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Basic Bible Teachings

“Conviction” – January 5, 2020

Lesson – What Is Conviction?

Scriptures – Luke 18:9-14

Introduction to lesson

The whole idea of salvation depends on someone recognizing his need to be saved. How does an individual come to know that he/she is a sinner and needs to be saved from this awful condition? In Acts 2, Peter preached a powerful message of Christ crucified and resurrected (vv. 31-36). After hearing the Word of God, something changed in those that heard him. They no longer felt good about themselves. When they heard the Truth, they became convicted or “pricked in their heart” like a sharp object stabbing them (v. 37). Conviction makes us feel bad on the inside. It’s an unpleasant and uncomfortable experience. Through conviction, we recognize our sin and our need to be saved from sin.

Key Verse: “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Questions to Discuss:

- Why did Jesus teach this parable? (v. 9)
- How would you compare a Pharisee (religious leader) and a publican (tax collector)? Why did these men go to the temple? (v. 10)
- How did the Pharisee look at himself? How did he compare himself to other men? (v. 11)
- What did he take pride in? (v. 12)
- How did the publican’s actions demonstrate that he was humble? (v. 13)
- What was the publican’s prayer? How did the publican see himself? (v. 13)
- How do you think he compared himself to others?
- Which one was justified (righteous before God)?
- Why was he acceptable to the Lord? (v. 14)
- What kind of attitude does the Lord want from us?

Think about it:

In this parable, Jesus describes two people: a Pharisee who saw himself as righteous and a publican who saw himself as a sinner. In the experience of conviction, an individual sees himself/herself as a sinner, as being sinful. The publican stood alone to himself with his head bowed, beating himself in the chest, and pleading for God’s mercy. The publican’s response to God demonstrates true conviction. Salvation by God’s grace begins with true conviction, when we see our sin and our need to be saved by Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches us the hope of salvation that we have in Jesus: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

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Basic Bible Teachings “Conviction” – January 12, 2020 Lesson – The Basis of Conviction Scriptures – Luke 5:1-11

Introduction to lesson

In conviction, we recognize our own sin and our need to be saved from sin. Conviction is therefore based on seeing ourselves for who we are – sinners, lost without God. But it is also based on seeing God for who he is – holy and separate from sin. God is not like sinful man; rather, he is perfect in all of his ways. Sinners truly understand the unholy nature of sin inside of them only through first seeing God’s perfect holiness outside of them. Jesus Christ is our perfect example of holiness – he never sinned. The contrast between a holy God and an unholy person, along with God’s expectation for him to be holy (1 Peter 1:16), makes conviction possible. In today’s lesson, we will see how Peter was convicted when he encountered the Lord.

Key Verse: “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- What did the people want from Jesus? (v. 1)
- What were the fishermen doing at this point? What does that tell us? (v. 2)
- After Jesus taught the Word of God to the people from Simon Peter’s ship, why did Jesus tell Peter to launch out into the deep? What was Jesus wanting Peter to understand? (vv. 3-4)
- Why was Peter so reluctant to go fishing? (v. 5)
- Why did Peter go anyway? (v. 5)
- When Peter obeyed the Word of God, what happened? (v. 6)
- What four things describe the size of the “great multitude of fishes?” (vv. 6-7)
- This catch was indeed miraculous (see verse 9). Peter understood that the miracle happened because he obeyed the words of Jesus Christ. What did Peter do first, which shows that he recognized Jesus as more than a mere man, like himself?
- How did Peter see himself in comparison to Jesus Christ? (v. 8)
- Is the purpose of conviction only to cause us to fear God? What is the ultimate purpose of conviction? (vv. 10-11)

Think about it: Peter saw that Jesus Christ was holy, while he himself was not. He recognized this difference because of the power of Jesus’ words. When he obeyed Jesus, he experienced something beyond his belief – an enormous catch of fish. This miraculous experience convicted Peter of his own sinfulness. Being convicted, his experience moved him to fear the Lord. But even more, it moved him to follow Jesus Christ. Conviction is a necessary part of true salvation and moves us to serve the Lord.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Conviction” – January 19, 2020

Lesson – Convicted by the Holy Ghost
Scriptures – John 16:5-9

Introduction to lesson

In John 3:17-19, Jesus explained that he did not come into the world to condemn it (v. 17). People actually bring condemnation and judgment on themselves through rejecting the light of Jesus Christ and his truth (vv. 18-19). “Casting stones” at people is not the way to get them to do right (Jn. 8:1-11). We sometimes want to shame them into changing their ways by placing guilt on them. But it doesn’t work. People have to see the error of their ways for themselves. This requires conviction. As we studied last week, the basis of conviction is God’s holiness. Certainly, as Christians, we have a responsibility to point others to a holy God. We should live consistent to God’s Word. We should speak the truth, maintain a good witness, and live a godly lifestyle. Nevertheless, how does a sinner come to understand a holy God? Through what power or by what means does anything we do or say become a source of conviction and reproof?

Key Verse: “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (Jn. 16:8).

Questions to Discuss:

- Where was Jesus going in the near future? (vv. 5, 10)
- How did the news of his departure affect his disciples? (v. 6)
- What did Jesus always speak (tell)? (v. 7)
- What truth did Jesus want them to understand about his departing?
- What would have happened if Jesus had not gone away? (v. 7)
- Who is the Comforter? (v. 7, John 14:15-17, 26)
- What happened after Jesus departed? (v. 7; Acts 1:8-9; 2:1-4)
- What is the work of the Holy Ghost? (v. 8) Name three ways he reproves the world? (v. 8)
- Finally, why does he show the world its sinfulness? (v. 9)

Think about it: The very purpose of seeing one’s own sinfulness is to come to faith and salvation in Jesus Christ. The Lord wants people to be saved. He does not want them to be condemned, but rather to have eternal life. The Baptism with the Holy Ghost is for every believer. The Spirit gives power and authority to the church. He is working in and through the church to bring conviction and reproof to the lost world, so that sinners will be saved. We have no need to be condemning and judgmental of sinners. We do not have to argue with people over right and wrong. All we have to do is live and speak the truth, boldly and without compromise. The Holy Ghost will do the rest. He is the one who convicts and convinces people of their need to be saved.

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Basic Bible Teachings “Conviction” – January 26, 2020

Lesson – Isaiah Experiences Conviction Scriptures – Isaiah 6:1-7

Introduction to lesson

How we see ourselves is shaped by conditions outside of us. For example, if I am tall, I only know this because another person is short. If I am clumsy, I know this because others are coordinated. If I am wrong, I know this because someone else is right. However, if everyone is wrong, then being wrong is normal and I cannot detect my error. In other words, the only way we know ourselves is in relationship to knowing others. Likewise, we cannot see ourselves in darkness (in the absence of light). But we see ourselves clearly in the presence of light as it shines on us. Again, we need an outside source to make sense of ourselves. Our ability to see and to know ourselves is dependent on an outside factor – something beyond us. This is the way conviction works. We see ourselves accurately only when we see ourselves in the light of God. One of the best examples of conviction in the Bible is Isaiah’s experience when he saw a vision of God. You may not have seen a vision like Isaiah’s, but in conviction you see God in the same way that Isaiah saw the Lord.

Key Verse: “Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

Questions to Discuss:

- Describe Isaiah’s vision of God. (v. 1)
- When the Seraphim flew above the throne, why do you think they covered their face and feet with their wings? (v. 2)
- What did this vision of God personally reveal to Isaiah? (v. 3)
- How did God’s glory physically manifest in the temple? (v. 4)
- After Isaiah saw God in all of his holiness and glory, how did he see himself in comparison to God? (v. 5) Why did he see himself as undone and unclean? (v. 5)
- How did seeing God and his holiness help Isaiah? What did God do for Isaiah when he confessed his sin? (vv. 6- 7)

Think about it: The Spirit shined the light of God into Isaiah’s darkness. Through his vision, he was convicted or reproved. He saw God clearly; and through seeing God in his holiness, Isaiah saw his own sin and iniquity. Like the situation of Isaiah, while conviction causes us to see the greatness of our own sin, it also prepares us to experience the greatness of God’s love and mercy. When we confess and genuinely repent of our sins, God graciously forgives. Thus, conviction by the Holy Ghost is vitally important to experiencing salvation through Jesus Christ.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Repentance” – February 2, 2020

Lesson – “What Shall We Do?”

