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Focus



*for
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*Sunday
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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Miguel Garcia Jr.

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Who is the Holy Ghost?” – January 6, 2019

Lesson – “Comforter”

Scriptures – John 14:14-18

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever needed a friend to comfort you in a special time of need? You may be going through a difficult time in your life and need someone to lend you a shoulder to cry on or a listening ear. Maybe you need someone who can give you some much needed advice. In today’s lesson, we will see that Jesus did not leave us alone without a comforter and friend to talk to and provide help. He said, “I will not leave you as orphans” (v. 18). He promised he would never leave us alone in our times of trouble “even unto the end of time” (Matthew 28:20).

Key Verse: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever” (John 14:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What did Jesus say to ask of him? (v. 14)
- ✚ What commandments did Jesus say to keep? (v. 15)
- ✚ To whom did Jesus pray? (v. 16)
- ✚ Who will send another comforter to us? (v. 16; see also John 15:26)
- ✚ How long is the comforter going to be with us? (v. 16)
- ✚ Why can’t the world receive this Spirit of Truth? (v. 17)
- ✚ Where does the Spirit of Truth live? (v. 17)
- ✚ How much does Jesus care for us? (v. 18)

Think about it:

Jesus had been with the disciples for three and half years, but now he was about to leave and knew that his disciples were going to be filled with sorrow. They needed to be consoled and comforted; so he sent the Holy Spirit to give them comfort, strength, and hope. Jesus said, “I will not leave you comfortless” (v. 18). If we will love Jesus and keep his commandments (v. 15), then we can receive this comforter whom he promised. Jesus told us to ask (v. 14). No matter what we face in our lives, we can pray asking God for his help, and the Holy Spirit who lives in us will provide peace, joy, and comfort.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Who is the Holy Spirit” – January 13, 2019

Lesson – “Teacher”

Scriptures – John 14:25-26

Introduction to lesson

From the moment we start Kindergarten and finish our education in college/university, we are met with new teachers each school year. Think of all the teachers you have now. Likely, you will have some completely different teachers next year. However, we have one teacher who has been exactly the same, year after year. He is the Holy Spirit. He is not only our comforter, but he is also our teacher and guide in this life, the teacher of all the things Jesus spoke (v. 25). He is the one who will bring all the things that Jesus said to our remembrance (v. 26). He will guide us into all truth if we will only listen and obey (John 16:13).

Key Verse: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Which things did Jesus speak about? (v. 25)
- + Who is the comforter? (v. 26)
- + Who is our teacher? (v. 26)
- + How many subjects will he teach us? (v. 26)
- + What happens if you forget some of the things Jesus said? (v. 26)

Think about it: When you begin a new school year, more than likely, you will be in a new classroom, meet new people, and will have new teachers. When you come on the first day, you really don't know what to expect. You may feel nervous and shy. But isn't it exciting that we always know who will be our spiritual teacher each and every year? We have the Holy Ghost who guides us and teaches us all of the things which Jesus taught. He helps us to understand all that God expects of us. He is not a mean person, but rather he is gentle and kind. If you forget something, he won't send you to detention, but he will simply remind you of it. He will bring the words of Jesus back into your memory. What a relief to know that we have a teacher we can always count on.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Who is the Holy Spirit” – January 20, 2019

Lesson – “Intercessor”

Scriptures – Ephesians 6:18; Romans 8:26

Introduction to lesson

“Men should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). Prayer is the lifeline of our Christian life. A Christian life without prayer is like the blood draining from your physical body, leaving you lifeless. But sometimes we don’t know how to pray. We run out of words or don’t know what words to use to speak to God. This is when the Holy Spirit comes in and prays for us unto God (Romans 8:26). The Spirit prays in the perfect will of God. Therefore, his praying is far more efficient and effective than our own prayers. Today, we will discover how and why the Spirit intercedes for us.

Key Verse: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ep. 6:18).

Questions to Discuss:

- + According to Ephesians 6:18, when should we pray? (v. 18)
- + What is supplication? And why should we pray in supplication? (v. 18)
- + What can we pray for? (v. 18)
- + Should we pray for everyone? (v. 18)
- + What does the Holy Spirit do for us? (Romans 8:26)
- + When you don’t know what to pray for, what do you do?
- + Do you know what God’s will is for your life when you pray?
- + Do you allow the Holy Ghost to intercede on your behalf?

Think about it: God has given us the Holy Ghost to be many things for us. He is our comforter, teacher, and intercessor. Sometimes our prayers and what we ask for do not meet God’s will and expectations. For this reason, the Holy Ghost is so important. He doesn’t just pray on our behalf, but he actually prays according to the perfect will of God. Although we might not understand his groaning, God knows the mind of the Spirit. He understands the utterances of the Spirit and knows exactly what we are praying when we groan, weep, and speak in tongues. For these reasons, we see how important the Spirit is in our prayer life. We need the Spirit to make intercession for us “according to the will of God” (Ro. 8:27)

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Who is the Holy Spirit” – January 27, 2019

Lesson – “Witness”

Scriptures – Romans 8:16

Introduction to lesson

Think of a court case for a moment. If a person is trying to prove his innocence, then there has to be a witness to confirm his story, in order for the jury to believe him. When we tell others about Jesus, we are not speaking on our own. We have a convincing witness to confirm our story. In today’s lesson, we will see the importance of the Holy Ghost as our witness. The Spirit testifies of Jesus and what he has done for us. “For he shall not speak of himself” (John 16:13), but he will give testimony to believers and to the world that God’s Word is truth! Since the Holy Ghost is the life and power of our witness, we should be filled with the Holy Ghost so that we can speak the words of God with authority (Acts 1:8). When you don’t know what to say or don’t have the words to speak, Jesus said, “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say” (Lu. 12:11-12).

