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3). According to John, a Christian who commits willful disobedience is a contradiction (1 Jn. 3:7-9; 5:17-18). Even more serious is the fact that God will judge willful disobedience among his people (Ep. 5:1-7; Col. 3:5-10). For this reason, when the New Testament saints committed sin, the apostles consistently and unanimously called for them to repent and turn from their sinful behavior. While any believer is capable of yielding to temptation and sinning against God and one's neighbor, willfully committing sin is nonetheless inconsistent with the love of God (He. 10:26; Jn. 3:16). As true Christians, we are responsible to live according to the knowledge of the truth contained within the Bible and revealed by the Holy Spirit. To act in opposition to one's conviction or to what one personally knows to be right is sin or willful disobedience (Ja. 4:17; Ro. 14:23). From this perspective, each believer must work out [carry out to completion] his/her own salvation with fear [awe and respect for a God that is holy] and trembling [with great care and caution] (Ph. 2:9-13).

Conclusion: Clearly, Jesus Christ came into this world to deliver us from the power of sin that produces willful disobedience. Our freedom from this power of sin (the law of sin) is experienced through sanctification and maintained through a consecrated lifestyle.

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Doctrine of Sin

What Is Sin? – April 17, 2016

Lesson- "The Works of the Flesh"

Scriptures- Ga. 5:19-21; Ro. 1:29-32; 1 Co. 6:9, 10; Ep. 5:3-6; Col. 3:5-9; 1 Jn. 5:17

Introduction to the Lesson: In the New Testament, sin is described in many ways. For example, transgression, disobedience, unrighteousness, and iniquity are all used to describe sin. In Galatians 5:19-21, when the apostle Paul wrote of **the flesh**, he was referring to the sinful nature that we each are born with that gives expression to sinful works of the flesh. In this lesson, we will briefly overview the works of the flesh, as we continue to answer the question, "What is sin?"

Key Verse: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Ga. 5:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- ❖ To you, what does it mean to "walk in the Spirit?"
- ❖ Can you name any first-hand examples of the "works of the flesh" that you have been witness to?

Think About It: Clearly, the works of the flesh are actions and attitudes of an unsanctified heart. To further illustrate that God requires a sanctified heart that produces holy actions and attitudes, the apostle Paul admonished the believer to walk in the Spirit, as opposed to walking in the lusts of the sinful flesh (Ga. 5:16). To help us know if we are walking according to the flesh, Paul listed the "works of the flesh" in an order according to their similarities. First, he identified sexual and/or sensual sins: adultery and fornication, uncleanness (every kind of immorality against purity and holiness), and lasciviousness (uncontrolled desires; vile actions; indecent conduct). Next, the apostle listed idolatry (worship of false gods, of self, or of devils – see 1 Co. 10:14-21) and witchcraft (e.g. sorcery, magical arts, and enchantments). Next, Paul listed hatred (hostility and ill will), variance (contention, division, and discord), emulations (jealousies), and wrath (acts of rage and anger). These are relational transgressions that oppose love and peace one toward another (Ga. 5:22). Moreover, strife (disputes), seditions (causing factions and "sides"), and heresies (promoting others to follow after false doctrine) are divisive sins. Next, envy (bad feelings because others possess something you want) and murder (hatred that leads to taking another's life) go hand-in-hand (Ge. 4:3-5; 1 Jn. 3:12). Finally, drunkenness (intoxication) and revellings (wild parties) are ungodly works lacking restraint. Of course, the "works" listed are not exhaustive but rather a representative list, saying, "and such like" (Ga. 5:21). Additionally, Paul referred to them as unrighteousness (Ro. 1:29-32; 1 Co. 6:9; 1 Jn. 5:17) and acts of disobedience to the commandments of God (Ep. 5:3-6; Col. 3:5-9).

Conclusion: Let us clearly understand: the works of the flesh are actions and attitudes of unrighteousness and willful disobedience to the commandments of God and are not mere imperfections in the life of the Christian. Fulfilling these ungodly works corrupt the soul and produce death (Ro. 1:32; 6:23; 8:13). However, the wonderful news is that Jesus Christ came into this world to deliver us from the power of sin that produces willful disobedience. Our freedom from this power of sin (the law of sin) is experienced through sanctification and maintained through a consecrated lifestyle.

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Doctrine of Sin

What Is Sin? – April 24, 2016

Lesson – “The Spirit of Rebellion”

Scriptures – 1 Ti. 1:9-10; Ge. 3:1-6; Ro. 1:23-25; Re. 12:3-4, 7-9; 20:7-10; Jn. 8:44; 2 Th. 2:8-12

Introduction to the Lesson: The world is filled with lawlessness and disobedience (1 Ti. 1:9-10). The sinful flesh does not want to be restrained by the Spirit of holiness and the standard of the Truth. When a person rejects the Truth (Jesus Christ and His Word) and the Spirit of holiness, they have fashioned God according to their own will, thus exalting themselves rather than serving the Creator (Ge. 3:5; Ro. 1:23-25). This action has been rightfully described as “rebellion.” In this lesson, we will examine Satan’s rebellion and its influence in the world today.

Key Verse: “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Ro. 1:25).

Questions to Discuss:

- ❖ What is rebellion?
- ❖ How many angels sided with Satan in his rebellion and were expelled from Heaven?
- ❖ Who was the angel that fought against Satan and his demonic angels?
- ❖ How long will Satan persist in rebellion against God?

Think About It: In John’s vision contained in the book of Revelation, he recorded a dramatic account of Satan’s fall and rebellion against God (Re. 12:3-4, 7-9). Satan and his angels (demons) fought against Michael, the archangel, and his angelic forces. Of course, Satan and his angels lost the battle; they were cast out of heaven into the earth; and they were reserved for judgment (Re. 12:9; 2 Pe. 2:4; Jude 6). Satan is filled with a spirit of rebellion against God. Though he and his angels are reserved for judgment, at the last he will again instigate a final rebellion against the Almighty (Re. 20:7-10). Rebellion is his nature. Satan will pursue rebellion until he is forever cast into the lake of fire (v. 10). Moreover, Jesus called him “a liar, and the father of it” (Jn. 8:44). He is a liar because “there is no truth in him” (v. 44). Through his rebellion against God from the beginning, Satan became the source of all lies and deception. He is the deceiver of the whole world (Re. 12:9; 20:8, 10). Through deception he leads the world in rebellion against the Truth toward their own destruction (2 Th. 2:8-12). In the Garden of Eden, we see how Satan instilled his rebellion in the human race (Gen. 3:1-6). First, he lied to Eve, saying, “Ye shall not surely die.” He contradicted the commandment of God, thus enticing Eve to question the Truth. In other words, Eve was enticed to consider the possibility that God had not been truthful with her. He planted doubt in her mind. Next, Satan substituted his own words for the words of God (v. 5). He enticed Eve by suggesting that God was keeping something desirable from her. By eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she could attain the knowledge of good and evil, and be like God himself. What deception! Sadly, Eve rejected the Truth and believed Satan’s lie. As a result, both Eve and Adam disobeyed the Word of God and rebelled against the Lord (v. 6). Thus, the spirit of rebellion took over the human race.

Conclusion: The spirit of rebellion against the Truth was the beginning of humanity’s disobedience. Today, Satan continues to entice many to reject the Truth and believe his lies. His work is to pervert the Word of God and to twist the Truth for the destruction of souls (2 Pe. 3:16-18). Thus, we must combat him through proclaiming the Truth.

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Doctrine of Sin

“What is Sin?”(Part Two) – May 1, 2016

Lesson – “Sins of Omission”

Scriptures – Mt. 25:14-30; Ro. 12:9; 1Th. 5:22; He. 10:23-25

Introduction to lesson

“Just do it” – We have all heard and seen this trademark of the Nike company. What a great slogan that Nike created promoting everyone not to neglect the talent that has been given them; and to do what one knows to do; and not to forsake the power to accomplish the task. Now we know the reason for this slogan was to sell Nike shoes and gear with the suggestion that one could excel in their talent by wearing Nike. In our spiritual life, the **sins of omission** do the very opposite of what the Nike slogan “Just Do It” promotes.

1. **Neglecting one’s responsibility.** Spiritual negligence is the failure to act faithfully in what has been given to us. An example of such is found in the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30), where the one servant buried his talent instead of using it. As a result of the servant being unprofitable, he was cast “into outer darkness.”

2. **Not doing what one knows to do.** We choose to do wrong by refusing to do right (Ja. 4:17). When I was growing up, I would willfully do something the wrong way because I wanted to get it done faster or just didn’t want to do it. My parents would say, “You know better,” which meant I was in trouble and would face the consequences for failing to do what I knew to do. When facing a decision, look at the situation closely and then ask yourself, “What is the right thing to do?” (Ro. 12:9; 1 Th. 5:22).

3. **Forsaking our power in unity.** We must not forsake the house of God. One of the sins of omission is when we neglect to assemble with one another that we may encourage each other (He. 10:23-25). There is great strength in our unity in Christ.

Key Verse: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ **Neglecting one’s responsibility** (Mt. 25:14-30)
What did each servant receive, and what did each one do with what he received? What is our responsibility spiritually?
- ✚ **Not doing what one knows to do** (Ro. 12:9; 1 Th. 5:22)
How do we abhor that which is evil? What must we cleave to?
- ✚ **Power in Unity** (He. 10:23-25)
Why are church services and youth activities so important?

Project: Make a class poster. In large letters, write on the bottom of a poster board, “JUST DO IT,” along with a check mark. Above this, make a list of excuses, such as, “doubting your ability” or “waiting until you’re older.” Then talk about how we must overcome the influence of excuses with the mindset of “Just Do It.”

Think about it: LET’S DO IT!! Let’s lace up our shoes and run this race holding on to the baton, by fulfilling our responsibility, doing what we know to do, and staying strong within the unity of the team (church) – for not doing what we know to do is sin.

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Doctrine of Sin

“What is Sin?” (Part Two) – May 8, 2016

Lesson – “Sins of Commission”

Scriptures – Mt. 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10; Jn. 14:21-24

Introduction to lesson

“ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS”

When it comes to understanding sins of commission, which is a choice of action against God or one’s neighbor, we can say clearly that our choice to break a commandment of God is an act of rebellion. As our key verse confirms, one can talk all day long, but it’s his/her actions that speak the loudest and confirm the spiritual state of that person. God gave the Ten Commandments, which were his expectations and requirements for all of us, especially his church (Ex. 20:1-17). Jesus taught that keeping the commandments of God is an expression of divine love in action (Mt. 22:37-40). Thus, sins of commission violate the love of God (Jn. 15:12). To love others is to fulfill the law (Ro. 13:8-10). Charity then is the outward action of the inward love for God and others. Our love for Christ is measured by our obedience to his commandments (Jn. 14:21-24). When we love the Lord, keeping his commandments flows from the heart with a desire to please Jesus in all things.