Scriptures – Acts 2:22-38

Introduction to lesson

In Acts chapter two, Luke recorded a brief history of the events surrounding the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Just as Jesus promised, at least one hundred and twenty saints were baptized with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. After being baptized with the Holy Ghost, Peter powerfully preached the Word of God: Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected. Through Peter’s anointed preaching on that day, the Holy Ghost reproved (convicted) the people when they heard the Truth. The title of today’s lesson explains the question that Holy Ghost conviction stirs within our hearts. Before the Spirit reproved us of our sins, we were not aware of God’s judgment against us. But after being convicted, we no longer feel good about ourselves. Today’s lesson explains the right response to conviction by the Holy Ghost.

Key Verse: *“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)*

Questions to Discuss:

- What was Peter’s main message for the people? (vv. 22-24)
- When the patriarch David prophesied, who was he talking about? (vv. 25-28)
- Who did God promise would sit on the throne of David? (vv. 29-30)
- What did God reveal to David about the Christ? (v. 31)
- Who did Peter declare was indeed the Christ, and what was his proof that he was the Christ? (v. 32)
- What was Peter’s explanation for all that happened on the day of Pentecost? (v. 33)
- When David prophesied, he was not speaking of himself. Who did David see exalted at the right hand of God? (vv. 34-36)
- When Peter finished preaching, what impact did the Truth have on the people? What was their immediate response? (v. 37)
- What did Peter tell them to do in response to God’s reproof (conviction by the Holy Ghost)? (v. 38)

Think about it:

Repentance simply means to turn or change. It is a change in the heart of a sinner. True conviction causes a sinner to wrestle with his sinful condition: “What shall I do – what should I do about my sin and guilt?” The obvious answer is to stop sinning – to turn away from one’s sinful ways and to turn to God (Ezekiel 33:9, 11). Through the conviction of the Word and Spirit, God is calling sinners to repent.

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“Repentance” – February 9, 2020

Lesson – “True Confession”

Scriptures – Luke 19:1-10

Introduction to lesson

How would you like for someone to say to you, “I know I did you wrong, but I cannot or will not do anything to change my behavior toward you?” This statement shows some level of confession – it admits guilt. I did wrong. But it does not show genuine repentance. Remember from last week: repentance means to turn or change. It’s a change of heart, and it means to turn away from one’s sin and to turn toward God. I may know that I did wrong, but am I willing to change? In my heart, do I really intend to change my ways? When a person truly confesses, he admits his guilt with a sincere intent to change or correct his wrong behavior. In today’s lesson, we will see an example of a true confession.

Key Verse: *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).*

Questions to Discuss:

- Publicans or tax collectors were known as swindlers, taking more money than they should, and therefore, the Jews labeled them as sinners. What would lead us to believe that Zacchaeus was dishonest in his taxing practices? (v. 2)
- What desire was in the heart of Zacchaeus? How do you know his desire was sincere? (vv. 3-4)
- How did Jesus know his name? What did Jesus have in mind for Zacchaeus? (v. 5)
- What impact did this have on Zacchaeus? (v. 6)
- How did the people look at Zacchaeus, and how did they react when Jesus went to his home? (v. 7)
- How do we know that Zacchaeus saw himself as a sinner? (v. 8)
- What was the proof that Zacchaeus had a change of heart? (v. 8)
- Did Jesus respect Zacchaeus’ intentions? (v. 9)

Think about it:

Jesus came to save the lost and sinners (v. 10). Zacchaeus was a known sinner. But when he met Jesus Christ, he had a change of heart. He did not want to do wrong anymore. He desired to change and correct his behavior. This is what we call genuine repentance: confession with a change of attitude and behavior. Genuine repentance says, “I know I did you wrong, but with God’s help I am going to do you right from this point forward.” Like Zacchaeus, those who come to Jesus Christ, admitting and turning away from their sins, will reap the mercy of God (Proverbs 28:13).

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“Repentance” – February 16, 2020

Lesson – “Changed Conduct”

Scriptures – Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:10-18

Introduction to lesson

Today’s lesson is all about the word “change.” When Jesus Christ saves us, we change. Salvation is a radical, life-changing experience. The Bible uses a number of contrasting ideas to help us understand the nature of this great change in our lives: death to life; darkness to light; sinner to saint; enemy to friend; and so on. Can you think of any others? In 2 Corinthians 5:17, the apostle Paul emphasized the radical change of salvation when he wrote, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new.” Clearly, we are called to “walk in newness of life” (Ro. 6:4). This is what it means to repent.

Key Verse: *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mk. 1:15).*

Questions to Discuss:

- The word “gospel” means good news. It refers to the good news of salvation. Who is the central figure of the gospel? (Mk. 1:1) Who was sent to preach and prepare the way of Christ? (Mk. 1:2-4)
- When John was in the wilderness baptizing disciples, what message did he preach? (Mk. 1:4; see also Matthew 3:1-2)
- When the people believed his message and were baptized, what else did they do? (Mk. 1:5)
- Repentance includes confession or admission of sin and guilt. But John wanted more than an admission of guilt; he also wanted to see the evidence of a changed life (changed conduct). He told the multitude to “bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance” (Lu. 3:8). When the people asked, “What shall we do then,” what did John tell them to do? (Lu. 3:10-14)
- When John preached repentance (changed conduct) and baptized disciples, who was he pointing the people to believe in? (Mark 1:7-8; Lu. 3:15-18)

Think about it:

Repentance (changed conduct) is an important part of the gospel of salvation. After John was imprisoned, Jesus began to preach the good news of the kingdom, saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mk. 1:15). Believing is only part of our salvation; repentance is the other part. To believe the good news of Jesus Christ and be baptized, and even to confess our sins, without real repentance, accomplishes little toward salvation. When we repent, we turn from our old way (sin) and we turn toward God’s way (righteousness). Repentance is a true change of heart that affects the way we live out our lives.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Repentance” – February 23, 2020

Lesson – “Godly Sorrow”

Scriptures – Psa. 51:1-17

Introduction to lesson

In Luke 17:3-4, Jesus said, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” Certainly, these verses teach us a great lesson about forgiveness. We are called to forgive completely because we have been forgiven completely. But these verses also raise a question about genuine repentance. Is saying “I repent” or “I’m sorry,” even repeatedly, the same as genuine repentance? The Bible says, “No.” Paul declared, “Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.” True repentance, the kind that brings forth salvation and lasting change, requires godly sorrow. Let’s look at David as an example of godly sorrow and true repentance.

Key Verse: *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Co. 7:10).*

Questions to Discuss:

- Why did David write this psalm? (vv. 1-3)
- Who did David offend? Who did he sin against? Who could see his sinful heart? (vv. 4-6)
- What did he want God to do for him? (v. 7)
- What did he want God to restore? (vv. 8, 12)
- What did David ask the Lord to do about his sins? (v. 9)
- What did he desire the Lord to do inside of him? (v. 10)
- What did he not want the Lord to do? (v. 11)
- Through God’s salvation, what did David pledge to do? (v. 13)
- What does salvation cause us to do? (vv. 14-15)
- What does the Lord desire from us? (vv. 16-17)

Think about it:

Many people feel bad about themselves because of the wrong they’re doing. Their sinful ways cause them much sorrow, but such sorrow does not change their wicked ways. However, when people experience the reproof (conviction) of the Holy Ghost, they see themselves as sinful and undone before God. Such guilt produces a godly kind of sorrow in their hearts. David described it as having a broken and contrite heart in Psalm 51:17. David was overwhelmed by a deep sense of sorrow for his sin and transgression, not only against man, but even more against God – a sorrow and brokenness that only God can heal. The apostle Paul described this experience as being “made sorry after a godly manner” (2 Cor. 7:9). This kind of sorrow in the heart gives an individual the right motivation to change or repent. In other words, when an individual is grieved about his sin in the same way God is grieved by his sin, he is moved to stop sinning. This conviction of the Holy Ghost produces the sorrowful motivation for real repentance and change in one’s heart.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Justification” – March 1, 2020

Lesson – “Giving Your Best”

Scriptures – Rom. 2:1-12

Introduction to lesson

When we talk about salvation, or being saved, we are actually referring to several things at once. For example, conviction (when God’s Spirit causes us to see our own sinfulness before God) and repentance (when we confess and forsake our sins) are both a part of our salvation. Likewise, justification is also a part of being saved. While justification is a big word, its basic meaning is found in the smaller word, just. The basic meaning of just is “right.” Through justification, those who repent of their sins are made right before God. Why is justification a necessary part of being saved? Why must we be made right before God? In today’s lesson, the apostle Paul explains why sinners must be made righteous through Jesus Christ. In Romans chapter two, he writes about sinners who justify themselves, but are in fact, guilty before God.