Key Verse: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Who testifies that we are God’s children? (Ro. 8:16)
- + How do we become better witnesses of Christ? (Acts 1:8)
- + How will the Spirit help us when we are witnessing? (Luke 12:11-12)
- + As God’s children, what is our responsibility in witnessing? (Acts 5:32)
- + Should we be afraid when witnessing to our friends at school?
- + Have you witnessed to someone recently? What was that experience like for you?

Think about it: Remember that the Holy Ghost has been given to us as a comforter, teacher, intercessor and a witness. Don’t forget that you have the power to be a witness of Christ to the world with the help of the Holy Ghost.

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Sunday School Services

Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Misty Wilcox

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spiritual Gifts” – February 3, 2019

Lesson – “Edification of the Body”

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; 14:1, 12

Introduction to lesson

The members of the church should edify one another. What does edify mean? It means we should work to encourage and build up one another. When encouraging edification in the church, the Bible uses terms like comfort, support, and be patient (1 Th. 5:11, 14). We are to consider each other in order to encourage love and good works (He. 10:24). Do you remember your parents saying, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all?” There is a Biblical backing to that statement (see Ep. 4:29). We should always seek to build up and not tear down. To help us edify and build up each other in the Lord, God has given us a variety of spiritual gifts in the church.

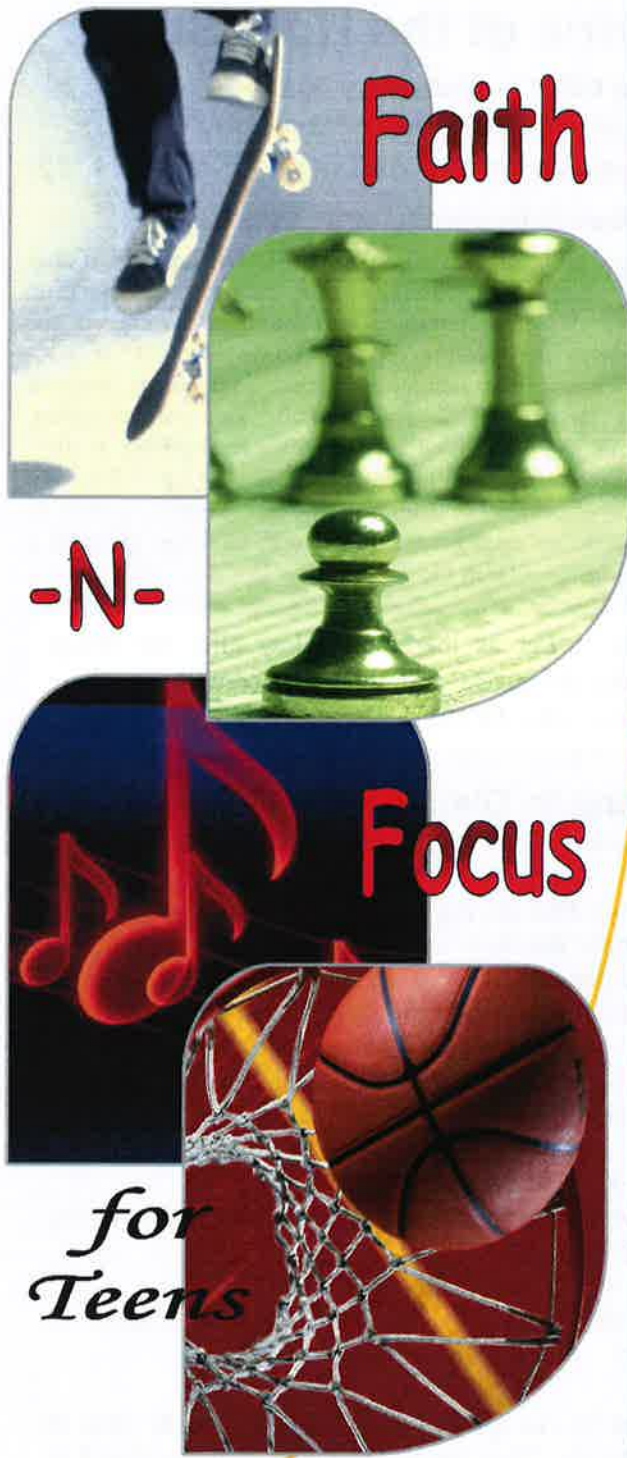
Key Verse: “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another” (Ro. 14:19).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why did the apostle Paul write about spiritual gifts? (1 Co. 12:1)
- ✚ What was Paul saying about the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit? Who does the Holy Spirit magnify and glorify? (v. 3; Jn. 15:26; 16:14)
- ✚ Where do the spiritual gifts come from? (vv. 4-6)
- ✚ When the Holy Spirit works through individual members, who does this profit and benefit? (v. 7)
- ✚ In the coming weeks, we will study the gifts of the Spirit. List all nine of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. (vv. 8-10)
- ✚ Who determines how the gifts are given and when they are operated? (v. 11)
- ✚ Should we desire spiritual gifts? (1 Co. 14:1)
- ✚ In our desire for spiritual gifts, for what should we seek? (v. 12)

Think about it: The spiritual gifts are given for the good of the whole church. They should operate within the church to build up and unite, but never tear down and divide. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Paul went on to explain that the key to edification in the working of spiritual gifts is love. When the spiritual gifts work in the church being prompted by God’s love, the gifts will work to edify and build up the body of Christ.