Key Verse: “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 Jn. 2:4).

Questions to Discuss:

Commandments of love (Mt. 22:37-40)

- What is the first and great commandment?
- What is the second commandment?
- Give an explanation in your own words of verse 40.

Fulfilling the law (Ro.13:8-10)

- What is it that fulfills the law of God?
- The 5 commandments listed in verse 9 are comprehended or understood in what saying?

Keeping the commandment (John 14:21-24)

- If we love the Lord and keep his commandments, what will Jesus do for us?
- If we do not love Jesus, what then will we do?

Project: Have the class make a “Charity Projects List” of how a youth group can show the love of God to others. Remember, actions speak louder than words, so put your projects to action and see how God will bless your class.

Think about it: ***DON'T TALK – JUST ACT; DON'T SAY – JUST SHOW; DON'T PROMISE – JUST PROVE.***

We will give no place for sins of commission if we love the Lord with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and if we love others.

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Doctrine of Sin

“What is Sin?” (Part Two) – May 15, 2016

Lesson – “Degrees of Sin”

Scriptures – He. 3:12-13; Mk. 7:20-23; Ge. 6:5-7

Introduction to lesson

“SIN WILL TAKE YOU FURTHER THAN YOU WANTED TO GO, KEEP YOU LONGER THAN YOU WANTED TO STAY, AND COST YOU MORE THAN YOU WANTED TO PAY.” Even though this is an old saying, it is still true today. How far are people willing to go from the presence of God; how deep are they willing to indulge in the corruption of sin; and how much are they prepared to give up? “Digging a hole for yourself” means taking action that will cause you a lot of trouble in the end. People often fail to see that sin has degrees or depths of corruption. A hole that is one foot deep is easy to get out of, but it will take some help to get out of a hole which is ten feet deep. Whether it’s a shallow hole or a deep hole, it is still a hole. All willful disobedience has the same nature, nevertheless sin has degrees or depths of wickedness connected with it. **Sin is deceptive.** Sin comes to an individual in a subtle way and then deceptively takes one deeper and deeper into its clutches. Before you know it, you have dug a hole that you can’t get out of. **Sin begins in the heart.** Sin begins in one’s heart before it shows up in one’s actions. Digging a hole starts with putting the shovel in your hand. **Sin is degenerative.** Sin and disobedience increase into greater and greater decadence. When the sin-hole becomes deeper and deeper for an individual, he suffers destructive consequences, even to the point of death.

Key Verse: “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them?” (Ro. 1:32).

Questions to Discuss:

Sin is deceptive. (He. 3:12-13)

- What are we to take heed to?

Sin begins in the heart. (Mk. 7:20-23)

- What does this statement, “the heart of the matter,” mean in relationship to these Scriptures?

Sin is degenerative. (Ge. 6:5-7)

- Describe what God saw concerning man?
- What was God’s response to what he saw?

Project: Divide a poster or white board into three sections. In the 1st section, draw treasures hiding in the ground, and then list the deceptive false treasures that the devil uses to draw one into sin. In the 2nd section, draw a picture of a shovel, and then list what has entered into one’s heart that would cause him to dig for false treasures. In the 3rd section, draw a picture of a very deep hole, and then list degrees of sin which would cause the great depth of the hole.

Think about it: *How Deep Will You Go?* Sin corrupts the heart through unbelief, produces transgression, results in open rebellion against the commandments of God, and then leads to destruction and death. Only a change in one’s heart will cause the shovel that once dug to now fill up the hole.

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Doctrine of Sin

“What is Sin?” (Part Two) – May 22, 2016

Lesson – “Personal Sin and Backsliding”

Scriptures – 2 Pe. 2:18-22; He. 10:38-39; Ge. 4:3-8

Introduction to lesson

WARNING!!! TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL. The enemy, Satan, is sly in his tactics, and Christians must always be on their guard, never presuming we are incapable of falling into sin. The dictionary states that “backsliding” means “to relapse into bad habits, sinful behavior, or undesirable activities.” In other words, to backslide is to fall or slip back to what you came out of (sin, serving the devil), and to turn away from what you came to (holiness, serving God). **Backsliding is an individual’s choice.** No one, not even the devil, can make us do it (sin). Backsliding is the choice to yield to sin and to disobey God willfully. **Draw back.** The song, “Slow Fade,” by Casting Crowns gives us a picture of what drawing back or turning back is. “*It’s a slow fade when you give yourself away. It’s a slow fade when black and white are turned to gray, and thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid.*” **Example.**

Backsliding is illustrated in the story of Cain’s life. From the time God rejected Cain’s offering to when he found himself in the field with his brother Abel, backward steps were taken by Cain. He was in a backsliding state, and his final step backward was murder. Cain’s steps could be named as follows: envy, anger, violent agitation, wicked desire, and murder. At any time, Cain had the opportunity to do the right thing; but it was his choice to continue to draw back and then commit personal, irreparable sin.

Key Verse: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Pe. 3:17).

Questions to Discuss:

Backsliding is an individual’s choice. (2 Pe. 2:18-22)

- With backsliding, what choice is one making – what is one turning from, and what is one turning to?
- In your own words explain what the true proverb means.

Draw back. (He. 10:38-39)

- What does God have no pleasure in?

Example. (Ge. 4:3-8; 1 Jn. 3:11-15)

- What was God’s warning to Cain?
- Why did Cain murder his brother?

Project: At the top of a poster or white board write, “The steps of a Backslider.” Using the scenario of a youth facing peer-pressure, have the class to list what they think would be the steps of a backslider with the last step being “sin.”

Think about it: 🎵 “*The journey from your mind to your hands is shorter than you’re thinking. Be careful if you think you stand. It’s a slow fade.*” 🎵 Be watchful, be alert, and be on your guard for sin lieth at the door. But the Lord is able to keep you from falling (Jude 24).

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Writer: Pam Jones

Doctrine of Sin

“What is Sin?” (Part Two) – May 29, 2016

Lesson – “Corporate Sin and Backsliding”

Scriptures – Re. 2:1-5; 2 Ti. 4:1-4; Jer. 2:11-13; 2 Ch. 7:13-14

Introduction to lesson

What are your symptoms? When one becomes sick, the first question asked by the doctor is, “What are your symptoms?” A symptom is a sign or indication of something. The diagnosis is determined by the symptoms. If you wake up with a sore throat, fever, headache, muscle aches, congestion, and cough, you have the symptoms of the flu and need treatment to restore you back to health. Below are listed the symptoms of corporate sin and backsliding.

1) **Forsaking our first love** – This is the abandonment of Christ. Forsaking our first love is our loss of affection for him. Being in love with Christ will create an atmosphere of love within the church. Being a Christian must be all about Jesus and following him.

2) **Forsaking the Word of Truth** – Timothy was the leader of the church at Ephesus; and he was to confront false teaching with the Word of Truth. Corporate backsliding is more obvious when the church rejects God’s Word of Truth.

3) **Forsaking the fountain of living waters** – This happens when the Holy Spirit has left the building, and no one even knows. Rejecting the leadership of the Holy Spirit will result in spiritual death. Once the doctor determines the problem by knowing the symptoms, he will seek a treatment. In just the same way, once the church sees the symptoms, she must **seek restoration** in the house of God – the treatment being: humility, prayer, and repentance.

Key Verse: “Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” (Mal. 3:7).

Questions to Discuss:

Forsaking our first love (Re. 2:1-5)

- Even with all the good things the Ephesus church was doing, what were they not doing and how was it to be corrected?

Forsaking the Word of Truth (2 Ti. 4:1-4)

- What are we instructed to do?
- In verse 3, Paul warned the time will come when what will happen?

Forsaking the fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:11-13)

- Explain what the two evils are that the church had committed.
- What did the church change their glory for?

Seeking restoration (2 Ch. 7:13-14)

- What are the three objectives in seeking to correct corporate backsliding?

Project: Making reference to Jude 3, have each one in the class to write down how the church can “earnestly contend for the faith” and then share the answers with the rest of the class.

Think about it: HEALED!! There is restoration in the house of God when the church repents of corporate sin and backsliding, and then turns back to our first love, following the Word of Truth and drawing from the fountain of living waters.

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Doctrine of Sin

“Tempted to Sin” – June 5, 2016

Lesson – “Why Temptations?”

Scriptures – Ja. 1:1-6, 12; Mt. 26:41; He. 4:14-16

Introduction to lesson

Temptations are a normal part of our lives as we follow Jesus. After all, Jesus himself was tempted by Satan when he was here in the flesh. We may be tempted to be dishonest with our teachers or disrespectful to our parents. We may be tempted to get revenge on our enemies or withhold forgiveness from a friend who hurt us. Satan desires to use all kinds of temptations in order to cause us to turn from obeying God and to give in to sin. God certainly does not desire for us to sin, but he does allow us to be tempted in order to benefit us. It may sound crazy, but it's true. In today's lesson, we will see why God allows us to face temptations as we follow Christ.

Key Verse: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him” (James 1:12).

Questions to Discuss:

- + What does temptation help to produce in our lives? (James 1:3)
- + What happens to us when our patience/endurance is fully developed? (James 1:4)
- + What can we do to keep ourselves from giving into temptation? (James 1:5; Matthew 26:41; Hebrews 4:14-16)
- + How must we respond to temptation if we want to be blessed? (James 1:12)
- + What has God promised to those who faithfully endure through the temptations of this life? (James 1:12)

Think about it: Are there situations in your life that make it seem very difficult to obey God? Does the opportunity to do the wrong thing seem very attractive at times? If so, you are in good company! All true Christians face these battles the Bible calls temptations. Jesus himself was tempted in all the ways that we are tempted, yet he never sinned. As our faithful High Priest, he is there to help us when the going gets tough. He is actually allowing us to go through the temptations so we will depend upon him and our patience/endurance will be developed. When our patience/endurance is fully developed, then we will be fully mature and perfect in him. If we are faithful to the end, the reward will be worth it all. So, don't give up the fight of faith, but look up to Jesus and endure until you receive the crown of life!

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Doctrine of Sin

“Tempted to Sin” – June 12, 2016

Lesson – “Drawn Away and Enticed”

Scriptures – Ja. 1:14; Ge. 3:4-6; Mt. 4:3-9; Ro. 6:13

Introduction to lesson

When hunters want to trap an animal, they use some type of food that will attract the animal to the trap. When fishermen want to catch a fish, they use some type of bait that draws the fish to bite the hook. Like the hunter and the fisherman, Satan wants us to pursue something that will capture us and bring spiritual death to us. He also knows he must use something attractive to lure us into disobeying God. What does he use when tempting us to sin? In today’s lesson, we will take a closer look at some examples of temptation to see what kind of bait Satan uses to draw us toward sinning against God.