Key Verse: *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).*

Questions to Discuss:

- Often, people judge another person’s sin, but at the same time, they are not willing to accept and deal with their own sin issues. Can any sinner make himself right before God? (v. 1)
- Who has the authority to judge sin? (v. 2)
- Will any sinner escape God’s judgment? (v. 3)
- When God does not judge, but rather shows mercy, what opportunity does he give to the sinner? (v. 4)
- When people do not repent, but continue in their sinful ways, what are they doing to themselves? (v. 5)
- How (what) will God judge? (v. 6)
- Who will receive eternal life? (vv. 7, 10)
- Who will receive indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish? (vv. 8 - 9)
- Does God show special favoritism when he judges? (v. 11)

Think about it:

In Romans chapter two, the apostle Paul does a great job of demonstrating that no sinner escapes God’s judgment. Every sinner will give an account of himself to God, whether he has done good or bad. Why does Paul go on and on about man’s sin and God’s judgment? He eventually declares, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Ro. 3:23). “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Ro. 3:10). The whole world is guilty before God (Ro. 3:19). In fact, God will judge all sinners, whether they have known his written law, like the Jews, or whether they have been ignorant of his written Word, like so many sinners today (Ro. 2:12). Therefore, all people are sinners and need to be saved. All people are wrong and they must be made right before God. But Paul wants us to understand that we cannot make ourselves righteous. If we understand that we are wrong, and we can’t make ourselves right, then how can we become right? God has provided us the way to be made right before him through his Son, Jesus Christ. Put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Justification” – March 8, 2020

Lesson – “The Basis of Justification”

Scriptures – Romans 5:6-9

Introduction to lesson

How is justification made possible? The apostle Paul declared, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). Through Adam’s disobedience, all are made sinners, but through Christ’s obedience, believers are made righteous. What obedience was Paul talking about? Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, saying, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). In today’s lesson, let’s consider what the death of Christ did for us.

Key Verse: *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:9).*

Questions to Discuss:

- What did Jesus Christ do when we could not help ourselves? (v. 6)
- Who did he die for? (v. 6) When did he give his life? (v. 6)
- Are we willing to give our lives (die) for others? If a person was really good or really important, would it make any difference? Why or why not? (v. 7)
- What motivated Jesus Christ to die for us? (v. 8)
- When the Bible says that Jesus died for us, what kind of people did he die for? (v. 9) When Jesus died, he shed his blood. What did his blood accomplish for us? (v. 9; 1 John 1:7)
- What did justification by his blood save us from? (v. 9)

Think about it:

Our justification is not based on religious rituals or any acts of worship. The Bible offers no substitute for the blood of Christ. The righteousness of the saints is made possible only through faith in Jesus’ shed blood. His blood is the basis of God’s plan of salvation from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). The blood of Christ and the preaching of the cross are the central message and theme of the church of God. To remove the blood from our message or even to minimize its importance is to deny the very source of our salvation and righteousness. The old hymn, Power in the Blood, says, “Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? There’s power in the blood, power in the blood; sin stains are lost in its life-giving flow; there’s wonderful power in the blood. There is power, power, wonder-working power in the blood of the Lamb; there is power, power wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.”

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Justification” – March 15, 2020

Lesson – “Justified by Faith”

Scriptures – Galatians 3:6-14

Introduction to lesson

In Romans 4:20-22, Paul spoke of Abraham, saying, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” As we have already studied, justification can be defined as being made righteous before God. Paul wrote, “it was imputed to him for righteousness.” By what means was Abraham made right with God? Let’s consider Abraham’s righteousness as an example for us today.

Key Verse: *“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Ga. 3:11).*

Questions to Discuss:

How was Abraham made right with God? (v. 6)

In what way are Christians today the children of Abraham? (v. 7)

How are the heathen (sinners) made right with God? (v. 8)

How can all people enter into the blessings of Abraham? (v. 9; v. 14)

In the many world religions, people seek to be right with God through keeping some code of conduct. The Jewish religion bases its righteousness on keeping the law (requirements) of the Old Testament. Why are they under a curse? (v. 10)

Is anyone made right by attempting to keep the law (or any other set of rules and regulations)? How does God explain righteousness? (vv. 11-12; Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:16-17; 3:22)

Since no one can measure up to God’s requirements under the law, who can deliver us from the curse of failing to keep the law of the Old Testament? How are we delivered from the curse (v. 13)

Think about it:

God gave the law of the Old Testament to bring all of us to our need for a Savior. He knew that no one could ever measure up to his requirements, that is, no one but Jesus. Of course, if nobody could measure up, then this made everyone guilty (Romans 3:19-20). So righteousness has never come by keeping the law. Instead, righteousness only comes through faith in God’s Word. In the same way that Abraham believed God’s Word, and was accounted righteous, today we also believe God’s Word and are made right with God. Abraham looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, while we look back to the cross of Christ, trusting in God’s Word for our salvation. Nothing we can do on our own can save us. But we are made right through faith in Jesus Christ. By faith we are justified, and by faith we obey and follow after Jesus.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Justification” – March 22, 2020

Lesson – “Faith in God’s Promise”

Scriptures – Luke 1:30-38

Introduction to lesson

Today’s lesson is a follow-up to last week’s lesson on justification by faith. The purpose of this lesson is to emphasize faith in God’s Promise. While Mary and Joseph were betrothed, Mary “was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Mt. 1:18). Joseph would have legally broken their betrothal, but the angel of the Lord stopped him, saying, “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Mt. 1:20). The Christ child was no ordinary baby. Who was he? Who did God promise that the Christ would be when he came into this world?

Key Verse: *“For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).*

Questions to Discuss:

- The name “Jesus” means savior or deliverer. Who named the Christ? What was the significance of naming him “Jesus?” Based on his name, who was the Christ? (vv. 30-31; Mt. 1:21)
- Pick out the main, descriptive words in verses 32-33. What do these words have in common? Based on these words, who was the Christ? (vv. 32-33)
- How did Mary, a virgin, have a child? (vv. 34-35)
- Being of the Holy Ghost, who would this holy child be? (v. 35)
- What did the miracle of Christ’s birth prove? (v. 37)
- What did Mary’s response to God’s Promise prove? (v. 38)

Think about it:

Jesus taught, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mk. 9:23). Mary believed the Promise of God, saying, “. . . be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). Her cousin, Elisabeth, spoke by the Holy Ghost, saying, “And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord” (v. 45). No doubt, Mary did not fully understand the great mystery of Jesus’ birth, but she embraced and believed the Word of God, receiving the Promise by faith. She believed that God could do the impossible. She believed that her baby would be the Son of God, the King, and the Savior. Mary’s faith in God’s Promise demonstrates righteousness (justification) through faith in the Word of God. Like Abraham, she also believed and was justified by faith.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Justification” – March 29, 2020

Lesson – “The Results of Justification”

Scriptures – Romans 5:1-2, 9-10

Introduction to lesson

Justification is a necessary part of our salvation experience because of the past sins we have committed. If an individual repented today and stopped sinning from this point forward, without justification he/she would still be guilty because of past sins committed. Being guilty before God, we must be justified or made right in his sight. Our justification is made possible through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 2:2). Through faith in Christ’s sacrifice, we are justified righteous before God. When we accept what Jesus did for us on the cross, repenting and placing our faith in him, our sins are forgiven and we are made righteous. What is the result of being justified and forgiven?