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**Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Bruce Sullivan**

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

"Spiritual Gifts" – February 10, 2019

Lesson – "Wisdom and Knowledge"

Scriptures – 1 Cor. 12:8; Eph. 5:17; Prov. 4:5, 7

Introduction to lesson

Today we will be discussing wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is simply an accumulation of facts. Someone may be knowledgeable about cars, cooking, chemistry, electronics and many other things. If one wants to gain knowledge, they need to read books or listen to someone who has experience and knowledge on the subject of which they desire to learn.

Wisdom is different from knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to take facts and make choices which are profitable. For example, an Army general needs wisdom. During a war, he receives a massive amount of intelligence as to his enemy's position and capabilities. However, a "wise" general is one who knows how to process those facts and use them to take a profitable course of action. If he wants wisdom, he needs to read, and listen to those who have been successful. He should listen to their advice and study their strategies. As Christians we understand God has all knowledge and wisdom. We should crave to know what God knows! Divine wisdom and knowledge come from the Bible.

Key Verse: "For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What are the differences between wisdom and knowledge?
- ✚ Where does the Christian go to gain wisdom and knowledge?
- ✚ Can God move on someone in the church to give wisdom and knowledge to the congregation? How does that happen?

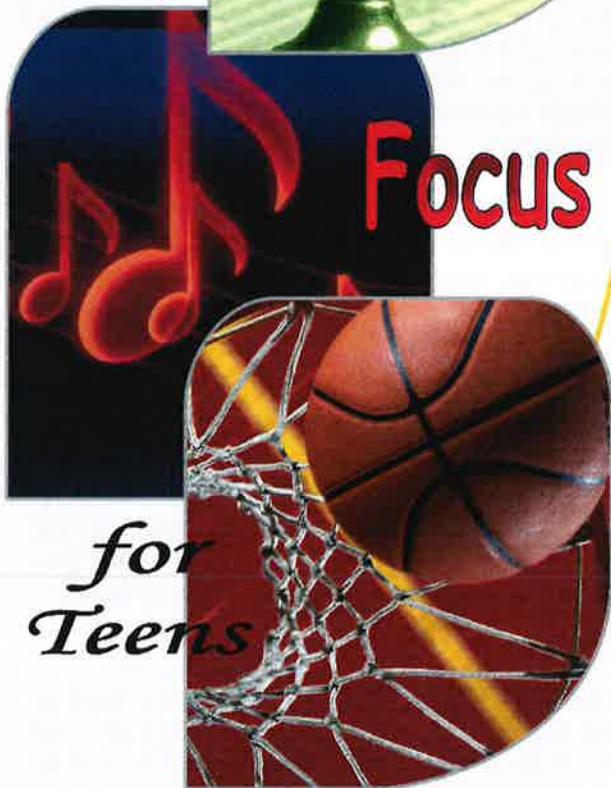
Think about it: In discussing the "Gifts of the Spirit" in 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul speaks of the "Word of Knowledge" and the "Word of Wisdom." To understand these gifts, let's break down these phrases. What is a word? "Words" are the means people use to communicate a thought or to convey a message to other people. What is "Knowledge?" "Knowledge" is the accumulation of facts or truths. Therefore, a "Word of Knowledge" is a gift of God's Spirit which enables a Spirit filled child of God to communicate God given understanding to the rest of the church. For example, a teacher may receive insight into what a scripture means and be given insight on how to communicate that truth to the congregation in a manner which is easily understandable. Communicating that Divine insight to the church is a "Word of Knowledge." What is "Wisdom?" "Wisdom" is the ability to make profitable judgments or to take profitable actions. God is "all wise" for God knows the future and the outcome of every action or decision. Therefore, God always knows the wisest course of action in any given circumstance. A "Word of Wisdom" is a gift of God's Spirit which enables a Spirit filled child of God to share insight from God as to the wisest course of action. We see examples of this throughout the Book of Acts (Acts 15:13-22; Acts 16:9-10). As Christians, we should search the scriptures for knowledge and wisdom from God. We should also crave to hear the words of wisdom and knowledge God shares through others in the church, especially preachers and teachers (1 Pet. 2:2).

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Sunday School Services

Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Pam Jones

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Spiritual Gifts – February 17, 2019

Lesson – Faith: Impossible Made Possible

Scriptures – Matthew 17:20; 21:17-22; James 2:17-26

Introduction to lesson

What was once impossible has been made possible by faith! Acceptance with God, serving the Lord, and following Him are only possible through faith, for we must believe in Jesus to have everlasting life (John 3:16). In this lesson, we will see how the Mission Impossible becomes Mission Possible. First, the impossible becomes possible by the ability to believe, embrace, trust, obey and serve the LORD – The Measure of Faith. We also will learn how the impossible becomes possible through the force of faith – The Power of Faith. Finally, we will look at a divine enablement exercised by the Spirit to help the individual personally and the church reach its fullest potential – The Spiritual Gift of Faith.