Key Verse: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ When Satan through the serpent tempted Eve, what did he say to her that made eating the forbidden fruit seem desirable? (Genesis 3:4-5)
- ✦ What did she think about the forbidden fruit after listening to the tempter? (Genesis 3:6)
- ✦ Jesus was tempted by Satan to use his divine power to serve himself by turning stones into bread. Why would this temptation have been desirable to Jesus? (Matthew 4:1-4)
- ✦ In an effort to get Jesus to tempt God, Satan misused a passage of Scripture to make Jesus think angels would save him if he threw himself from the highest point of the temple. Why do you think this would have been desirable to Jesus? (Matthew 4:5-7)
- ✦ When trying to get Jesus to worship him, what did Satan say he would give to Jesus? (Matthew 4:8-10)
- ✦ As followers of Christ, is it ever okay to yield ourselves to sin? (Romans 6:13)

Think about it: True Christians have a desire to obey God and to do what’s right in his eyes. Satan knows this and presents the opportunity to sin in a very seductive way. He may use things such as wisdom, knowledge, pleasure for our bodies, vindication (proving ourselves), honor, power, riches, or any other thing that we naturally desire as bait to lure us into disobedience. Notice, none of the “baits” listed above are evil in and of themselves; but if we go against God’s will in order to have them then we desire those things over God, and we sin. As believers, we must be aware of Satan’s strategies and yield ourselves no longer to sin. We must rather yield ourselves completely to God and allow him to purify our hearts from the inborn sin that makes us so prone to fall into Satan’s snares. Only then can we live a dedicated, sanctified life following the example of our Lord and Savior.

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Doctrine of Sin

“Tempted to Sin” – June 19, 2016

Lesson – “When Lust Conceives”

Scriptures – Ja. 1:14-15, 4:6-7; Mk. 7:20-23; Mt. 5:28;
2 Sa. 11:2-4; 1 Pe. 5:8-9

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever had a thought that you knew was not a good thought, but at the same time it seemed desirable? After having the thought, did you wonder if you had done something wrong? When tempted, something will seem desirable to us, but that does not mean we are guilty of sinning. It is important to realize that temptation draws us to sin, but when we are tempted we can choose not to sin. Simply having a thought does not make us guilty, but what we do with it can lead us into sin. When being tempted, at what point do we become guilty of sin? In today's lesson, we will try to answer this question so that we are not defeated when temptation comes.

Key Verse: “Then when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ When David saw Bathsheba from the roof, do you think David tried to stop any further thoughts about her? Why or why not? (2 Samuel 11:2-4)
- ✚ Did David try to keep his distance from Bathsheba after finding out she was Uriah's wife? What did he do? (2 Samuel 11:4)
- ✚ According to Jesus, can a man commit adultery with another man's wife without touching the woman? (Matthew 5:28)
- ✚ According to Jesus, from where do all sinful actions come? (Mark 7:20-23)
- ✚ What must happen in order for a sinful action to be brought forth? (James 1:15)
- ✚ When facing temptation, what can we do to keep ourselves from being guilty of sin? (James 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:8-9)

Think about it: Sin does not begin when we are simply tempted. Neither does it begin with the outward act. If we resist the temptation, then the desire for what Satan offers us will not win our hearts, and the outward act will not take place. On the other hand, if we don't resist, then a strong desire to experience the pleasure of sin will take control of our hearts, and at that point we become guilty of sin, even if we have never outwardly committed the act. The disobedience begins when we surrender our will to the temptation and lust is conceived. Then the lust in the heart will bring forth the outward act. We have a choice to make. We can play with temptation or resist it. With God's grace enabling us, we can resist temptation and live a victorious life of obedience to God.

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Doctrine of Sin

“Tempted to Sin” – June 26, 2016

Lesson – “Do Not Be Deceived”

Scriptures – Ge. 2:17; 3:6; Ro. 6:21, 23;
He.11:24-26; Ja. 1:15-16

Introduction to lesson

Have television commercials or other forms of advertisement ever caught your attention with humor, an attractive person, or maybe an emotional story? Advertisements and commercials have a goal to catch your attention and make you remember a certain product or brand in a positive way. For example, beer commercials and ads catch people’s attention with humor, and then the beer brand is remembered and associated with the funny commercial. Never do the beer commercials focus on the deadly health problems that may be associated with drinking alcohol. Similarly, Satan’s forces present sin in a positive way, and if you’re not on guard, you will be captivated and deceived by the temptation. In today’s lesson, we will examine the true consequences of giving in to temptation to sin against God.

Key Verse: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro. 6:23).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ What did God say would happen as a consequence of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil? (Genesis 2:17)
- ✦ How did Eve view the forbidden fruit after listening to the tempter? (Gen:3:6)
- ✦ Can you experience pleasures when you give in to sin? (Hebrews 11:24-25)
- ✦ How long can someone enjoy living a sinful lifestyle? (Hebrews 11:25)
- ✦ Moses chose to suffer for the sake of Christ rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin. Why did he think suffering for Christ was greater than having the treasures of Egypt? (Hebrews 11:26)
- ✦ If someone continues to live sinfully, what will be the end result? (James 1:15; Romans 6:21-23)

Think about it: Giving into temptation and surrendering to sin will cause us to die spiritually. In other words, willfully sinning separates us from God. The temptation may look like it will bring us pleasure and it will, but it will also separate us from the One who gives us spiritual and eternal life. We can decide to enjoy the pleasures of sin, but we will lose real peace and joy that comes from God. The pleasure that sin brings will only last for a season, and then we will be judged for our life in this world. The wages of sin will then be eternal death. In the end, there will be no more pleasure but rather torments for those who continued to obey sin rather than forsaking it and yielding their lives to God. Do not be deceived! Like Moses, you can forsake sin and yield yourself completely to God; and in the end your reward will prove to be much greater than anything you could gain in this world.

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Doctrine of Grace

“Saved by Grace” – July 3, 2016

Lesson – “God’s Disposition”

Scriptures – 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Tim. 2:4

Introduction to lesson

We experience God’s grace when the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to our life. The shedding of his blood proves that God is merciful and loving, but also holy and just. Today, many want to remove the justice of God and apply his love to everything, even to their sin. But until we understand God’s full disposition, we cannot accept his judgment, nor can we embrace the fullness of his forgiveness. The story goes of a woman who murdered her husband and ended up in jail. Of course, this woman did not know God. However, she came to know Jesus while in prison, and she repented. Her life was changed along with her understanding of God. She was subject to the death penalty, yet all who knew her respected her change. However, the punishment was carried out. She committed a wrong while lost; she was found in prison; and she was welcomed home into the arms of God. Through understanding God’s justice and his mercy, she more fully understood the grace of God.

Key Verse: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What is grace? And why is it important to you?
- ✚ Did God really forgive this sinner in prison? How could he? (Tit. 2:11)
- ✚ Did she really go to heaven? Discuss how grace was applied and how God will welcome her home? (1 Tim. 2:4)
- ✚ How do you understand God’s promise of salvation? (John 3:16)
- ✚ Can we be like Jesus and forgive a sinner who has wronged us? (Tit. 2:11; 1 Cor. 10:13)
- ✚ Does salvation come from God’s mercy alone, or is something required of us? (Mark 1:15; 2 Peter 3:9)

Think about it: To truly understand God’s grace, we must first gain knowledge of his disposition. He is loving and merciful; but also, he is holy and just. God’s justice requires a penalty for sin; but God’s love supplied the payment of the penalty. His saving grace then is revealed in Jesus Christ. Grace is something we do not deserve; however, God is willing to give us saving grace because of Jesus. Some people believe the Lord will give us grace simply because he loves us too much to send us to hell. Although he is the God of love and mercy, he is also a just God. God will punish those who abuse and disregard his grace. But he does not desire for any to be lost. Because of Christ, God’s grace allows sinners to experience his love and salvation. Through Christ, we can feel forgiven and find freedom in the grace of God.

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Doctrine of Grace

“Saved by Grace” – July 10, 2016

Lesson – “God’s Provision”

Scriptures – 1 Peter: 1:19-21; Tit. 2:11; Eph. 2:8; Eph. 2:4; Heb. 7:25

Introduction to lesson

We know the grace of God through Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten Son. God’s saving grace is free to those who will reach out by faith and accept it. We should cling to this special gift with all that we have. God has provided all that we need in Jesus Christ in order for us to walk with him in a saved relationship. Just as God provided a raven to feed his prophet (1 Kings 17:6), protection for his servant in a lion’s den (Daniel 6:22), and victory for his people in their battles (He. 11:34), he has provided salvation for us through Jesus Christ. Why would anyone turn away God’s awesome provision of grace in a world filled with heartaches and disappointments? If others want the world, let them have it! Choose the promise of something much greater than the world – eternal life through Jesus Christ!

Key Verse: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Questions to Discuss:

- + How has God provided for your salvation? (1 Pet. 1:19-21)
- + What have you provided for your salvation? (Eph. 2:8)
- + What does being rich in mercy mean to you? (Eph. 2:4)
- + “The grace of God has appeared,” but what does this appearance mean to us? (Tit. 2:11)

Think about it: Hebrews 7:25 states that Christ makes intercession for us, which means a continual coming to God on behalf of us. It should be noted that God comes to the aide of his people and protects them (1 Peter 1:5). However, we should also understand that those who refuse to believe and repent – rejecting his grace – do not have the protection of Christ and his intercession in their lives. Moreover, without the blood of Christ, we do not have cleansing power or righteousness (1 John 1:5, 7-9). His cleansing power is ours because God is “rich in mercy,” and because of “his great love wherewith he loved us” (Ep. 2:4). Our salvation by grace through faith is God’s gift (Eph. 2:8). But God’s grace must never be abused (Ro. 6:1-2, 14-15). The grace he has provided to us is not freedom to sin but rather freedom from sin – the freedom to be righteous (Ro. 6:18)!

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Doctrine of Grace

“Saved by Grace” – July 17, 2016

Lesson – “Grace Imparted”

Scriptures – Rom. 5:1-2, 5; 8:1-2; John 16:13-14;

Titus 2:11-13; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:14-15; Acts 1:8

Introduction to lesson

God is holy and just, but he is also loving and merciful. Because of this, he has provided salvation for us through Jesus Christ so that we can escape his judgment against sin. He does not want anyone to perish, but desires that all men should be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). God’s saving grace is given to us through the work of his Spirit in our lives (Rom. 8:1-2). The Lord’s blood and sacrifice made this possible. He paid a high price for us to experience his saving grace. Therefore, we should never treat God’s grace as a light thing. God’s grace is a free gift (Ep. 2:8; Mt. 10:8), but grace is **his** to give or to withhold. We should therefore embrace his gift with great appreciation and reverence.