Key Verse: *“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isaiah 32:17).*

Questions to Discuss:

- Explain how we are justified? In other words, by what and through whom are we justified? (v. 1)
- In addition to forgiveness, what does justification also do for us? (v. 1)
- How do we stand in this grace or continue in peace with God? (v. 2)
- When we are justified by faith, why do we rejoice? (v. 2)
- When we are justified through Christ, what are we saved from? (v. 9)
- What kind of relationship did we have with God before being justified? (v. 10)
- What does it mean to have peace with God? (v. 10)
- Jesus’ death made our peace with God possible. Now that we have peace with God, how will we be saved? (v. 10)

Think about it:

We believe in the atoning work of Jesus on the cross. He died and shed his blood to take away our sins. When we repent and place our faith in his sacrifice, our sins are forgiven and we have peace with God. His death has reconciled us to God. We are no longer enemies of God, but friends. Our faith is firmly placed in his shed blood for our salvation. Nevertheless, we do not trust in a dead Savior, but in a living Lord. We believe that we are reconciled to God and have peace with God through Jesus’ death, but much more, we are saved by his life. We believe in a risen Savior who lives forevermore. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are saved.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Regeneration” – April 5, 2020

Lesson – Spiritual Death

Scriptures – Ephesians 2:1-6

Introduction to lesson

In the beginning, God made man in his own image. Adam and Eve were perfect creations. They were created to live forever – to enjoy the life that God had given them. The Lord told them that they could eat of every tree in the Garden of Eden, except one: the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God said, “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Nevertheless, they disobeyed the Word of God and ate of the forbidden fruit. The results were disastrous. Through Adam’s transgression, sin entered the human race. Furthermore, God’s penalty for sin was death. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). In today’s lesson, let’s consider the spiritual death caused by sin.

Key Verse: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Questions to Discuss:

- What has God done for the believer? (v. 1)
- How did Paul refer to the Ephesians before they believed?
- What kind of death was Paul writing about? (v. 1)
- Describe the spirit that works in the sinner? (v. 2)
- How did Paul describe sinners? (v. 3)
- Why did God make a way for sinners to be saved? (v. 4)
- Describe what it means to be saved by grace? (v. 5)
- What did Paul mean by being “raised up?” (v. 6)
- As Christians, where do we now sit? (v. 6)

Think about it:

The penalty of natural death has passed to all people through sin – “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Romans 5:12). Because of sin, we physically die. Yet there is another side to the penalty of sin – spiritual death – being “dead in trespasses and sins.” The very moment Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he spiritually died. The apostle Paul taught, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Because of sin, people are spiritually dead. But Jesus Christ has made a way for us to have eternal life – “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro. 6:23). By faith in Jesus’ shed blood, our sins can be forgiven (justification), and we can be raised up to spiritual life in Christ (regeneration).

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Regeneration” – April 12, 2020

Lesson – Spiritual Resurrection

Scriptures – John 3:16; 5:24; 11:23-26

Introduction to lesson

The apostle Paul wrote about the lost human condition as being spiritually dead. He described this spiritual death as being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). He placed those who are spiritually dead under God’s judgment and called them “by nature the children of [God’s] wrath” (Ep. 2:3). In short, sinners abide in death and judgment. However, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and through faith in his atoning blood, God restores life to every believer. In today’s lesson, we will see that regeneration is spiritual resurrection – God’s solution to spiritual death.

Key Verse: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life” (John 5:24).

Questions to Discuss:

- What does believing in Jesus Christ deliver us from? (Jn. 3:16)
- What does believing in Jesus Christ do for us? (Jn. 3:16)
- What two things are necessary to have everlasting life? (Jn. 5:24)
- When we are given eternal (everlasting) life, what are we delivered from? (Jn. 5:24)
- When we are given everlasting life through Jesus Christ, what has happened to us? (v. 24)
- In John 11:23, Jesus told Martha that Lazarus will rise again. Did Martha believe in the resurrection (being raised to life)? (Jn. 11:24; see also Jn. 5:28-29)
- How did Jesus explain resurrection and life? Who is the giver of life? How do we receive life? (Jn. 11:25)
- On this occasion, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11:43-45), but of course, naturally, Lazarus physically died again when his time came. Therefore, what kind of life (and death) is Jesus really talking about in verse 26? (Jn. 11:26)

Think about it:

Our natural bodies perish because of sin (Ge. 3:19; Ro. 5:12), but through Jesus Christ we have spiritual life, even eternal life. Our bodies die, but our souls never die, because Jesus Christ is our resurrection and life. Through him, we are regenerated and live forever. In fact, all who believe and have life through Christ will be given new bodies in the resurrection of life and at the rapture when Jesus comes for his church (Jn. 5:29; 1 Co. 15:50-53; Ph. 3:20-21; 1 Th. 4:14-18).

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Regeneration” – April 19, 2020

Lesson – You Must Be Born Again

Scriptures – John 3:1-8

Introduction to lesson

Jesus taught, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 7:21). Thus, he taught the difference between true salvation and merely having a profession of faith in God. No doubt, many people’s professions are false and self-righteous. They are religious, but their hearts have not been changed. However, regeneration (being born again) is an act of God’s will in our lives (Jn. 1:13; Titus 3:5-7). We are not saved because we have a profession of faith and do righteous works, but rather, we have a profession of faith and do righteous works because we are saved, having been born again to new life.

Key Verse: “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7).

Questions to Discuss:

- Describe Nicodemus. (vv. 1-2)
- What did Nicodemus think of Jesus? (v. 2)
- What did Jesus say was the requirement for seeing God’s kingdom? (v. 3)
- Did Nicodemus understand Jesus? What kind of birth did he think Jesus was talking about? (v. 4)
- What is the one word that explains exactly what Jesus meant by being born again? (v. 5, see also verse 6 and 8)
- What is Jesus contrasting in verse six? (v. 6)
- What is “born again?” What kind of birth is it? Why must we be born again? (v. 7)
- Describe the wind. (v. 8)
- How is the work of the Spirit like the movement of the wind? (v. 8)
- When we are born again, of whom are we born? (v. 8) When someone is born again, how do we know it?

Think about it:

Being born again, or the new birth, refers to regeneration. It is a spiritual birth. Experiencing new life in Jesus Christ comes through being born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:8). Jesus emphasized this spiritual birth through contrasting it with the fleshly, natural birth. Nicodemus needed to understand that neither his position as a Jewish leader nor even his Jewish lineage were sufficient to gain him a place in the kingdom of God. Salvation is not received on the basis of natural birth or by our human will, but we must be regenerated by the Spirit of God. Regeneration is a spiritual transformation in the heart of the believer through placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Regeneration” – April 26, 2020

Lesson – The Blessings of Regeneration Scriptures – 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Introduction to lesson

Being convicted by the Spirit of personal sinfulness, an individual repents, calling on the name of Jesus, and he is justified (forgiven) and regenerated (given life) by God. We call this genuine salvation. When a person is regenerated, he experiences a radical change. Regeneration is that experience of receiving new life through faith in the work of Jesus Christ. A person passes from death to life, and it happens in a moment. In today’s lesson, let’s consider the spiritual blessings of regeneration. These blessings give witness to the spiritual transformation and change in the born again believer.