Key Verse: “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What size of faith must one have to move a mountain? (Matthew 17:20)
- ✚ How big is a mustard seed compared to other seeds? (v.20)
- ✚ Why was it important for the fig tree to have fruit on it? (Matthew 21:18)
- ✚ What happened to the fig tree and why? (v. 19)
- ✚ What was the reaction from the disciples when they saw the withered fig tree? (v. 20)
- ✚ What was Jesus’ response to the disciples? (v. 21)
- ✚ What are the action words Jesus spoke in this verse? (v. 22)
- ✚ If we put faith into action, asking and believing, what will the result be? (v. 22)
- ✚ Can faith stand by itself? (James 2:17)
- ✚ How can one show others their faith? (v. 18)
- ✚ Abraham & Rahab were justified by works—how? (vv. 21,25)
- ✚ Fill in the blank – “. . . by works was faith made _____.” What do you think is perfect faith? (v. 22)

Think about it: Mission impossible is made possible by FAITH. To each one is given a measure of faith to move mountains. Through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, we establish our faith in Christ and grow in the power of faith, so that we can ask in prayer and receive from God what is needed in our lives. Then as we see the working of the spiritual gift of faith within the church, the whole church will continue believing and asking for even greater works. Always remember our mission must be to please God; and to complete that mission we must have faith!

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Zachary Snyder

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spiritual Gifts” – February 24, 2019

Lesson – “Healings and Miracles”

Scriptures – Mt. 8:13-17; 1 Co. 12:9-10; Ep. 3:20

Make no mistake about it, gifts of healing and the working of miracles were common occurrences in the life and ministry of Christ and on throughout the New Testament (Mt. 8:13-17; Mk. 1:40-45; Lu. 7:22). During Jesus’ earthly ministry, he healed many with different kinds of sicknesses and diseases (Mt. 9:35). We should remember that our need for healing is sometimes more than physical, for Satan doesn’t attack our bodies only. He also seeks to poison our minds with carnal thoughts and fear (1 Co. 10:5-6; 2 Ti. 1:7) and to corrupt our spirits with the evidence of the works of the flesh (Ga. 5:19-21). Therefore, the Lord has provided healing for the whole person: soul, mind, body, and spirit. Before Jesus ascended back to the Father in heaven, he promised to send the Holy Spirit to us. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, the Lord has placed gifts of healing and the working of miracles in the church in order to empower its ministry, convict sinners, build up the body of Christ, and to prove to the world that he is still at work through his church (1 Co. 12:9-10). Zion Assembly must continue to realize our need for God’s divine favor; we must be in a condition spiritually where the Spirit will use us for the honor and glory of God (Ep. 3:20).

Key Verse: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ep. 3:20).

- ✦ What would be some of the reasons for not seeing miracles and healings? What would hinder the Holy Spirit from working in our lives?
- ✦ Since God desires to do the miraculous in and through his church, do you individually make sure that you are spiritually conditioned for him to use? How can you spiritually prepare yourself to be used by the Holy Spirit?

Think about it: Zion Assembly has an important role to fulfill in this world in being God’s church. As his church, we must honor God through obedience to his Word. We must also live close to God by being filled with the Holy Spirit. How will Zion Assembly shine brightly to the world around us? Not only will the church be the light of the world by proclaiming the whole truth of God’s Word, but Zion will also be seen by the working of the Spirit within her through signs and wonders, healings, and the working of miracles. However, in order to be used of the Spirit, we individually must be spiritually conditioned. The power of God working through us individually is conditional.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Trevor Graves

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spiritual Gifts” – March 3, 2019

Lesson – “Prophecy and Discernment”

Scriptures – Acts 15:5-29

Introduction to lesson

Do you want to know more about God's plan for your life? God certainly desires to help you understand His plan more clearly and just how you fit into it. The gift of prophecy and the gift of discernment are two gifts of the Spirit that work in the church to help us know the will of God. The gift of prophecy occurs when the Holy Ghost uses an individual to speak God's word with power and authority. The gift of discernment happens when the Holy Ghost helps believers to judge whether or not the prophecy is truly from God. In this lesson, we will see how God uses both the gift of prophecy and the gift of discernment to give direction for the church.

Key Verse: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Who began to speak to the assembly? (v. 13)
- + From whom did God take out a people for His name? (v. 14)
- + What did James refer to when confirming Simeon's (or Simon Peter's) message? (v. 15)
- + What did James conclude after proclaiming the Scriptures? (vv. 19-20)
- + When James was finished speaking, were there any disagreements among them? (v. 22)
- + Who approved of James's conclusion? (v. 28)
- + Do you think James was speaking by his own power? (v. 28)
- + How did the church know that the Holy Ghost was pleased with their decision? (v. 28)

Think about it: The gift of prophecy and the gift discernment working together revealed God's plan to the early church and helped them to avoid division. God's will was communicated to them by someone who spoke with the power of the Holy Ghost working through him. By the same Spirit, they were able to judge the message they were hearing as seeming good to the Holy Ghost. These gifts will do the same for us today. When the gifts of prophecy and discernment are in action, our mission in the church is made clearer, and we are kept from being misled by false teachers. Together, these gifts of the Spirit will reveal the mind of God to us, so that we can grow and become all that God wants us to be.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Trevor Graves

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spiritual Gifts” – March 10, 2019

Lesson – “Tongues and Interpretation”

Scriptures – Acts 2:1-8

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever tried to talk to someone who does not speak your language? It's a difficult task if you don't have an interpreter to translate what you are trying to say. Sometimes in the church, there may be people gathered together who do not speak the same language. Despite language barriers, God can still communicate what He desires to reveal to everyone present and use the church to do so. He can use Spirit-baptized individuals in the church to speak and interpret any language. The Holy Ghost may use the gift of diverse tongues to speak Spanish through someone who only knows how to speak English or French. Sometimes, God may use someone to speak a message in tongues in order to help the church and then use someone to interpret the message so that all may understand. The gifts of diverse tongues and interpretation of tongues are both supernatural gifts of the Spirit given to build up the body of Christ. In this lesson, we will see that the church is not hindered by language barriers when its members are empowered by the Holy Ghost.