Key Verse: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What does grace really mean to me?
- ✚ How does grace bring about salvation in Christ? (Tit. 2:11-13)
- ✚ After receiving the grace of God unto salvation, what else is there for me to do? (1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:14-15)
- ✚ How then should I treat God’s grace?

Think about it: It is truly incredible that God has imparted the gift of his saving grace to us. How has he done this? His grace is provided by Jesus Christ, and we experience his grace through the Spirit by faith in what Christ has done (Rom. 5:1-2, 5). Through the Spirit, God daily imparts grace to us so that we may grow in his great love. He imparts grace giving us boldness to tell others of our liberty (freedom) in Christ (Acts 1:8; John 8:36; Rom. 8:2). He imparts grace giving us his truth and spiritual guidance on our faith journey (John 16:13-14). God is working in our lives by his Word and through his Spirit to save us, and to save others through our lives. This is God’s grace in action. His grace – at work in us – is an awesome gift!

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Doctrine of Grace

“Saved by Grace” – July 24, 2016

Lesson – “Grace through Faith”

Scriptures – Eph. 2:8; Phil. 2:12-13; Rom. 5:1-2;
Jude 24-25

Introduction to lesson

Faith in God is powerful – faith unlocks the promises and provisions of God’s Word. Faith in God’s Word brought forth water from the rock for God’s people (Ex. 17:5-6). Faith in God’s Word healed Naaman when he dipped in the river Jordan (2 Kings 5:14). Over and over, throughout the Scriptures, the blessings of God were received by faith. Likewise, we are “saved through faith” (Ep. 2:8). Our key verse plainly teaches that faith is required on our part; and thus, we cannot have salvation by grace apart from faith. We can conclude then that the gift of saving grace must be embraced in the fullness of faith in Christ. Salvation can only be received by believing in Christ and all he did for us when he died on the cross (Jn. 3:16).

Key Verse: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ When you think about salvation, what kind of gift is grace?
- ✚ What does the Scripture mean by work out your own salvation with fear and trembling? (Phil. 2:12)
- ✚ Can we have salvation without grace? (Phil. 2:13)
- ✚ Can we be saved without faith? Why or why not?
- ✚ How has grace and faith impacted your walk and your life?

Think about it: God’s grace allows us to be justified (righteous) by our faith (Rom. 5:1-2; 1:17; Hab. 2:4). By grace through faith we are saved. But grace is more than salvation only. Grace opens to us the many blessings of God’s kingdom, for example: love, joy, peace, wisdom and understanding. God has provided us everything we need in Christ in order to live holy and pleasing to God; and we receive this grace by faith. As the believer walks by faith, God’s grace works in him to make him the kind of disciple that God wants him to be. The grace of God was fully stated in Jude 24, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” How truly amazing and awesome is the revelation of God’s grace! Put your faith in Christ and receive the fullness of God’s grace in your life.

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Doctrine of Grace

“Saved by Grace” – July 31, 2016

Lesson – “Grace throughout History”

Scriptures – Rev. 1:8, 11; Heb. 13:8; Mt. 24:35;
Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Jn. 3:2-3; 1:5-7

Introduction to lesson

Has grace changed throughout history? Has God ever changed his mind about grace? Will God ever break his promises or go back on his Word? Of course not! Christ stated that he is the Alpha-Omega (Rev. 1:8, 11). Thus, his promises are true from the beginning and will continue to the end. God’s Word will never change (Mt. 24:35; Heb. 13:8). So we cannot change the meaning and the work of God’s grace. The same grace that saved Noah was also given to Moses to lead God’s people to freedom. The grace that provided safety for Daniel, Elijah, and Joseph is the same grace that provides love, power, and protection to us today. Before the foundation of the world, God saw ahead through time and knew that we would be on this earth today; and he determined, even before the foundation of the world, that he would save and preserve all who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. That’s the grace of God!

Key Verse: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Has God’s grace been inconsistent throughout time? If it has, when? If not, why?
- ✚ What is the purpose of God’s grace in our lives? (Rom. 8:28-29)
- ✚ Can we rest on the foundation of God’s grace? (1 John 3:2-3)

Think about it: Leonard Ravenhill once stated, “Have we truly unlocked the full potential of grace?” It is truly hard to grasp the full magnitude of God’s grace and all it provides for us. Grace is so powerful and so beautiful. How can we possibly explain the wonder of this precious gift? For the gift required the death of Christ yet gave us the promise of heaven and life everlasting. Can you possibly imagine sitting next to the Lord in heaven? Can you imagine walking on the streets of gold, or seeing the glory and power of God on his throne? His grace has delivered us from the bondage of sin and has brought us into his marvelous light. However, today many see grace as a privilege and a right rather than a responsibility to “walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1 Jn. 1:5-7). The same grace that saves us will further enable us to please the Lord. The grace that saves us will surely keep us.

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Writer: Miguel A. Garcia

DOCTRINE OF GRACE

“Revelation of Grace” – August 7, 2016

Lesson – “Everlasting Gospel”

Scriptures – Luke 1:67-75; Gal 3:6-9; Luke 24:27

Introduction to lesson

According to the dictionary (Merriam-Webster), the definition of the word “everlasting” is defined as “continuing for a long time or indefinitely.” This is our starting point in studying the subject of grace. Mainstream Christianity would have us believe that grace is something new and only associated with the New Testament and Christ’s death on the cross. They fail to see grace as a continuing thought throughout the Scripture. This month, we will see how God in his infinite wisdom showed his grace through the ages. God wanted his gospel to be preached to all fallen human beings from the start. According to Luke 1:70, Zacharias (John the Baptist’s father) declared, “As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.” In other words, God has been speaking to humanity using his prophets from the beginning, sort of like a spokesman, that all may come to salvation. Moreover, Galatians 3:6-9 says that this gospel was preached unto Abraham – the father of the faithful – and he believed. Luke 24:27 also gives us a glimpse into how far back this grace was preached: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets” So the grace of God is not something that popped out all of a sudden, but it has been part of God’s plan of salvation since the beginning of time from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Key Verse: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ In your own words, what is God’s grace?
- ✚ According to Luke 1:67-75, whom did God use to preach his gospel?
- ✚ Is grace only a New Testament occurrence? Why or why not?
- ✚ Participation and discussion – What are more examples in the Old Testament where God gave saving grace unto man? (Hint: Consider Hebrews chapter 11.)

Think about it: God’s plan of salvation did not begin with the New Testament but has been around from the beginning. Grace is God’s undeserved love and mercy shown throughout the ages. Grace is God’s nature – he desires to save those who will believe, trust, and obey him. Let us share and preach his grace to others who have not heard the “good news” of salvation through Jesus Christ.

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DOCTRINE OF GRACE

“Revelation of Grace” – August 14, 2016

Lesson – “Grace Revealed”

Scriptures – Romans 5:2; Hebrews 10:38;
Genesis 3:15; 22:18; Hebrews 11

Introduction to lesson

Think about a mother expecting a baby. For nine months, the baby is developing and growing; but who will the child look like, Mom or Dad? This will not be revealed until the day of birth. Up to that point, it remains a mystery. In the same way, man did not fully know the grace of God until the person of Jesus Christ was born or “made of a woman” (Gal 4:4). God promised a Savior from the beginning; and man had to embrace and believe God’s promise. The question has been asked, “Since Christ came much later in human history, how then were Old Testament saints saved?” Like the rest of us, they were saved by faith: “Now the just shall live by faith” (He. 10:38). Faith gives us access into God’s saving grace (Ro. 5:2). Beginning with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15, the promise of Christ was that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. Furthermore, Christ is the promised seed of Abraham, “In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 22:18). Christ is also the promised seed of Judah, Shiloh being a reference to Christ (Gen. 49:10). You see, today we follow the same pattern of faith in the unchanging promises of God. Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation. He is the grace of God fully revealed and the fulfillment of God’s redemptive promise down through the ages. He is the most precious gift anyone could ever expect to receive. Take hold of the gift of God’s grace by faith!

Key Verse: “But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Galatians 4:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Is faith the only way one can be saved?
- ✚ What is the common denominator in the OT and NT as it regards grace?
- ✚ By whom was God’s grace revealed?
- ✚ Based on today’s study, how do you define grace?

Think about it: God’s plan from the very beginning was to reveal his Son in the flesh to humanity. What an awesome God! He had this fantastic plan of salvation and eternal life through the man Jesus Christ -- “the Word [of God] was made flesh” (John 1:14). Are you thankful that we can look back at Golgotha and the cross, and see that God’s grace was revealed in Christ?

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DOCTRINE OF GRACE

“Revelation of Grace” – August 21, 2016

Lesson – “Grace and the End of the Law”

Scriptures – Gal. 3:24; Heb. 10:1-4; Ps. 103:8-13;
Rom. 6:1-2, 14-15

Introduction to lesson

The Old Testament law was not without God’s grace (Ps. 103:8-13); and New Testament grace is not without moral law (Rom. 6:1-2, 14-15). Law and grace are like the two sides of a coin. But many believe that since we live in a time of grace, the law no longer applies; yet nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, without God’s moral law, we cannot fully enjoy the benefits of God’s grace in our lives. The Old Testament law has served its purpose – it has been called a “schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24). A schoolmaster refers to an attendant or tutor, usually a slave, whose job was to accompany, train, and discipline a child. As a schoolmaster, the Old Testament law, which established right and wrong, not only caused us to see our errors and sins, but also pointed us to our need for a Savior. Under the law, year after year, animals were sacrificed and their blood was shed; yet this could never take away sins (Hebrew 10:1-4). But now that Christ has come and died for us, he has fulfilled the reason for the law, and we are no longer under that schoolmaster. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4). Though we are no longer under the Old Testament law, we are still under God’s moral law. In fact, our relationship with God and our righteousness in Christ should make us more aware of our moral obligations (what is right and what is wrong).

Key Verse: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What do you think Paul was saying in Romans 6:15?
- ✚ Can you identify grace in David’s speech in Psalms 103:8-13?
- ✚ What knowledge does the Old Testament law bring to us in Romans 3:20?
- ✚ In Romans 7:7 and 7:13, what does the Old Testament law prove to a sinner?

Think about it: Jesus Christ is the God of law and grace. His law proves that we are sinners and points us to his saving grace. When we understand that we are sinners and come to Jesus for salvation, we experience God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness. Therefore, the very purpose of the Old Testament law is fulfilled (i.e. finished, ended, completed) in Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:4). Praise the Lord for salvation through faith in Christ.