Key Verse: “Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

Questions to Discuss:

- Building on the lesson introduction, discuss what it means to be “in Christ.” (v. 17)
- How does the apostle Paul explain “a new creature (creation)?” (v. 17)
- If a person is “in Christ” and is “a new creature,” can he follow after the “old things” he did as a sinner? (v. 17)
- As new creatures in Christ, what will we follow after? What kind of spiritual fruit will we bear? (v. 21; Ep. 5:9; Ga. 5:22-23)
- When we are “in Christ,” what becomes new? (v. 17)
- Who makes “all things” new? (v. 18)
- Who made our newness possible? (v. 18)

Think about it:

When we are regenerated by faith in Jesus Christ, experiencing new life in Christ, everything changes – all things become new. We are brought into a new relationship with God – we are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ (2 Co. 5:18-20). We are no longer the same person. We may look the same on the outside, but our inner man has been radically transformed by God. We are made completely new in Christ. Attitudes and actions change; purposes and goals change; practices and habits change. As new creatures in Christ, we receive many spiritual blessings – the fruit of the Spirit. Because of Christ, we experience love, joy, and peace, as well as many other spiritual blessings (Ga. 5:22-23). The righteous fruit of Christ in our hearts opens up a whole new world.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Sanctification” – May 3, 2020

Lesson – What Is Sanctification?

Scriptures – Romans 6:1-7

Introduction to lesson

Not only was Jesus’ blood shed for our justification (forgiveness of sins committed) and our regeneration (new life in Christ), but also for our sanctification (deliverance from the power of sin). But understand that God cannot sanctify anyone who does not desire to do any better. At the same time, we can weary ourselves trying to do better, but still fail to be sanctified. Instead, sanctification is a spiritual blessing. It is the work of God in our hearts. Only Jesus Christ can sanctify and deliver from the power of sin.

Key Verse: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6).

Questions to Discuss:

Does God’s grace (his love and mercy toward us) permit a Christian to continue sinning? (vv. 1-2)

When does a person stop sinning? (v. 2)

In verse 3, baptism does not mean “water” baptism. Instead, it refers to the work of the Spirit in placing us into Christ. Water baptism symbolizes this spiritual baptism to which Paul refers. When we are placed into Christ, what else are we baptized into? What should we be dead to? (v. 3)

In the natural, Jesus Christ was crucified (put to death), buried, and then he was raised to new life. When we die to sin, being buried with Christ (spiritually), to what are we raised in Christ? (v. 4)

How does Christ’s death and resurrection illustrate the work of God in the believer? (v. 5)

Paul refers to the “old man” as the sinful nature within us. When we are regenerated to “newness of life,” we must not continue to sin. Since we must stop sinning, what must happen to the “old” sinful man within us? (v. 6)

What results from the crucifying (death) of the old man (sinful nature)? (vv. 6-7)

Think about it:

When we are forgiven (justified) and born again (regenerated), we experience new life in Christ. Through Jesus Christ, we are saved from sin. In fact, he came to destroy the power of sin in our lives. For this reason, we can see why the “old man” or sinful nature must be crucified and put to death. God did not give us “newness of life” only to leave us in the corruption of sin. Instead, he wants us to “walk (live) in the newness of life.” Think about it: there must be a death in order for there to be a resurrection. Sanctification is the death of the sinful nature within us. If a man is dead to sin, then he certainly will not live in sin any longer. Through sanctification, we can have victory in Jesus and walk in the fullness of the Holy Ghost. This does not mean that we cannot sin, but it does mean that we have power to overcome sin. So we do not have to be a punching bag for sin, for Jesus promised to free us from it (Jn. 8:34-36). If you are struggling with sin, then cry out to Jesus Christ and ask him to sanctify your heart.

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“Sanctification” – May 10, 2020

Lesson – The Second Definite Work

Scriptures – Galatians 2:16-21

Introduction to lesson

A conflict of the flesh and the Spirit occurs when we are born again. After being justified and regenerated, the child of God finds within him a battle between the flesh and Spirit – wanting to do right but being pulled to do wrong. Sanctification is the resolution to this conflict. While some people experience sanctification alongside their conversion or perhaps alongside being baptized with the Holy Ghost, it should not be confused with either. It is a second, definite work of God’s grace, following the new birth and preceding the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Key Verse: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Questions to Discuss:

- How are we justified (made right with God)? (v. 16)
- Can we be right with God by keeping his law? (v. 16)
- After being justified by Christ, is it possible to go back into sin? (v. 17)
- Who is to blame if we turn back? (v. 17)
- How do we make ourselves transgressors (sinners)? (v. 18)
- In verse 19, the apostle Paul explains what the law of God actually does. It cannot save us from sin. Instead, it causes us to know that we are sinners (Romans 3:20), so that we might place our faith in Jesus Christ, and through him become dead to the law that condemns us. Therefore, when we die to the law through faith in Jesus Christ, what then can we do? (v. 19)
- By faith in Jesus Christ, we die to the law that condemns us. What word (or experience) does Paul use to explain this death? (v. 20)
- Sanctification is being crucified with Christ, where we no longer live to fulfill the desires of the sinful flesh, but rather we live to please the Lord. How can a person be “crucified” with Christ, yet still live? (v. 20)

Think about it:

In this passage, we can see someone who has been justified, but then he is turning back to sin. In sanctification, our “old man” is crucified or put to death through faith in Jesus Christ. The old man of sin dies, so that the new man of righteousness might live unto God. Sanctification is not the same experience as justification. In justification, we are forgiven and pardoned of sins committed. But in sanctification, the nature of sin (old man) is crucified and put to death. Thus, by faith we are justified, and by faith we are sanctified. If someone who has been justified finds that he is being pulled back to his old lifestyle of sin then he clearly needs to be sanctified by faith. He/she should pray and seek the Lord, placing one’s faith in the blood of his cross, until he obtains victory and power over sin. Only then can we live out the life of faith and righteousness, and experience true joy in the Lord.

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Basic Bible Teachings

“Sanctification” – May 17, 2020

Lesson – How Are We Sanctified

Scriptures – John 17:14-20

Introduction to lesson

Justification (pardon of sins committed) and regeneration (spiritual life in Christ) anticipate and expect sanctification (the death of the old sin nature). In other words, as new believers and followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot continue to walk in sin; but we must walk in righteousness and live a life pleasing to the Lord. Sanctification makes this possible. Through sanctification, we can live holy lives. Like justification and regeneration, we are sanctified through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Sanctification is also a work of the Spirit in our hearts. We experience it as a crisis in a moment through faith in Jesus. So Jesus provided sanctification through his sacrifice, but the Spirit does the work in our hearts. In today’s lesson, we will see that we are not only sanctified by Christ’s blood and by his Spirit, but we are also sanctified by his Word.

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

Questions to Discuss:

- What did Jesus give to his disciples that was so important to their walk with God? (v. 14; see also v. 8)
- Why does the world hate followers of Christ? What makes us different from the world? (v. 14)
- When Jesus says that we are not of this world (v. 16), what does he mean? What is Jesus’ desire for us? (v. 15)
- How are we kept (set apart) from evil? (v. 17)
- What sanctifies us? (v. 17)
- Although we are not of this world, where has Jesus sent us, and for what purpose are we sent? (v. 18)
- When Jesus sanctified himself or set himself apart to God, what was he demonstrating to us? (v. 19)
- How do we know that sanctification is for all believers? (v. 20)

Think about it:

We are sanctified through faith in Jesus Christ – through faith in what he did for us when he shed his blood on the cross. The Spirit of God does the sanctifying work in our hearts. But remember, we only know what Jesus did for us when we hear the Word of Truth. We only understand righteousness and true holiness when we hear the Word of God. Through hearing and receiving the Word of Truth by faith, we are sanctified. Thus, Jesus prayed for his apostles and for all who would believe on him through their word, that is, through their testimony of the truth. Today, we are still preaching and teaching the Word of Truth that sanctifies us. Through believing the Truth and then walking in it by faith, we can be holy and pleasing to the Lord.

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“Sanctification – May 24, 2020

Lesson – The Will of God

Scriptures – 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Introduction to lesson

In last week’s lesson, we asked the question, “How are we sanctified (set apart to God)?” Clearly, God has provided the way for our sanctification (Hebrews 10:9-10). We are sanctified by the Word and Spirit of God through faith in the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ. Realizing that God has made this provision for us, one might ask, “But is it God’s will that every believer experiences sanctification?” If an individual experiences regeneration (the new birth) but does not seek and experience sanctification in his life, is this God’s will?

Key Verse: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (1 Thessalonians 4:3)..