Key Verse: “To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ Were the disciples who were gathered thinking about different things? (Acts 2:1)
- ✦ What was the sound from heaven like? (v. 2)
- ✦ What did the tongues that were like fire do? (v. 3)
- ✦ How were they able to speak with other languages? (v. 4)
- ✦ The Jews who were dwelling at Jerusalem at this time had returned there from where? (v. 5)
- ✦ Why was the crowd of people so confused? (v. 6)
- ✦ Why was the crowd of people so amazed? (vv. 7-8)

Think about it: What an amazing work God performed through His church on the day of Pentecost! Jews from many different nations heard the wonderful works of God in their own language. They were all astonished because the people speaking were Galileans who ordinarily could not speak their languages. They were able to speak other languages because the Spirit gave them utterance. You see, God can speak and interpret all languages. The Holy Ghost still works in the same way today. He still speaks to and through the church to ensure that the message He wants to reveal is clear to everyone who may be gathered together. The gifts of diverse tongues and interpretation of tongues are wonderful gifts that will strengthen and build up the body of Christ as we proclaim the gospel into all the world.

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Writer: Trevor Graves

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spiritual Gifts” – March 17, 2019

Lesson – “Signs Following Believers”

Scriptures – Mark 16:15-20; Matthew 24:24;
Revelation 13:11-15

Introduction to lesson

When taking a road trip to a new place, road signs can be useful tools that help you to know the right direction. In the same way, when we set out to do God's will, miracles can be like signs helping to assure us that we are going the right way. Jesus taught that in His name believers would cast out demons, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, be protected if they drink something deadly, and lay hands on the sick and heal them. These are signs that will follow them who believe. The purpose of these signs is to confirm the Word of God and direct our faith toward Jesus Christ. Do you think that we as Christians should follow signs? In this lesson, we will see what God says about signs, so that we can know the answer to this question.

Key Verse: “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Are believers going to follow signs, or are signs going to follow believers? (Mk. 16:17)
- + Why did God use signs when He worked with the early church? (Mk. 16:20)
- + What do you think Jesus meant by “false Christs” and “false prophets?” (Mt. 24:24)
- + What will the “false Christs” and “false prophets” be able to do? (Mt. 24:24)
- + What will happen as a result of their signs? (Mt. 24:24)
- + Who will the false prophet cause people to worship? (Re.13:12)
- + What will the false prophet use to deceive those that dwell on the earth? (Re. 13:13-14)

Think about it: As you can see from the Scripture, signs can be deceiving. Jesus warned about false prophets who would show great signs and wonders. The signs performed by false prophets are like road signs with the wrong information. These lying signs will lead people away from the Truth and direct their faith toward someone or something other than Jesus Christ. For this reason, Christians should not follow after signs, but rather follow the Word of God. As we focus on God's Word, we will be able to appreciate the true signs that will confirm His Word. The true signs will strengthen our faith in the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Jesus Christ.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Trevor Graves

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spiritual Gifts” – March 24, 2019

Lesson – “The Greatest Gift”

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Introduction to lesson

How much would you pay for a Big Mac without the burgers? You probably wouldn't pay a dime, because the bread, the toppings, and the sauce all lose their value without the main thing. Similarly, the gifts of the Spirit also become meaningless if the most important gift is not working in the church. According to the Apostle Paul, the greatest gift is love. He was not referring to a “romantic” kind of love or a “friendship” kind of love. These examples are types of love that all humans are capable of having. Paul was referring to the kind of love that we experience when God's Spirit works in and through us. This kind of love can only come from God. In this lesson, we will learn what the love of God is like, so that we can understand why it's the greatest gift.

Key Verse: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love]” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Questions to Discuss:

- + What is a person like who speaks the languages of men and angels but doesn't have God's love? (v. 1)
- + What is a person who understands mysteries and all knowledge but lacks God's love? (v. 2)
- + What does a person gain by doing good things for others if they do not have God's love? (v. 3)
- + What characteristics should people have if God's love is within them? (v. 4)
- + Would God's love cause a person to demand his/her own way? [Explain your answer.] (v. 5)
- + Would God's love cause a person to be happy when others fall into temptation? Why or why not? (v. 6)
- + Would the love of God cause us to give up on our brother or sister when he/she does us wrong? [Give an example of your answer.] (v. 7)

Think about it: The goodness of God's love goes far beyond our human ability to love. The human kind of love can become impure and self-centered, due to the influence of the sin nature, but the love of God is always pure and selfless. The love of God was demonstrated when God gave His only begotten Son to die for us when we were yet sinners. It is this self-sacrificing love that is the most important gift to help us build God's church. The gifts of the Spirit such as tongues and interpretations, prophecy and discernment are all helpful, but without the love of God working through us, they become meaningless. As we seek to build up the church, we need to remember the main thing is God's love.