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DOCTRINE OF GRACE

“Revelation of Grace” – August 28, 2016

Lesson – “The Grace Finale”

Scriptures – Rom 5:10; Mt. 28:18; Eph. 1:19;
Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:24-28

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever wondered, “What is the end result of God’s grace in our lives?” What is the ultimate purpose of God’s grace? We know that God’s saving grace was fully revealed in Christ. His provision of grace was manifested in his death on the cross. However, his grace was not only limited to his death on the cross but also shown in his resurrection – for we are saved by his life (Rom. 5:10). Moreover, grace established Christ’s authority when he was resurrected with power by the Holy Spirit and later ascended to the right hand of God. In other words, the grace of God has been fully revealed in Christ whose name is above all other names – for God has given him “all power in heaven and in earth” (Mt 28:18). Believe it or not, that same power and authority which was revealed in Christ is the same grace of God working in believers today by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:19; Ro 8:11). You and I are partakers of the same grace manifested in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit! In addition to all of this, Christ will come back to restore his kingdom to the way it should have been from the beginning. He is presently accomplishing this through his church as we work to proclaim the gospel of his saving grace. The grace of God will one day reach its finale when Christ destroys all evil principalities and powers once and for all (1 Co. 15:24-28). Then we will enter into the final chapter of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1-7).

Key Verse: “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:21).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ In your own words, what is the grace of God?
- ✚ We see grace in Christ’s suffering and death, but where else do we see the grace of God toward us? (Rom. 5:10)
- ✚ What is the church’s role concerning the grace of God?
- ✚ What is the ultimate purpose of grace?

Think about it: God’s grace will fulfill its ultimate purpose when all things come under the feet of Christ. He will return to rule and reign upon the earth; and we will rule and reign with him. At the end, Christ will offer up the kingdom to the Father “that God may be all in all.” Even though evil presently abounds in the world, one day all evil powers and authorities will be destroyed. Then Christ will himself submit all to the glory of God the Father.

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Doctrine of Grace

“Grace and Obedience” – September 4, 2016

Lesson – “The Relationship between Grace and Obedience”

Scriptures – Hebrews 11:7; Romans 6:1; Gen. 6

Introduction to lesson

We live in a religious world that abuses the grace of God. For some, being a Christian is a strict set of rules and regulations to live by. Therefore, serving the Lord becomes more of a burden. For other Christians, living for the Lord has no restraint. The grace of God allows them to make the rules as they go – “I am a Christian and can live like I want.” Paul said, “Do we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!” The grace of God is not an excuse to sin. However, both of these attitudes are unacceptable to God. Faith in Jesus Christ forms a balance between grace and obedience. What is grace? What is obedience? What does God expect from us? How can we please God? As a child of God, these are questions we need to understand and answer.

Key Verse: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What does God expect from us? (Gen. 6:14-16)
- ✚ What is grace? (Gen. 6:18)
- ✚ What is obedience? (Gen. 6:22)
- ✚ How can we please God? (Heb.11:7)

Think about it: In Genesis chapter 6, God told Noah that he was going to destroy the earth because of the wickedness of mankind. The extent of man’s wickedness is described as follows: “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Ge. 6:5). But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God told Noah to build an ark. This same ark would save his family. What if Noah decided that the ark was way too big and decided to cut back on the size and make it smaller? Or what if Noah decided not to build the ark? God told Noah exactly how to make it, what to use, and the size the ark needed to be. Noah had faith in God and his word. We must understand that Noah had no idea what was going to take place. He had no idea how bad it was going to be. He knew what God expected from him and he followed it to the end. If Noah would have disobeyed God he would have died with the others. By faith Noah obeyed the Lord and was saved by the grace of God. Following Noah’s example, we also should obey God because we love and fear him for who he is.

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Doctrine of Grace

“Grace and Obedience” – September 11, 2016

Lesson – “Grace without Obedience?”

Scriptures – James 1:21-25

Introduction to lesson

The apostle Paul declared, “That the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Th. 5:2). No one knows when the Lord will come again. But at his coming, he will execute judgments upon the earth (v. 3; Lu. 21:36). What we must also understand is that God will judge us according to our works, whether good or bad (1 Pe. 1:17; Rev. 22:12). But God has not chosen us to experience his wrath; rather we – his disciples – will “obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th. 5:9). It is only by the grace of God that we will escape the coming judgments. The purpose of the grace of God is to save us from the power of sin and its consequences. But can faith in God, without obedience, save us from God’s judgment and the wrath that is coming upon the earth?

Key Verse: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (James 2:14)

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What must we do to obtain God’s grace?
- ✚ How do we escape the judgment of God?
- ✚ If we are disobedient to God and his word, can we be a Christian?

Think about it: Can faith in God without obedience to his word save us? What must we do to obtain God’s saving grace? In his epistle, James explained that genuine faith in Christ always produces faithful obedience. First, we must be hearers of God’s word. Second, we must believe and receive God’s word. Third, we must obey (practice) the word. Whosoever looks into God’s word, continues in it, and is a doer of the word will be blessed in everything he does (Ja. 1:25). If we are true followers of Christ, then we must separate ourselves from sin and unrighteousness. We must not allow the sinful influences of this world to hinder us from obeying God’s word. The apostle John concluded that obedience to the commandments of God is inseparable from God’s saving grace (1 Jn. 2:3-6; 3:9). If we disobey God’s commandments, walking in sin, then his Spirit simply does not dwell in us (3:24), placing us in danger of God’s judgment. Clearly, those who abide in Christ by faith and obedience have the full assurance of God’s saving grace. Aren’t you thankful that the same grace that saved us can also keep us in Christ?

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Doctrine of Grace

“Grace and Obedience” – September 18, 2016

Lesson – “Grace and God’s Law”

Scriptures – Matthew 5:14-20, Romans 13:10

Introduction to lesson

In today’s lesson, we will see that God’s grace and his law come together in Jesus Christ. We are saved by God’s grace. We did not earn it by being good enough, but Jesus purchased our salvation on the cross. As God’s children, we are examples to others of God’s saving grace. We should show forth the virtues of Christ (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus explained that we are the light of the world. We are his city for the whole world to see (Mt 5:14). Now ask yourself: “Am I producing the light of Christ or my own light?” True Christians will produce the light of God’s abiding love. God’s kind of love is an unconditional love that can only be produced by the Spirit of God (Ga. 5:22). Paul wrote that by loving others we are fulfilling the laws of God (Ro. 13:10). Are we showing others the true love of God? Are we fulfilling the law of God? God’s grace produces holy love in every true believer.

Key Verse: “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What does God’s grace produce in us?
- ✚ How do we fulfill the law of God?
- ✚ Can we fulfill the law of God without love?

Think about it: Jesus explained the importance of the law of love when he told us the first and greatest commandment is to love him. Then he added, “The second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mt. 22:39). All the other laws depend on these two. If we say we love God but hate our neighbor, the love of God is not in us (1 Jn. 4:20). Loving God and loving one another are inseparable. God’s grace produces holy love. When you love God with all your heart, mind, and strength, you will obey his word and desire to please him. This produces a holy lifestyle in the believer. God’s love working in us refuses the lusts of the flesh. In brief, God’s grace will never go against God’s law. Through the grace of God, love will never seek to wrong a neighbor, or a brother or sister in Christ. God’s grace produces good works in us, bringing glory and honor to God.

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Doctrine of Grace

“Grace and Obedience” – September 25, 2016

Lesson – “Grace and Truth”

Scriptures – John 17:6-8, John 14:16-18

Introduction to lesson

Grace not only establishes the love of God, but also his truth. The apostle John declared, “I rejoice greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth...and this is love, that we walk after his commandments” (2 Jn. 4-6). The grace of God teaches us to walk in love **and** truth. His will is that all come to the knowledge of the truth in Christ. The grace that saves and keeps us in the love of Christ will also reveal God’s truth in our lives. Clearly, to know the Son of God is to know the truth, for Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). The truth teaches and helps the saints of God to walk soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:11-13). Thus, the grace of God teaches and reveals the truth in our lives. So growing and walking in grace means we must live in obedience to the knowledge of the truth.

Key Verse: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ How does the grace of God teach us to walk?
- ✚ How does the grace of God teach us the truth?
- ✚ Will the Spirit of God (the Holy Ghost) and the Word of God contradict one another? (1 Jn. 5:7)

Think about it: Can we say that we walk in the grace of God but not obey his words? Will the Spirit of God contradict the Word of God? God instructs us in the truth by his Word. The Bible teaches us that the Word of God is the truth (Jn. 17:17). Jesus taught the words of God to his disciples, and the disciples received and kept the words as the Word of God. Likewise, we know the truth today through the same Word of God. Moreover, we know the truth by the Spirit of God. Jesus promised his disciples he would send the Comforter when he departed. He identified him as the indwelling Spirit of truth who would not speak of himself, but of Christ and his teachings. The Spirit of God can teach nothing but truth. Many people say that the Spirit leads them to do certain things that contradict the Word of God. But the Word and the Spirit are one. They are in perfect harmony. The Word of God will never conflict with the truth of the Spirit. The Spirit of God will never contradict the truth of God’s Word.

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Philippians

Lesson- "Grace and Peace" – October 2, 2016

Scriptures- Ac. 16:6-40; Jn. 1:1-6; 2 Pe. 1:4; Ac 14:21-22; Mt. 6:10; Ro. 14:17

Introduction to the Lesson: The apostle Paul was an amazing man of God and one full of love and care for all people. He tried with all his might to win as many to Christ as he could. Paul maintained a constant burden for their spiritual growth. He was the first to bring the gospel to the people of Philippi. He had since left and was now sending them a letter of encouragement. In the opening, Paul shared his desire for the believers to possess two things particularly that would benefit them greatly in their Christian walk: grace and peace from God.