Questions to Discuss:

- How do we know that the apostle Paul is about to make a serious statement? (v. 1)
- What has Paul taught the saints in the past? (v. 1)
- What was Paul encouraging the church to do? (v. 1)
- Where did Paul’s commandments and teachings come from? (v. 2)
- What is God’s will for us? What was the particular sin that he instructed them to avoid? (v. 3; see also 1 Cor. 6:15-20)
- After we experience sanctification, do we automatically know how to live sanctified (set apart) or must we be taught and instructed, and learn how to live in sanctification? (vv. 4-5)
- What will happen to those who do not live sanctified and separated from sin? (v. 6)
- How then should we live? (v. 7) What is our inward motivation to be holy? (v. 8)

Think about it:

After being saved and even sanctified, we do not know everything about serving God. A sanctified baby in Christ is still a child, and he must grow up in the Lord in order to understand how to walk before the Lord. Children will stumble and fall when trying to walk, but they keep getting back up until they master it. As they gain balance and agility, they learn to run, until finally, they become swift. Children of God who are sanctified have the mind of Christ, yet they must still grow in the Lord, learn how to keep themselves from sin, and learn how to bring glory and honor to Jesus. For this reason, much of the New Testament is instruction and correction, helping us to know how to walk in God’s will. God’s will is our sanctification. Of course, we cannot be holy, until the sin nature is first crucified with Christ. So sanctification is not merely being good enough; for we must be sanctified by the Spirit of God. But also, God cannot sanctify anyone who refuses to set himself apart from sin. We know that sanctification is a second definite work of grace in the life of the believer, but we also know that each believer must grow in the knowledge of Christ and in the practice of our faith. Therefore, we should seek to experience sanctification, and also pursue a holy life. This is God’s will.

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The Mission of the Church “Mission Models” – May 31, 2020

Lesson – The Separation Model? Scriptures – 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Introduction to lesson

Our understanding of the relationship between the church and the world greatly affects the way we fulfill our mission in the world. As we will see in today’s lesson, God calls the church to be separate from the world. But how far do we take the idea of separation. While separation is Biblical, we must keep in mind God’s burden for the lost condition of humanity. If we separate ourselves to the point that we disconnect ourselves from sinners, how will we reach them with the gospel of Christ? Let’s see what the apostle Paul wrote about being separate.

Key Verse: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

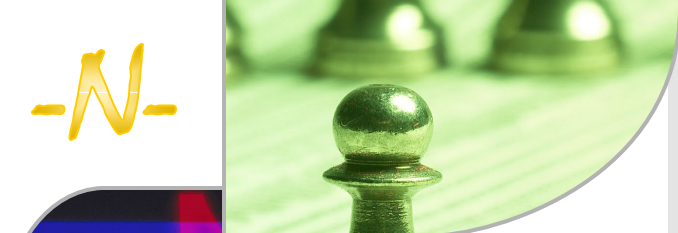
Questions to Discuss:

- Are believers and unbelievers equal (the same)? How are the two different? (v. 14)
- The word “yoked” means “connected.” What is the problem with believers (Christians) being closely connected with unbelievers? What do you think will happen to Christians who spend too much time hanging around sinful people? (v. 14)
- Can Christians take part in the lifestyle and practices of sinners, yet remain faithful to the Lord? (vv. 14-16)
- Why must we be different from the world around us? (v. 16)
- What must we do for God to receive us? (v. 17)
- If we separate ourselves from the world and its sinful practices, what does God promise that he will do? (v. 18)

Think about it:

Being “separate” from sinners is Biblical. We are called out of the world to be different from the world. But “separate” does not mean being completely disconnected from sinners. If we have no fellowship with sinners then we will fail to minister to those who desperately need the Lord. Separation actually means having no fellowship with the sinful ideas and practices of this world. Jesus mercifully reached out to and ministered to sinners. In fact, he came to save sinners. But he also kept himself from sin – he separated himself from the practices of sinners. God has not called us to isolate ourselves, but rather to carry the gospel of salvation to the lost and unbelieving. Clearly, we cannot be separatists and at the same time reach the world for Christ.

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The Mission of the Church “Mission Models” – June 7, 2020

Lesson – The Accommodation Model? Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 9:20-23

Introduction to lesson

While we must separate ourselves from sin, we should not disconnect ourselves from sinners, if we want to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Since separation cannot accomplish the mission of the church, some try to accommodate sinners in order to reach them. Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Accommodation attempts to make the gospel more appealing to the world. They adapt the church and its message to fit the needs of the world, so the world will accept the church. Certainly, we cannot expect sinners to bridge the gap and come to us. We have an obligation to reach out to them and help them to come to Christ. But in reaching the lost, we must not compromise the faith and doctrine of the church. Let’s see what the apostle Paul actually said about identifying with the needs of sinners.

Key Verse: “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Questions to Discuss:

- In ministering to Jews, how did the apostle Paul relate to them? (v. 20)
- Why did he approach them as a fellow Jew? (v. 20)
- How did he approach people who kept the Mosaic Law (law given by Moses)? (v. 20)
- Why did he respect them in this way? (v. 20)
- How did he approach people who did not keep the law? (v. 21)
- Did this mean that Paul was lawless? (v. 21)
- How did he relate to the weak? (v. 22)
- Why did he seek to identify with all people?
- Why did Paul seek to understand people and minister to people just as they were? (vv. 22-23)

Think about it:

Although the apostle Paul ministered to people in this way, do you think he ever compromised who he was or what he believed? Do you think he ever quit being faithful to his convictions? Do you think he bent the truth to win people to Jesus Christ? Although we should do everything in our power to bring people to the Lord, we must never quit being the church that Jesus Christ has called us and commissioned us to be in the world. We are not called to accommodate a sinful world. We are not called to make our message more appealing and acceptable to the world. Instead, we are called to be faithful witnesses in a world that desperately needs to hear the truth spoken in love.

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The Mission of the Church “Mission Models” June 14, 2020

Lesson – The Unification Model? Scriptures – Romans 12:1-2

Introduction to lesson

As Christians, we should love our neighbors as ourselves, just as Jesus commanded us (Matthew 22:39). In the same way Christ loved us, we are called to share Christ’s love with others (1 John 4:7- 11). However, when sharing God’s love with the lost, we must not fail to declare his coming judgment against all sin and unrighteousness. Some people become so extreme about loving their neighbors, they actually lose sight of their first obligation – to love the Lord their God with all of their heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37-38). We can compromise the truth of God’s Word, in order to reach the world. But rather than making true converts, we will bring sinners into the fellowship of the church. What does the mission of the church look like, when the church and the world become united? In today’s lesson, the apostle Paul taught that we must be different from the world. Only then, do we have a mission.

Key Verse: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Ro. 12:2).

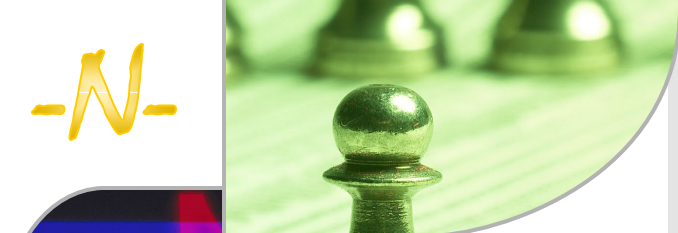
Questions to Discuss:

- How do we know that Paul’s writing is urgent (serious)? (v. 1)
- What should we do with our bodies? (v. 1)
- What one word describes what we should be like? (v. 1)
- When we are holy in our living, how does God see us? (v. 1)
- Is holiness too much for God to ask of us? (v. 1)
- Should we follow the ways of the world? What should be our relationship to the world? (v. 2)
- How does God transform us and make us different from the world around us? (v. 2)
- Why must your mind (thinking, perspective, understanding) be renewed (changed)? (v. 2)

Think about it:

Clearly, in trying to love our neighbors and attempting to reach sinners for Christ, we must not become like the world, in order to win them to the church. The world’s beliefs and practices are not compatible to that of the church. The world is sinful, but the church is sanctified and set apart to Christ alone. The world is in darkness, but the church shines with the light of Christ. The world is under God’s judgment, but the church abides in the saving grace of God. In next week’s lesson, we will see how the church can function in the world without being swallowed up by the world.