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Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Trevor Graves

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spiritual Gifts” – March 31, 2019

Lesson – “Prophesy”

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 14:1-12

Introduction to lesson

When people try to get in shape, they usually work out all of their muscle groups. It doesn't make good sense to strengthen one muscle group when it takes your entire body to do daily activities. Likewise, God does not want some members of the body of Christ to be strong and others to be weak. God desires the whole body of Christ to be built up and every member able to do his/her work effectively. He wants us all to be in our best shape spiritually, so that together we can fulfill the great commission. In order for all of us to become strong, we must have the word of God. We need to be corrected, encouraged, comforted, and instructed with a clear message. For this reason, Paul emphasized prophesying over speaking in tongues, when there is no interpretation. Prophesying occurs when the Holy Ghost uses an individual believer to speak God's word with power and authority. In this lesson, we will see how prophesying provides more of a “full body workout” than speaking in tongues when we are gathered together.

Key Verse: “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy” (1 Corinthians 14:1).

Questions to Discuss:

- + When someone speaks in an unknown tongue, to whom is he/she speaking? (v. 2)
- + Can anyone understand a person who speaks in an unknown tongue? (v. 2)
- + Who is spoken to when a person prophesies? (v. 3)
- + What are the benefits of prophesying? (v. 3)
- + Who benefits from an unknown tongue? Who benefits from prophecy? (v. 4)
- + Why is the person who prophesies greater than the person who speaks in tongues when there is no interpretation? (v. 5)
- + What should we seek for in our pursuit of spiritual gifts? (v. 12)

Think about it: God wants every one of us to be strong in Him so that we will affect the world rather than the world affecting us. Therefore, edifying the church should be our focus when we are gathered together. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul was not trying to stop the church from speaking in tongues, but he wanted them to see that prophesying (anointed preaching) helps to build up the whole church, while speaking in an unknown tongue only strengthens the individual. Everyone can benefit from prophecy, because the message is understandable. In contrast, speaking in unknown tongues blesses the individual who speaks, but there is no understanding given to the church. With this in mind, we should not forbid speaking in tongues, but we should seek to prophesy so that all may be strengthened in the will of God.

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Spirits of Destruction

“Adultery and Fornication” April 7, 2019

Lesson: Sensuality

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

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Spirits of Destruction

“Adultery and Fornication” April 14, 2019

Lesson: Pure Hearts

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

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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“Adultery and Fornication” April 21, 2019

Lesson: A Godless Society

Scriptures: Romans 1:21-28

Introduction to lesson

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

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

(Romans 1:22)

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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“Adultery and Fornication” April 28, 2019

Lesson: Don't Be Deceived

Scriptures: Ephesians 5:3-6

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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“Adultery and Fornication” May 5, 2019

Lesson: God’s Judgment

Scriptures: Luke 16:13-25

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

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

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Doctrine of the Church May 12, 2019

“Responsibilities of Church Membership”

Lesson – Consecration in Prayer

Scriptures – Mark 13:32-37

Introduction to lesson

In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 13, Jesus taught about his second coming. The chapter closes by urging us to steadfast faithfulness. We want to be ready for Jesus when he comes for us. When we know that company is coming to our house, what do we do? Most of the time, we prepare and get ready for them. Perhaps, we clean our house, buy some extra food, and even change our schedule to accommodate our guests. In other words, we do everything necessary to be ready for their arrival. The members of the church have the responsibility of remaining prepared and ready at all times for the coming of Christ. Readiness includes prayer. Through consistent, watchful prayer, we prepare for his coming.

Key Verse:

“Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is” (Mk. 13:33).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ When is Jesus coming? (v. 32)
- ✦ Who does know when Jesus is coming again? (v. 32)
- ✦ Since we do not know when Jesus is coming, what three things should we do? (v. 33)
- ✦ Why should we be watchful for the coming of Jesus Christ? (vv. 34-35)
- ✦ When could Jesus come again? (v. 35)
- ✦ What could happen to us if we do not watch for him? (v. 36)
- ✦ What is Jesus' final warning to everyone? (v. 37)

Think about it: Cell phones are great devices of communication. Anymore, people are constantly talking and texting on the phone. We can communicate with others from virtually anywhere and at anytime. When company is coming to our house, we can know they are getting closer, simply by calling one another as their arrival gets nearer. And we even can talk to one another as they pull up in the driveway. Prayer is like a spiritual cell phone. Through Jesus, we have direct access to God. As we pray and talk to God, we will not be caught off guard when Jesus comes, but we will be ready and prepared for his arrival.

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Doctrine of the Church May 19, 2019

“Responsibilities of Church Membership”

Lesson – Church Attendance

Scriptures – Hebrews 10:23-25

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever been to an art museum? Sometimes, the pictures or paintings displayed present optical illusions. At first glance, they may look like nothing more than streaks of color or various shapes on a canvas. However, with more careful observation, you become filled with disbelief as an amazing image comes into view. Only by looking at a piece of art in the right way will you see the true creativity behind it. To some, it's just paint on a canvas, but to others who know what they're looking at, they see a masterpiece. How do you view church attendance? Is it merely a place to go on Sundays and see a few friends, or do we truly see its importance to Christ's purpose in our lives? How important is church attendance?