Key Verse: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Ph. 1:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- ❖ **Have you ever built something from "scratch" and felt the pride for having done so? Legos? Model car? Or something even more complex? How did you feel about this? Could Paul have felt this way about the converts at the Philippian church?**
- ❖ **Have you ever experienced the inward peace of God while fighting conflicts outwardly?**

Think About It: During Paul's second missionary journey he felt the Lord direct him to Macedonia (Ac. 16:9-10). He left for Philippi (a city in Macedonia), and there he met and won to Christ a woman named Lydia and also a Philippian jailor (Ac. 16:14; 27-32); and from this the church in that city was established. Paul left and went on to other areas to promote the cause of Christ. However, he still possessed a great love and burden for the people of this city and felt the impression of the Spirit to write them a letter. At the same time the letter was written, there was great persecution being waged against the church in Philippi. Because of this, Paul, who had also experienced much persecution himself, shared his prayer that the believers would be blessed with God's grace and peace (which is experienced in Jesus Christ). "Grace" is a gift from God; it is undeserved and unmerited favor, which simply means we can do nothing morally or physically to receive it. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are forgiven of every sin, created as a new spiritual person, and brought into God's kingdom. Sadly, however, we tend to only think of grace in terms of our initial salvation. But God gives us his grace at conversion so that He can give us even more grace--- more undeserved blessings as we continue to serve and follow him (Jn. 1:16; 2 Pe. 1:4). A sinner cannot experience the vast majority of God's grace, but the believer can tap into his unending supply! Paul also prayed for their peace. Peace is something that can be experienced outwardly as well as inwardly. To say someone has outward peace is to say they are free of conflict (trouble, strife, war). This type of peace is nearly impossible to experience for more than a short period of time because we live in a sin-cursed world where Satan and his unholy angels are out to "kill, steal, and destroy" every soul. Outward peace will not be fully realized until Christ sets up his physical kingdom on earth (Ac. 14:21-22; Mt. 6:10). Although Paul did desire the church to have as much outward peace as possible, his main desire was that they experienced inward peace. This peace is brought into our hearts when we are saved through the person of the Holy Ghost (Ro. 14:17). This is one of the most beautiful things that Christ does for his children--- he gives peace even when the most desperate of situations surround us!

Conclusion: Certainly there is no better way Paul could express his sincere love for the Philippian people than to introduce them to the gospel message, and then to show care and concern by praying for more of God's grace and peace in their lives. Please know that whatever you are faced with right at this moment, God knows how to give you more grace and lasting peace.

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Philippians

Lesson- "God at Work in You" – October 9, 2016

Scriptures- Ph. 2:12-13; 2 Co. 3:18; Ga. 5:22-23; Ph. 1:6; He. 5:12-14; 1 Co. 3:1-2; Ep. 4:14-15; Jn. 14:26; 16:13

Introduction to the Lesson: No one was ever born as an adult. Over time, with the proper nourishment and exercise, we eventually grow into adulthood. In the same way, when we are "born again" we become a "babe" in Christ. Through spiritual nourishment we develop into mature Christians. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit working within us to transform our every word, action, and attitude to become like Christ's.

Key Verse: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Ph. 1:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ❖ What are some traits of immature Christians?
- ❖ What are some traits of mature Christians?

Think About It: Whenever people became Christians through the ministry of the apostle Paul, he would do his very best to establish them in the teachings of Christ before leaving them to evangelize other areas. Time would only allow Paul to teach the basics. He knew they later would have to make many decisions that he had not addressed in order to please the Lord and remain in a healthy relationship with God. Remember, they did not have the Bible as we do today. Also, they didn't have the luxury of texting, emailing, or even calling; letters would take weeks to deliver, and in most cases would never get to the intended person in time. Therefore, they would have to do as the apostle had taught--- "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Ph. 2:12). The Philippian saints had been sanctified (i.e. released from the bondage of sin), and the Holy Spirit had been infused into their hearts and minds. So Paul was confident that they could live and serve Christ with power. They had the proper tools to be able to make right decisions and to mature in Christ. As they continued to grow in the knowledge and stature of Christ, ascending spiritually from "glory to glory," they would also be transformed into the image of Christ (2 Co. 3:18). Paul goes on to declare that the Spirit would work within the individual Christian giving them both the "will" and the "ability" to do what God desired (Ph. 2:12-13). Moreover, the Holy Ghost would teach the child of God what to "put on" in regard to spiritual disciplines and conduct, and what to "take off" in regard to sinful practices and vices. The Holy Ghost would also work within them to produce wholesome and visible fruit giving evidence that they were truly the children of God (Ga. 5:22-23). Just as the New Testament believers, if we find some part of our lives not meeting God's standard of Christlikeness, the Spirit will become grieved and will convict us so that we might confess the sin or fault, turn from the action, and be restored to a healthy relationship with the Lord. Let us clearly understand; our personal spiritual growth will continue until Christ comes again and transforms our mortal, physical bodies into one that is just like his: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Ph. 1:6).

Conclusion: Every born again Christian has a desire to be like Christ. This desire is brought into our lives by the Holy Ghost. Spiritual maturity doesn't take place over night. Therefore we must continue to surrender to the leadership of the Spirit, refusing the desires of the flesh. As the Holy Ghost reveals the truth of God's Word, and we follow Christ in the truth, we will continue to grow up into Christ in all things (Jn. 14:26; 16:13; Ep. 4:14-15; 1 Co. 3:1-2; He. 5:12-14).

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Philippians

Lesson - "God's Trojan Horse" – October 16, 2016

Scriptures - Ac. 28:30; 22:1-22; 24:24-27; 26: 1-28; Philemon 10; Ph. 1:12-13; Ac.8:4; 23:11

Introduction to the Lesson:

Have you ever heard of the "Trojan Horse" in Greek literature? The Greek army had tried for ten years to penetrate the walls that protected the city of Troy. Finally, they devised a plan. They built a large, hollow, wooden horse, placed a few soldiers inside, and left it outside the gates of the city. Troy's citizens thought it had been left behind by the retreating Greeks and pulled it inside. Once it was inside the walls, the soldiers within opened the horse and unlocked the gates allowing their waiting army to enter. Have you ever considered that your circumstances may be God's "Trojan Horse?" Perhaps, God has strategically placed you where you can reach those around you with the message of Christ?

Key Verse: "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Ph. 1:12).

Questions to Discuss:

1. Have you ever felt that you were in the wrong place at the wrong time?
2. If so, did it ultimately turn out that God used it for his glory and your learning?

Think About It: At the time Paul was writing this inspired letter to the Philippians, he was imprisoned in Rome. By this time he had been in jail for a number of years (Ac. 28:30). He had been arrested in Jerusalem; later transferred to Caesarea; and finally he was shipped off to Rome. Yet throughout his years of incarceration, Paul continued to be aware of his Christian duty: sharing the gospel of Christ. In Jerusalem, he preached Jesus (22:1-22). In Caesarea, he preached the gospel (24:24-27; 26:1-28). While in Rome he was used by the Holy Ghost to lead many to Christ (Philemon 10). At this time Nero was the emperor in Rome and possessed a passionate hatred of Christians. It was reported that he actually crucified Christians in his garden, lit them on fire, and used their bodies as torches. Yet Paul's imprisonment and the threat of death didn't stop him from sharing his faith. In fact, Paul said the message of Christ had reached all the way to the "palace" (Ph. 1:13). It seems as if he had been brought before the emperor and instead of him being intimidated into submission he continued to promote Jesus! Paul concluded his letter by sending greetings from the saints in Rome (4:22). He had even won some within Nero's household to the Lord! Satan cannot stop the influence of the gospel. When the Jews in Jerusalem persecuted and threatened the saints, the Bible records, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Ac. 8:4). No matter what life handed to them, or where they were forced to go, the early Christians preached the message of Jesus Christ. The Philippians wondered why God had allowed Paul to be placed into prison. However, Paul explained God had a plan (Acts 23:11). God gave Paul the gospel, allowed him to be arrested, and sent him to Caesar's palace. Once there, Paul preached the gospel. Paul's arrest was the Trojan horse so that the liberating message of Jesus could reach the inhabitants of the emperor's palace! They brought him as a prisoner, but he arrived as an evangelist! You may question why you are at your school or in the classes you are taking, or the reason you live where you do, or why your life is so confusing, but one of the reasons you are there is to share the gospel with someone who would never attend a church. Perhaps, God allowed life to take you where the gospel was needed most. Christ doesn't want you to hide out in a church building. He wants you in your school, in your neighborhood, and around town among lost people. He has strategically placed you in an area to be his light. Be the light Christ has called you to be!

Conclusion: Brother Bruce Sullivan told of a message entitled, "Bloom Where You're Planted." He said that the preacher encouraged people to bring forth fruit wherever life took them. Sometimes, we may not understand why God has us in certain places, but God has a plan. Your circumstances may be God's Trojan horse to penetrate sin's prison! Wherever God sends you, come out preaching!

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Philippians

Lesson- "Wrong Motives - Right Gospel" – October 23, 2016

Scriptures- Ro. 10:17; He. 4:2; Ro. 1:16; He. 4:12; 1 Pe. 1:23; Lu. 8:11; Mk. 4:20; 1 Co. 3:6-7; 4:5; Ga. 1:9; Ro. 16:17; 2 Jn. 10-11; Jude 3-4

Introduction to Lesson: In Christianity, there have been people who have declared God's Word yet were not driven by the right motives. Some clearly were not saved. However, their wrong motives couldn't diminish the power of God's Word. Paul taught that if the true gospel is preached and mixed with faith, even when impure men deliver it, people will still be saved (Ro. 10:17; He. 4:2).

Key Verse: "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Ph. 1:18).

Question to Discuss:

- ❖ Does a jealous or selfish attitude ever help a situation in a positive way? What about in sports, academics, and jobs?

Think About It: Paul spent most of his mission work preaching the gospel in places where people had never heard of Jesus. But Rome was different. Many were there preaching and teaching. Some of these loved and respected Paul, and they took courage from his boldness as a preaching prisoner. Unfortunately, others were jealous of Paul and his influence as the "apostle to the Gentiles." Instead of seeing Paul as a "co-worker" and respecting his calling, they had a self-promoting, jealous, and competitive spirit. How did Paul view all of this? He wrote to the Philippians and told them that he rejoiced, because despite their motives or attitudes toward him, the gospel was still being preached. Paul understood an important principle that everyone should understand: the power of eternal life is contained in the gospel itself. Therefore, salvation depends more on the gospel than on the messenger. Paul had written earlier to the Romans, and said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it [the gospel] is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Ro. 1:16). The power is in God's Word (He. 4:12). It is the "incorruptible seed" which produces eternal life (1 Pe. 1:23). Jesus spoke of the gospel as a "seed" in his parable of the sower (Lu. 8:11). In this parable, when the gospel falls on good ground it will produce life (Mk. 4:20). When it is heard by a Holy Ghost convicted person and is then mixed with faith, eternal life will be the result! Every farmer knows the power is in the seed. No matter how skilled a farmer may be, he cannot produce life by planting a rock. He can only grow crops if he plants the life bearing seed that God created. So then, it is not the planter or the one who waters who produces life, but rather the seed. Thus, "God gives the increase" (1 Co. 3:6-7). Today, we are faced with people who preach the gospel with impure motives (i.e. to gain money, fame, position, and so on). Through the years, some ministers have even been exposed for living sinful, hypocritical lives (e.g. drunkards, thieves, and adulterers). Does this mean the people who accepted Christ in their meetings were never really saved? Not at all! The power of salvation was in the gospel and not in the men. Those who preach hypocritically will one day be judged (1 Co. 4:5), but their impurity cannot destroy the power of God's Word! At the same time, it must be pointed out that an insincere speaker preaching the truth is vastly different from one who preaches a lie. We must never rejoice in or condone the preaching of a perverted gospel. Scripture tells us those who preach a false gospel are accursed (Ga. 1:9). We are warned to avoid them (Ro. 16:17); and we are told never to offer them material or verbal support (2 Jn. 10-11). We rejoice when the truth is preached, but we never rejoice in a lie. **Conclusion:** One day the secrets of our hearts will be made manifest. Let us therefore labor to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ with pure motives. Let us never develop a competitive spirit toward our fellow laborers like some had toward Paul. Let us rejoice when the gospel is preached while at the same time contending against false gospels (Jude 3-4).