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The Mission of the Church “Mission Models” – June 21, 2020

Lesson – The Distinction Model
Scriptures – John 17:6, 9, 11, 13-18

Introduction to lesson

So far, we have looked at three mission models often embraced by Christian groups in the world today. Each model attempts to explain how we should relate to the world around us. While each model uses Scripture to support it, all three models fall short of fulfilling the mission of Christ and the church. Today, we consider the fourth and final mission model, the “Distinction Model: In but Not of the World.” The Lord has sent the church into the world, but he has also set apart his church from the world. In John chapter 17, let’s look at Jesus’ prayer for the church and see how the distinction model works to accomplish God’s mission.

Key Verse: “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil” (John 17:15).

Questions to Discuss:

- When Jesus prayed to the Father, who was he praying for, and who was he not praying for? (vv. 6, 9)
- Why did Jesus say that he was “no more in the world?” (vv. 11, 13)
- Jesus went back (ascended) to the Father after he arose from the dead. He left, but what happened to the church? (vv. 11, 15)
- Why does the world hate us (the church)? (vv. 14, 16)
- Jesus prayed that we should be sanctified, or set apart, through the truth (God’s Word). Believing and practicing God’s Word makes us different from the world. Although we are not of the world, where has Jesus sent us? (vv. 17-18)

Think about it:

Jesus has left the church in the world to finish his mission. He is coming again, but until that time we have work to do. We should tell others about Jesus Christ and stand up for what is right, according to the Word of God. Truly, we are not of this world, but God has called us out of this world to be set apart from the world. Because we wholeheartedly follow Jesus and his Word, we are clearly different from the world. Although we are separate and different, Jesus has sent us into the world to fulfill his Great Commission. Thus, we are in, but not of the world. We are called out, but nevertheless sent into the world. The church is like a circle inside of another circle – in the world, but clearly distinct from it.

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The Mission of the Church “Cross-Cultural Missions” – June 28, 2020

Lesson – The Scope
Scriptures – Luke 24:44-49

Introduction to lesson

Although the earth is only one small spot in the galaxy and an even smaller speck in the universe, it is extremely special because mankind dwells on the earth. How special? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . .” (John 3:16). I know that Christ died on the cross to save me; he came to save my family and friends. But wasn’t his coming and death also for the multitudes I have never seen? Are we responsible for reaching the lost people of other countries and cultures? Who is responsible for the people who have never heard the truth? No doubt, the ones who are responsible are the ones who have heard the gospel and received salvation. Reaching the billions with the truth of the gospel is our missionary responsibility. In today’s lesson, let’s consider the scope (extent) of our mission as God’s church.

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

Questions to Discuss:

- What understanding did Jesus give to his disciples? (vv. 44-45)
- What specific truth(s) did Jesus want his disciples to understand in the Scriptures? (v. 46)
- What is our message to the lost? What should we speak in Jesus’ name? (v. 47)
- Where should we declare the gospel of Christ? (v. 47) Who should be witnesses for Christ? (v. 48)
- Why do we need “power from on high” (the power of the Holy Ghost)? (v. 49; see also Acts 1:8)

Think about it:

We must know the Word of God (the Holy Scriptures). We must know what we are talking about. We must have a clear message, and we must take our message to the world. We are Christ’s witnesses. Look at the memory verse. Jesus said we should go into “all the world” (the whole world), but then he also said we should share the gospel with “every creature” (every person). In other words, we must go everywhere and give the gospel to everyone. The gospel is for young and old, for boys and girls, for both rich and poor, for all races, nations, and cultures. Jesus gave us a complete, comprehensive mission – a mission as general as the whole world, but as specific as every individual person. So we need to take the gospel around the globe, but we also need to share the gospel with our neighbor. This is the scope of our mission.

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The Mission of the Church

“Cross-Cultural Missions” – July 5, 2020

Lesson – The Macedonian Call

Scriptures – Acts 16:6-12

Introduction to lesson

Do we actually have what it takes to carry the gospel to the whole world? After all, it’s a mighty big world. Even though we are a gifted people with talents and resources, we will never get the job done by our own abilities. However, God has given us his power – a power that we must never underestimate. The church can accomplish its worldwide mission, if we all will do our part and follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost. “The Macedonian Call” demonstrates how the Holy Ghost desires to inspire and direct our mission. Through following the Spirit, we will achieve greater missionary successes. “The Macedonian Call” shows us how the Spirit will lead us in God’s will, as we seek to fulfill the mission of the church. {Suggestion: This lesson covers part of Paul’s second missionary journey. As you read the verses, trace his steps on your Bible map.}

Key Verse: *“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Acts 16:9).*

Questions to Discuss:

- What happened to Paul and Silas in traveling throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia? (v. 6)
- Why do you think the Holy Ghost might have stopped them from preaching in Asia (to the south)? (v. 6)
- After they came to Mysia, where were they attempting to go next? (v. 7)
- When they tried to go into Bithynia (to the north), what happened? (v. 7)
- Was there anything “wrong” with their wanting to preach the gospel in the region of Bithynia? (v. 7)
- When they finally reached Troas, what happened to Paul during the night? (vv. 8-9)
- Where was the man in his vision from? (v. 9)
- What was he begging Paul to do? (v. 9)
- After Paul saw the vision, what did they do? (v. 10)
- Did they believe the vision was from the Lord? (v. 10)

Think about it:

Leaving Troas, Paul and his companions (Silas, Timothy vv. 1-3, and Luke vv. 10-12, “we”) headed forward toward Macedonia and ended up in the chief city of Philippi (v. 12). Why did God lead them this way? In Philippi, they laid the foundation of what would become one of Paul’s best supporting churches and partners in the mission work. The Holy Ghost would not permit them to go south; he would not allow them to go north. But the Holy Ghost gave Paul a vision to direct their mission (Acts 2:17). God knows how to lead his people. When we follow the leadership of the Holy Ghost, we will have success in the church.

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The Mission of the Church

“Cross-Cultural Missions” – July 12, 2020

Lesson – The Burden of the Lord

Scriptures – Luke 4:28-32, 40-44

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever seen people protesting – like picketing, or holding a rally? Behind every protest is a cause. People speak out because they feel strongly about something important to them. Protesters are passionate. They have a burden, a sense of heaviness, a feeling of responsibility for their cause. Today, there are countless causes in the world, but none more important than winning lost souls to Christ. Therefore, we need a burden for our mission. Each one of us should feel the weight of Christ’s burden for souls. Having a real burden will move us to carry the gospel into the whole world – to all nations and to every creature (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). In Luke chapter 4, we will see that Jesus’ burden for his mission was the energy that fueled his ministry. His burden kept him reaching out and helped him overcome all opposition.

Key Verse: *“And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth” (Mark 1:38).*

Questions to Discuss:

- When Jesus taught at the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth, how did the people react to his teaching? (vv. 16, 28)
- First, what did they do to Jesus, and second, what were they attempting to do to him? (v. 29)
- What did Jesus do to escape? (v. 30)
- How did their opposition affect his missionary work? (v. 31)
- How did the people in Capernaum respond to his teaching? (v. 32)
- What kind of ministry did Jesus have in Capernaum? (vv. 40-41)
- How would you compare his ministry in Nazareth to his ministry in Capernaum? (v. 42)
- If you had been in Capernaum with Jesus, doing this successful ministry, how would you have felt about it?
- Although the people wanted Jesus to stay in Capernaum, what was his burden? (vv. 43-44)

Think about it:

No doubt, being in Capernaum was great. Jesus had a successful ministry there. But his burden urged him to keep going to the next town. Others needed to hear the gospel of salvation. His burden for lost souls and his compassion for people took him from place to place, and from person to person, with the good news. Our mission in the church today is a continuation of the burden of Jesus Christ. We have a great work to do. But we need a real burden in our hearts. Christ’s burden will motivate us to win souls. Let’s pray and ask Jesus to give us a burden for lost souls

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The Mission of the Church

“Cross-Cultural Missions” – July 19, 2020

Lesson – Counting the Cost

Scriptures – Luke 14:27-33

Introduction to lesson

We know that Jesus Christ gave his life for our salvation. We cannot earn salvation; and we cannot pay for it. Jesus paid the price on the cross. However, following Jesus as his disciple and fulfilling his mission involve a cost, a sacrifice. Think about it this way. People are willing to pay a high price for things that are extremely valuable to them. Money is no object. An art collector will pay thousands and even millions of dollars for highly valuable masterpieces. Likewise, Jesus said, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46). How valuable is the kingdom of heaven to you? Are you willing to give your all to win souls for the kingdom of God? Our mission is costly. Are we willing to give our time, abilities, and money?