Key Verse: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” (Hebrews 10:25a)

Questions to Discuss:

- + What must we maintain (hold fast) at all times? (v. 23)
- + Why can we be faithful? (v. 23)
- + What two ways can we help one another? (v. 24)
- + In verse 24, “provoke” has a positive meaning. It means “to push” or “point in the right direction.” In what two ways should we provoke one another? (v. 24)
- + As Christians, we need to be faithful, and we need to help one another be faithful. Therefore, the Bible tells us not to forsake what? (v. 25)
- + In coming together for church worship, in what way do we help one another? (v. 25)
- + We are helping each other to be faithful as we await the coming of the Lord (“as ye see the day approaching”). How often should we assemble and come together for church? (v. 25)

Think about it: Sadly, some who claim to be Christians do not see the importance of church attendance – Note: “as the manner of some is.” Because they do not faithfully attend church and participate in worship, they fail to receive the benefits and blessings of church worship and fellowship. God has provided a way for all of us to stay encouraged in the faith. Church attendance is important – don't miss out!

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Doctrine of the Church May 26, 2019

“Responsibilities of Church Membership”

Lesson – Stewardship

Scriptures – Mark 12:41-44 (Lu. 21:1-4)

Introduction to lesson

Stewardship is a word that refers to being responsible with one's money. A good steward uses his/her money for good purposes. As Christians, we should always seek to honor God with our income. Certainly, living in this world requires money – it can be costly at times. Therefore, we should work hard to earn an honest income, but then we should use that money in a responsible and God-honoring way. Our first obligation is tithing. When we tithe, we give God the first 10% of our income. In other words, if we make \$100, then we give God \$10. In addition to tithing, we also honor God by giving to special needs as they arise in the church. Through tithing and giving, we honor God and further the mission of Christ through the ministries of the church. In today's lesson, we will see that God honors a right spirit and attitude in our giving.

Key Verse: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, 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” (Malachi 3:10).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What were people doing at the treasury of the temple? (v. 41)
- ✚ What group of people was Jesus watching as they gave into the treasury? (v. 41)
- ✚ What caught Jesus' attention? (v. 42)
- ✚ Exactly how much did she cast into the treasury of the temple? Was this amount a lot of money? (v. 42)
- ✚ Who literally cast in more money, the rich people or this poor widow?
- ✚ Whose offering did Jesus value the most? (v. 43)
- ✚ Why did Jesus value the widow's offering above all of the rich people's offerings? (v. 44)
- ✚ What does this example teach you about the gifts and offerings which you give to God?

Think about it: In addition to our tithe, we give offerings to honor God. However, the amount of our giving is not what honors him, but rather the spirit and attitude in which we give. When a typical individual gives \$50 to missions, it means something more than when a wealthy individual gives \$50 to missions. When a wealthy person gives out of their abundance, it means less than those who give out of their need. Always remember: God does not honor the dollar amount, but he honors our motives and our faithfulness in giving our very best to him.

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Doctrine of the Church June 2, 2019

“Responsibilities of Church Membership”

Lesson – Service to God

Scriptures – Proverbs 6:6-8

Introduction to lesson

People waste a lot of precious time, doing a whole lot of nothing. How do you spend your time? Do you use it wisely? Do you realize you have but one life to live, and that you have a limited time in this world? Time is therefore a precious gift. In Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, the Bible says, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.” Therefore, none of us should waste the time which God has given us. We should use our time to serve the Lord.

Key Verse: “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Ro. 12:11).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ When Solomon writes about the ant, what kind of people does he have in mind? (v. 6)
- ✚ What can we gain by considering the ways of an ant? (v. 6)
- ✚ Do ants require a supervisor or boss to manage their time? Should it be necessary for someone constantly to look over our shoulder and tell us what to do? (v. 7)
- ✚ Most of the time, what do we see ants busily doing? (v. 8)
- ✚ What else do you know about ants?
- ✚ What happens when we fail to work hard? At school, at home, on a job, in the church?

Think about it:

Certainly, we need a good balance between work, play, and rest. Play and rest are necessary to refresh ourselves, mentally and physically. But hard work brings results and gets the job done. Young or old, all of us should work in the mission of the church. Many souls are lost and need to be reached with the good news of Jesus, and taught in the truths of God’s Word. It takes hard work to build the church. If we like the benefits of hard work (such as a clean house, good grades, a pay day, and new converts in our church), then we should be willing to work hard for it. Let us all use our time wisely, work hard, and serve the Lord.

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Spirits of Destruction June 9, 2019

A Slandering Spirit

Lesson – “The Slanderer”

Scriptures – Job 1:6-11; 2:1-5

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

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

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

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

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Spirits of Destruction

June 16, 2019

A Slanderous Spirit

Lesson – “The Tongue”

Scriptures – James 3:2-12

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

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

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

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

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June 23, 2019

A Slanderous Spirit

Lesson – “Enduring Slander”

Scriptures – 1 Peter 2:21-23

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

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

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Spirits of Destruction

June 30, 2019

A Slanderous Spirit

Lesson – “Gossip and Rumors”

Scriptures – Proverbs 26:18-25

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

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

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Common Bonds” – July 7, 2019

Lesson – “A Forgetful People”

Scriptures – Exodus 16: 1-3

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Common Bonds” – July 14, 2019

Lesson – “A New Identity”

Scriptures – Exodus 19: 1-8

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Common Bonds” – July 21, 2019

Lesson – “The Promise Fulfilled”

Scriptures - Matthew 21:33-46

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Common Bonds” – July 28, 2019

Lesson – “An Established Purpose”

Scriptures – Matthew 16: 13-19

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Matthew 28:19, 20

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Relationships with the World” – August 4, 2019

Lesson – “IN the World but not OF the World”

Scriptures – *John 17:1-26*

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

"Relationships with the World" – August 11, 2019

Lesson – Not Ashamed of the Gospel Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 1:18-27

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

"Relationships with the World" – August 18, 2019

Lesson – "The Saving Power of God"