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Philippians

“Philippians – October 30, 2016

Lesson – “Magnify the Lord”

Scriptures – Mt. 5:16; Ps. 34:1-3; Ac. 7:54-60

Introduction to lesson

“IT’S NOT ABOUT ME! IT’S ALL ABOUT THE LORD!”

Is the Lord magnified in our life so that others can clearly see Jesus in us? What does it mean for one to *magnify the Lord*?

To magnify is to take something and make it bigger, for the purpose of seeing it for what it really is. In our lesson today, Paul desired for the world to clearly see Jesus and his great salvation, mercy, grace, and love, not only through the way Paul lived his life, but even in the way he died. Every good deed we do should be about the Lord, magnifying Christ (Mt. 5:16). Good deeds, such as supporting orphanages, feeding the hungry, and caring for the sick and hurting should never be done with ulterior, self-promoting motives. But we should always seek to draw attention to Jesus and the gospel. Every word we speak should be pleasing to the Lord, lifting him up (Ps. 34:1-3). Praise, testifying, singing, and witnessing to people about the Lord means letting our light (i.e. Jesus) shine. Even in death, we can magnify Christ just as Stephen did (Ac. 7:54-60).

Key Verse: “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Ph. 1:20).

Questions to Discuss

- Give examples of how you can let your light shine; and explain how these examples can *magnify the Lord*. (Mt. 5:16)
- What are different ways we can *magnify the Lord* with our words? (Ps. 34:1-3)
- Paul stated in the Key Verse above that “Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.” How did Stephen’s death *magnify the Lord*? (Ac. 7:54-60)

Project: Each student should write a Scripture or thought about what it means to “magnify the Lord.” Write it on a piece of paper as small as can be written. Then hold up the papers in front of the class as far away as possible and see if anyone can read them. Next hold up a large magnifying glass in front of the words and let everyone read the messages. By magnifying the words, one can now clearly see the message. How important is it for others to clearly see the message about salvation, love, mercy, and grace?

Think about it:

Magnifying glasses are fascinating and lots of fun – like putting the glass up to our eye to make it look BIG. Magnifying glasses are very useful. They are found in microscopes to help scientists and doctors see the “invisible.” When we *magnify the Lord* through good deeds, with our words, and even in death, we allow the world to visibly see Jesus. **It’s all about the Lord.** “Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together” (Psalm 34:3).

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Philippians

“Philippians – Part Two” – November 6, 2015

Lesson – “The Servant Mindset”

Scriptures – Jn. 1:1, 14; Mk. 10:44-45; Jn. 13:1-17

Introduction to lesson

W.W.J.D. – WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

We are all called to possess the mind of Christ. So just what would Jesus do? What is he thinking? What attitude did Jesus have that determined how he responded to situations? We are called to take on that same servant mindset. C.S. Lewis stated the following: *“Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.”* Is this not what Jesus did? “Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant” (Ph. 2:6-7). God became flesh; he left the glory of heaven and “was made in the likeness of men” in order to be a servant (v. 7). Jesus did not ever forget who he was. He was and is God; yet he put others before himself, even dying for us all. Like Jesus, we also should serve others. How important is this attitude of being a servant? It is so important that Jesus instituted the practice of “feet-washing” in the church (John 13:2-17). The king of the universe humbled himself to serve man; we too must humble ourselves to serve others.

Key Verse: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Ph. 2:5).

Questions to Discuss

- Why did Jesus not consider his claim of equality with the Father as robbery? (John 1:1,14; John 10:30)
- Jesus was God, yet he served others. What lesson can we learn from his attitude?
- If we desire to be first, we must become what and why? (Mk. 10:44-45)
- How important is participating in feet-washing services, and what lessons do we learn from this experience? (Jn. 13:1-17)

Project: The WWJD slogan was born out of Charles Sheldon's 1896 novel *In His Steps*. The lead character suggested that if each person asked himself "what would Jesus do" with each decision he made, the world would be a much better place. Many people don't know or remember the original meaning of WWJD. In fact, when faced with decisions, many people don't know what Jesus would do. Note: Share some real situations concerning being a servant and how Jesus would respond (WWJD) compared to how the worldly mindset (i.e. a selfish attitude) would respond. Share some scriptures to support WWJD.

Think about it:

What did Jesus do? He sacrificed his life on the cross for those he loved. What a servant mindset!! Now he calls us to that same mindset of being a servant. We must be mindful of the needs of others in the church, and at the same time, we must reach outside the church to help those in need that the lost might be saved.

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Philippians

**“Philippians – Part Two” – November 13, 2016
Lesson – “Living as the Light”**

Scriptures – Ep. 4:17-20; Ps. 119:130; Ph. 2:14-15

Introduction to lesson: 🎵🎵 LET IT SHINE 🎵🎵

A little boy was standing in an alley with a broken piece of glass, reflecting the light of the sun to a third-story window. A police officer came by and scolded him asking, “What mischief are you up to now?” The boy said to the officer, “Nothing sir, my little brother is sick and can’t leave our apartment up there on the third floor where no sunlight ever gets into his room. The only sunlight he ever sees is what I reflect from this little bit of glass.” In the Bible, Jesus tells us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which in heaven” (Mt. 5:16). This lesson is about the **WHY-HOW-WHO** of “*Living as The Light.*” **WHY** – Because people are “in the dark,” and they have a perverted view of right and wrong. They are ignorant to the right ways of God. We must shine the light to those who are trapped in darkness (2 Co. 4:4; Mt. 7:14; Ep. 4:17-20; Col. 1:13). **HOW** – By shining the light of God’s Word. God’s word gives light and understanding. It is what lights the path that one may walk in the right way (Psalm 119:105, 130). **WHO** - We, as children of God, must live a life of light. Wherever we go, we represent Christ. Our actions speak loud. In other words, the way we conduct our lives should point people to Christ. “Ye are the light of the world.” So shine as the Light (Mt.5:14-16; Ph. 2:14-15).

Key Verse: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Ph. 2:15).

Questions to Discuss

- Give examples of what it would be like to live in darkness. Also discuss living in spiritual darkness. (Ep. 4:17-20)
- How do we live as the Light and what effect will our light have on those living in darkness? (Ph. 2:14-15; Ps. 119:130)

Project: Have each student to blindfold themselves and shut their eyes so as to be completely in the dark. Take them on a trip giving them directions as you go (note: try to get them confused as to where they are). Once you have arrived, remove the blindfolds, and see if they realized where they ended up. How did it feel being totally in the dark? People all around us who do not know Jesus are living in a dark place of spiritual confusion. Understanding how it feels to be in the dark, what can we do as Christians to make a difference?

Think about it: 🎵🎵 **I’M GONNA LET IT SHINE.** 🎵🎵

This dark world needs someone to SHINE AS THE LIGHT, to be a witness to them, and to tell them about Jesus. We must share the Word of God, for the Word will give them understanding (i.e. it will turn on the Light) and lead them in the right path. We must live a life of light that all may see Jesus. Just as a lamp must have a light bulb and a flashlight must have batteries to give light, we too must have the power of the Word of God in us before we can live as the Light!

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Philippians

“Philippians – Part Two” – November 20, 2016

Lesson – “Righteousness in Christ Alone”

Scriptures – Ph. 3:1-11; Ro. 10:3-4; Ga. 2:-11-21

Introduction to lesson: **“In Christ Alone”**

My hope is found in Christ alone. We must always remember our hope for forgiveness and acceptance rests on Christ’s sacrifice alone. Righteousness – what is considered right and approved by the Lord – comes only through Jesus Christ and his sacrifice. Moreover, true faith in Jesus Christ will be followed by genuine repentance ... a turning away from sin, a hatred for the things God hates, a love for the things God loves, and a desire to be like Jesus. A hymn written by Robert Lowry says is perfectly: “What can wash away my sins; nothing but the blood of Jesus!” Man can do nothing to atone for his sins. Christ’s sacrifice was enough; so there is nothing more that must be done to be right with God. The righteousness of God by faith will not allow us to act like the world, smell like the world, speak like the world, and listen to the things that the world listens to. **GOD WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE.** That difference is HIS righteousness through the blood of Jesus. The sacrifices under the Old Testament law were only “shadows” of Christ’s sacrifice. When you understand and experience the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, you stop pursuing your own approval of what is right and find your rest in his righteousness for your soul (Mt. 11:29-30).

Key Verse: “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Ph. 3:9).

Questions to Discuss

- What does it mean to be found in Christ and have the righteousness which is from God by faith? (Ph. 3:1-11)
- How does someone seek to establish their own righteousness? (Ro. 10:3-4)
- Righteousness comes through what/whom? (Ga. 2:19-21)

Project: Draw a line down the center of a whiteboard or poster board, and then write “SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS” on the left side and “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD” on the right side. Read Romans 10:3-4. What is the difference between the two? Self-righteousness is the things we do to try to make us right with God. Self righteousness looks great on the outside, and people notice it. When you don’t know God’s righteousness which is in Christ alone, you will then try to establish your own righteousness.

Think about it: 🎵 *My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.* 🎵 If you have put your faith in Christ, then rest from your own good works for righteousness! Christ’s sacrifice was enough! He is our righteousness (2 Co. 5:21). Follow him by faith.

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Philippians

“Philippians – Part Two” – November 27, 2016

Lesson – “Striving for the Resurrection”

Scriptures – Ph. 3:10-15; 1 Th. 4:13-18; Re. 20:12-15

Introduction to lesson

♪♪ “ARE YOU RUNNING FOR THE PRIZE?” ♪♪

Bro. Trevor Graves wrote a song that goes with today’s lesson: *Are you running for the prize?* Are we striving and making great effort to obtain the prize (i.e. the resurrection of the saints). Paul explained in Philippians 3:12 that he was pressing on in order to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus had also laid hold of him. The question we must ask ourselves is this: “How bad do you want to obtain the prize?” If you are determined to be a part of the resurrection of the saints, then you will strive, run, and press to win the prize. The Bible teaches there will be two resurrections. There is going to be a resurrection of the just and also a resurrection of the unjust (1 Th. 4:13-18; Re.20:12-15). There is an old saying concerning the resurrection – “Born twice, die once; born once, die twice.” If you are born again by the blood of Jesus (born twice), then you will not experience the lake of fire, called the second death. We must press on until we experience the “power of his resurrection” (Ph. 3:10)

Key Verse: “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Ph. 3:11).

Questions to Discuss

- What does it mean for us to strive for the resurrection? (Ph. 3:10-15)
- Explain the differences between the two resurrections. (compare 1 Th. 4:13-18 with Re. 20:12-15)

Project: Stand-Firm Activity - (Note: This simple activity will introduce the concept of standing firm in what you desire from the Lord. You will see how easy it is to lose your balance when you do not have two feet firmly on the ground). First, have one volunteer to come to the front of the group. Have him to stand on one foot and hold it. Then have another volunteer to come to the front and ask him to give the first volunteer a little push. Notice how easily he loses his balance. Next, have the first volunteer to stand firmly on both feet, spreading his feet wide at least shoulder-length apart. Now have the second volunteer to push him again and notice the difference.

Think about it: ♪♪ “I’m running for the prize. I’ve been saved, sanctified, Holy Ghost filled, fire baptized; I’ve got Jesus on my mind. I’m running for the prize.” ♪♪

“This one thing I do” (Ph 3:13). This must be the mindset for those who are pressing to apprehend that for which we were apprehended of Christ. We must be determined to be a part of the first resurrection (resurrection of the saints). Be steadfast in your faith, stand firm to the end, and you will win (He. 3:14)!

Are you running, pressing, and striving for the resurrection?

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Philippians

“Philippians, Part Two” – December 4, 2016

Lesson – “Follow Those Who Follow Christ”

Scriptures – Ph. 3:17; Jude 3-4; Ac. 20:29-30; 2 Pe. 2:1-3;
Mk. 10:45; 1 Th. 2:10-12; 4:1-7

Introduction to lesson

Most people have role models in their life. A role model is someone that we admire and hope to be like, such as a parent, teacher, pastor, or friend. Role models usually have a great influence on the way we think, feel, and live our lives, because we respect them and care about what they have to say. As Christians, our ultimate role model is Jesus Christ. Our goal is to be like Jesus Christ in the way that we think, feel, and act toward God and toward others. God has designed his church to have mature Christians who are able to lead us in being like Jesus Christ through their teaching and example. Sadly, there are also people who will try to lead us who may seem to be Christian, but in reality they are not a true witness of Jesus Christ. So, how do we know who we should and should not follow? In today's lesson, we will learn to recognize the difference between real Christian role-models/ministers and false teachers who only appear to be Christian role-models, so that we can make sure we are following Jesus Christ.

Key Verse: “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example” (Philippians 3:17).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ What do ungodly men do with the grace of God? (Jude 3-4)
- ✦ Why do false teachers twist the truth and speak perverse things? (Acts 20:29-30)
- ✦ What do false teachers do to God's people? (2 Peter 2:1-3)
- ✦ What purpose should Christian ministers have in mind if they are following Jesus' example? (Mark 10:45)
- ✦ How should true ministers of the gospel behave themselves toward God's people? (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12)
- ✦ When true Christian ministers instruct us about our lifestyle, what will their message sound like? (1 Thessalonians 4:1-7)

Think about it:

God has given us Christian leaders that are great role models for us to follow, but we have to watch out for deceivers. Deceivers change the teachings of Jesus Christ and have wrong motives toward God's people. Rather than emphasizing being holy and living to please God, deceivers make God's grace seem like an excuse to sin. Instead of leading people to follow Christ and the church, they draw away disciples after themselves. While they should be serving God's people, they are trying to be served by seeking money and material gain. A real Christian role model will lead us by their teaching and their example to be like Jesus Christ. A real Christian role model will teach us to live holy and will themselves live holy. They will seek to serve God's people and will love them sacrificially, because they are following the ultimate role model who laid down his life for us. Now that you understand what a real Christian role model is like, be careful to follow those who truly follow Jesus Christ!

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Philippians

“Philippians, Part Two” – December 11, 2016

Lesson – “Rejoice in the Lord”

Scriptures – Ph. 4:4; 1 Th. 5:16-18; Ac. 16:23-30; 5:40-41; 13:50-52; 2 Co. 4:17-18; Ro. 8:18; Mt. 5:10-12; 2 Ti. 2:12

Introduction to lesson

Who has never had a “bad day” in his/her life? If you have been living in this world very long, then you know what it’s like to have a day when you feel stress, frustration, emotional pain, or physical suffering. As Christians, we are not promised a trouble-free life. As a matter of fact, we are promised that we will have troubles in this life simply because we follow Jesus Christ. Because he is our Lord, we will be hated and persecuted in some way for his sake. As terrible as that may be, we don’t have to be defeated or discouraged. Jesus said that in the world we would have tribulation, but he also said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have access to the throne of grace and a reward in heaven that will never fade away. Therefore, we can rejoice and be glad even on the bad days. Today, let’s see what the Bible has to say about when, how, and why we should rejoice.

Key Verse: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ In what circumstances should we rejoice, pray, and give thanks? (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
- ✦ If we react to the bad times with prayer and praise to God, how might other people be affected? (Acts 16:23-30)
- ✦ When we suffer because we are living for Jesus Christ, how should we respond? (Acts 5:40-41)
- ✦ Even though our message may sometimes be rejected, we can still be filled with what and who? (Acts 13:50-52)
- ✦ While we endure the troubles of this life, what should remain our focus and why? (2 Corinthians 4:17-18; Romans 8:18)
- ✦ Why should we rejoice and be glad when people mistreat us for following Jesus? (Matthew 5:10-12; 2 Timothy 2:12)

Think about it:

When should we have joy and be glad? As Christians we should strive to always have joy and be glad! We can do this through Christ who strengthens us! He is the one who gives joy that the world is not able to give us. When we suffer for being a Christian, we can rejoice in him. When our witness is rejected, we can still be filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit! We should continue to have joy not because things are perfect, but because of the fellowship we have with Christ and the hope of a perfect future with him for eternity. So then, if we are going to maintain our joy, we must keep our focus on Jesus and heaven rather than our temporary circumstances. If we keep praying, praising, worshiping, and giving thanks, then the joy of the Lord will be our strength through every situation until we see the Lord face to face. “REJOICE in the Lord always: and again I say, REJOICE!”

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Philippians

“Philippians, Part Two” – December 18, 2016

Lesson – “Don’t Worry”

Scriptures – Ph. 4:6; Mt. 6:34; Lu. 12:25; He. 4:15-16;
1 Pe. 5:7; He. 4:15-16; Jn. 16:24; Mt. 7:7

Introduction to lesson

What do you do when bad things happen and you begin to wonder what could happen next? Some people allow fear to takeover because they simply keep thinking about their problems and imagining the worst for their future. This is called worrying. Worrying happens when we do not correctly deal with our fears. Worrying causes us to be full of care and burdened down emotionally. The Bible gives us clear directions about what to do and what not to do in order to keep ourselves from being overloaded with care. If we follow God’s instructions, we will avoid a lot of heartache and experience the peace and joy of God. Today, let’s learn some wisdom from the Scriptures that will help us deal with our problems and fears so they don’t get the best of us.

Key Verse: “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why should we not worry? (Matthew 6:34)
- ✚ Can worrying benefit you? (Luke 12:25)
- ✚ Where can we go to receive mercy and find grace to help when we need it? (Hebrews 4:15-16)
- ✚ Instead of worrying what can we do with our cares? (1 Peter 5:7; Hebrews 4:15-16)
- ✚ Since worrying cannot help us in any way, what can we do? (John 16:24; Matthew 7:7)

Think about it:

We all have problems that we face from day to day. If we do not handle those problems the right way, we can become burdened down and tormented in our minds. If we keep thinking about our fears rather than placing our faith in God, we are worrying. Worrying never changes our situations, nor does worrying affect us in a positive way. God, on the other hand, can work all things out for our good, and he can give us peace and joy in the middle of our problems. When thoughts of fear come into our minds, we have a choice to make. We can choose to keep thinking about how terrible our circumstances are or how bad they may become, or we can choose to take what’s on our hearts to God in prayer. God understands what we face, and he cares enough to help us. Don’t worry! Cast your cares upon the Lord, and ask him to help you in times of need.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Trevor Graves

Philippians

“Philippians, Part Two” – December 25, 2016

Lesson – “Christian Contentment”

Scriptures – Mt. 6:19-20; Ph. 4:11-13; 1 Ti. 6:6-10, 17-19

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever thought about how nice it would be to have more money, new clothes, a nicer car, and such? While there is nothing wrong with having these things, they will never give us true contentment in and of themselves. Contentment is the state of being satisfied. Everyone wants to be content, but it seems like very few people are. The rich and poor alike are often unhappy with what they have and worried about getting more. Maybe they think to themselves, “If I can just get a better job or a bigger house, then I would be satisfied.” The truth is if money and possessions are their main concern, they will never reach a place where enough is enough. In today’s lesson, we will learn about the danger in being too concerned with money and how to be truly content with or without it.

Key Verse: “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ Why should we be careful not to covet or strongly desire money? (1 Timothy 6:10)
- ✦ Why should we store up our treasures in heaven rather than on earth? (Matthew 6:19-20)
- ✦ Besides money, what is another way we can be rich? (1 Timothy 6:17-19)
- ✦ What do you think the apostle Paul meant when he wrote “godliness with contentment is great gain?” (1 Timothy 6:6-8)
- ✦ In what conditions did the apostle Paul learn to be satisfied? (Philippians 4:11-13)
- ✦ How was Paul able to continue serving the Lord in difficult times? (Philippians 4:11-13)

Think about it:

The apostle Paul faced times when he had plenty and times when he had very little. With Jesus being the source of his strength, Paul learned to be content in every situation. Like the apostle Paul, we too can learn to be content in the Lord no matter how much or little we have. We can find that Christ is all we need in all situations. While money is necessary for our basic needs, we should be careful that we do not desire money and material things more than we desire God and his will for our lives. If money and possessions become too important to us, then our desire will lead us away from the faith. Wealth will become our god, and we will lose our relationship with the One True God. While many people try to find contentment by getting more money and possessions, as Christians, we must learn to find our contentment in our relationship with Jesus Christ. As he works in us and through us, we can experience a greater contentment that money can’t buy; and this contentment will last throughout eternity!

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