Scriptures – 1 Peter 1:18-25

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Relationships with the World – August 25, 2019

Lesson – “An Open Book”

Scriptures – Matthew 5:14-16

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Christ Centered Relationships” – September 1, 2019

Lesson – “The Right Motive”

Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 4:1-6

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

"Christ Centered Relationships" – September 8, 2019

Lesson – "Those Over Us"

Scriptures – Hebrews 13:7-17

Introduction to lesson

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

Key Verse:

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Hebrews 13:17

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

“Christ Centered Relationships ” – September 15, 2019

Lesson – “Honor and Prayer for Civil Authority”
Scriptures – 1 Tim. 2:1-5

Introduction to lesson

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

Key Verse:

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Righteousness in Relationships

"Christ Centered Relationships" – September 22 2019

Lesson – "A Friend of God"

Scriptures – John 15:12-14

Introduction to lesson

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

Key Verse:

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Spirits of Destruction

“Adultery & Fornication ” – September 29, 2019

Lesson – “Sensuality”

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

Introduction to lesson

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

Key Verse:

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Spirits of Destruction

“Jealousy and Envy” – October 6, 2019

Lesson – “Envy and Strife”

Scriptures – Genesis 4:1-8

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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“Jealousy and Envy” – October 13, 2019

Lesson – “Moved With Envy”

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

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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“Jealousy and Envy” – October 20, 2019

Lesson – “Envy and Rivalry”

Scriptures – 1 Samuel 18:5-16

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

As a commanding officer in Saul’s army, David was full of wisdom.

What was his reputation among the people? (v. 5)

When Saul and David returned from fighting with the Philistines, what did the women sing? (vv. 6-7)

Why was Saul so upset? (v. 8)

How did Saul feel about David after this? (v. 9)

What did Saul’s jealousy and envy provoke him to do? (vv. 10-11)

What happened to Saul’s and David’s relationship after this? (vv. 12-13)

Why was Saul so threatened by David? (vv. 14-16)

Think about it:

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

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Spirits of Destruction

“Jealousy and Envy” – October 27, 2019

Lesson – “A Self Destructive Spirit”
Scriptures – John 11:45-53; 12:10-19

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – November 3, 2019

Lesson – “Spirit of Love

Scriptures – 1 John 4:7-12

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

Why should Christians love one another? (v. 7)

Name two things that “loving one another” demonstrates? (v. 7)

Why does love show that we know God? (v. 8)

How do we know and understand God’s love? (v. 9; John 3:16)

Why is it possible for us to love God? (vv. 10, 19)

Why should we love one another? (v. 11; 1 John 3:16)

When we love one another, what two things do people see in us? (v. 12)

Think about it:

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

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – November 10, 2019

Lesson – “Spirit of Truth”

Scriptures – Eph. 5:8-13

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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“Spirit of the Church” – November 17, 2019

Lesson – “Spirit of Holiness”

Scriptures – Psalm 93:1-5

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

With what is the Lord clothed or covered? (Ps. 93:1)

What did the Lord establish? (v. 1) What was established even before the world? (v. 2)

The creation is vast and powerful. The Psalmist gives the sea and waves as an example of its might. But what is mightier and more powerful than the creation? (vv. 3-4)

Distinct from all of his creation, what did the Lord establish on the earth? (v. 5)

What is the unchanging principle of God’s house? (v. 5)

Think about it:

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

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – November 24, 2019

Lesson – “Spirit of Unity”

Scriptures – Genesis 11:1-9

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

In the land of Shinar, what was communication like among the people? (vv. 1-2)

When they began building a city and a tower, what goal and purpose did the people have in mind? (vv. 3-4)

When the Lord came down to see their construction, how did he describe the people? (vv. 5-6a)

Clearly, the people were united. They were all speaking the same language, and they were working together for one main purpose. What did God say about them that shows the strength of their unity? (v. 6b)

Though their unity was impressive, were their actions pleasing to the Lord? (vv. 7-9)

When do you think unity among people would become displeasing to God?

Think about it:

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

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Doctrine of the Church

“Spirit of the Church” – December 1, 2019

Lesson – “Spirit of Prayer”

Scriptures – Mark 11:15-17

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Doctrine of the Church

“The Church Covenant” – December 8, 2019

Lesson – “A Solemn Promise”

Scriptures – Matthew 12:33-37

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

How do you determine the goodness of a tree? (v. 33)

What is the fruit of a Christian life?

How do you know a true Christian?

Because of their evil speaking, what did Jesus call the Pharisees (religious leaders)? (v. 34)

Where is the source of our words – where do our words come from? (v. 34)

What kind of words come out of a good heart? (v. 35)

What kind of words come out of an evil heart? (v. 35)

Obviously, our words are important because they reflect what is in our hearts. Give another reason our words are important? (v. 36)

What kind of words will justify us (or prove that we are right before God) on the Day of Judgment? (v. 37)

Think about it:

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

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Doctrine of the Church

“The Church Covenant” – December 15, 2019

Lesson – “Authority of the Scriptures”

Scriptures – Matthew 4:1-11

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Doctrine of the Church

“The Church Covenant” – December 22, 2019

Lesson – “Walking Together”

Scriptures – Eph. 5:1-11

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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Doctrine of the Church

“The Church Covenant” – December 29, 2019

Lesson – “Giving Your Best”

Scriptures – Galatians 6:1-5

Introduction to lesson

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

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

Questions to Discuss:

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

Think about it:

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

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