Key Verse: *“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).*

Questions to Discuss:

- What two things must we do, if we are to be a disciple of Christ (v. 27)
- What do you think it means to bear your cross? What does it mean to “come after” Jesus? (v. 27; Matthew 16:24-26)
- If you were building a house, why would you first need to count the cost of building it? (v. 28)
- What would happen if you started construction, but then realized that you could not afford it? (vv. 29-30)
- Would it make sense to wage war against a country without knowing how many troops they have? (v. 31)
- If your army was far outnumbered, what would be the best course of action? (v. 32)
- What does Jesus require from his disciples?
- What is Jesus driving at? (v. 33)

Think about it:

Jesus is teaching us that following him is costly. We cannot follow him, until we first count the cost, and decide that the cost is worth it. Nothing must stand in our way. When we set out to follow Jesus and fulfill his mission, it’s going to require something from us. What kinds of things will it require? What kinds of things are necessary in following Jesus? Are we willing to go the distance with Jesus? Are we willing to follow him no matter what it costs us? Are we willing to be his witnesses?

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The Mission of the Church

“Cross-Cultural Missions” – July 26, 2020

Lesson – Sending Missionaries

Scriptures – Acts 13:1-5

Introduction to lesson

The world must be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because we have the truth, we must go. But exactly who will go? Sending missionaries into new mission fields is crucial. Think of it this way. You work for a company and get assigned to a special task force. In your team meeting, you determine that the success of the company requires one of the employees to work in another country. Volunteers anyone? Taking the assignment means leaving everything behind and learning a brand new way of life. But that’s not all. The job will require a decrease in your salary, and your living conditions may not be as comfortable as you wish. Who will go? Who will accept the challenge for the good of the company? You see, we can talk about our mission, even preach about it. But ultimately our mission is not complete until the church sends forth missionaries into the world.

Key Verse: *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8).*

Questions to Discuss:

- What are the two types of ministers mentioned in verse one? (v. 1)
- What are their names? (v. 1)
- What were these prophets and teachers doing when the Lord spoke to them? (v. 2)
- What was the Holy Ghost saying about Saul and Barnabas? (v. 2)
- Why weren’t the other ministers called in this same way?
- What three things did their fellow ministers do before sending Barnabas and Saul on their way? (v. 3)
- What is the significance of laying their hands on them?
- Were they sent by the church into this ministry, or were they sent by the Lord? (vv. 3-4)
- What did their work require them to do? (v. 4)
- Specifically, what kind of ministry did Saul and Barnabas do as they travelled? (v. 5)

Think about it:

Paul and Barnabas fulfilled a third type of ministry – they were missionaries. The church works with God in the sending of missionaries. God first calls; and in response to God’s call, the church sends. The church is not responsible to call young people into the ministry, but we should confirm those whom God has called into his service. The church works “with God,” sending into the mission fields the ministers whom the Spirit has already sent.

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The Mission of the Church

“The Ministry of the Body” – August 2, 2020

Lesson – A Work for Every Willing Worker
Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 12:18-27

Introduction to lesson

Think about the complex human body. It has many parts, and each part has a special function. Every member of the physical body is important to us. We do not want to lose any part – right? Each member is necessary to make a whole, complete body. While some members of the human body may seem less important than others, none of us is eager to damage any part of his body. Why is this? Each member of the body belongs to the whole body and is valuable for this very reason. When a body part is damaged or missing (for example, a finger or even a finger nail), the body’s ability to function is hindered to a degree. In today’s lesson, the apostle Paul used this example of the human body to show the importance of every member of the body of Christ, the church. Each member of the church is valuable to the mission of the whole church.

Key Verse: *“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary” (1 Corinthians 12:22).*

Questions to Discuss:

- How has God arranged the members (parts) of your body? (v. 18)
- What would happen to your body if you consisted of only one body part (member)? (v. 19)
- Although our bodies have many members (many working parts), how does it function? (v. 20)
- Is any one member of the body sufficient on its own?
- Is one part of the body more important than others?
- How do our body parts support each other? Give examples. (v. 21)
- Are the feeble, weak parts of our bodies necessary? Give an example. (v. 22)
- Each one of us have “less honorable” and “uncomely” members in his body. Would you rather have an inferior member or would you prefer to have a missing member of the body?
- What do we tend to do about the weaker, more inferior parts of our bodies? (vv. 23- 24).
- Because every part of the body is important to the whole body, what should the rest of the body do when one member suffers?
- When one member is honored? (vv. 25-26)

Think about it:

The church is made up of many members, just like the human body. All of its members are important to the whole church. Like the human body, each member of the church has a special part to play in the mission of the church. No one member can do it all, and each member is necessary. Therefore, in the church, there is a work for every willing worker. God has made each one of us to do his special part in the mission.

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The Mission of the Church

“The Ministry of the Body” – August 9, 2020

Lesson – Equipped to Do the Work

Scriptures – 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever tried to do a task without the proper tools? An easy job can become challenging, and a difficult job can become frustrating when you lack the right tools. Of course, tools are designed to be used in specific ways. The job is even harder, if not impossible, when you really do not know what you are doing. For any task, having the right tools and knowing how to use them are essential to success in the work. In other words, being equipped to do the work is necessary for success. God has provided a way for us to be equipped for the mission of the church. Are you equipped for the mission?

Key Verse: *“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17).*

Questions to Discuss:

- What has Timothy known since his childhood? (v. 15)
- What was the apostle Paul encouraging Timothy to do? (v. 14)
- Why can Timothy be more certain of what he knows? (v. 14; 2 Ti. 1:5, 13; 2:2; 3:10)
- What three things will the Holy Scriptures do for us? (v. 15)
- Although men were the physical instruments who wrote down the words of God, who actually gave us (inspired) the Holy Scriptures, the Bible? (v. 16)
- Name four ways that the Bible is profitable for us? (v. 16)
- What impact do the Scriptures have on us? (v. 17)
- What do the Scriptures equip us to do? (v. 17)

Think about it:

The Bible (the Holy Scriptures) is the main tool of our faith. We need to know everything about our tool and we need to know how to use this tool skillfully (2 Timothy 2:15). Studying and memorizing the Scriptures is essential to knowing the Word of God. We need to know what the Bible says, but we also need to know what it means. Also, we need to know how to apply the Scriptures to our lives. Of course, all of this takes effort. It does not happen automatically, and it does not happen overnight. We must get in God’s Word, praying for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, learning more and more about Jesus Christ and our relationship with him. In this way, we will be better equipped to do the work of our mission in the world.

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The Mission of the Church

“The Ministry of the Body” – August 16, 2020

Lesson – Work According to One’s Abilities

Scriptures – Matthew 25:14-19

Introduction to lesson

The human body is a wonderful creation of God (Ps. 139:14). We have so many parts, each with specific functions. Isn’t it amazing how all of the parts work together? When a person physically works, the members of the body cooperate to accomplish a task. We call this coordination. However, what if the hand began trying to function like the nose? What if the elbow thought it could see? Such confusion would render the body incapable of performing even the simplest task. In today’s lesson, we will see that each member of the body of Christ, the church, should work (or function), according to one’s individual gifts and abilities. Each one should use what God has given to him for the benefit of the whole church.

Key Verse: *“And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey” (Matthew 25:15).*

Questions to Discuss:

- Read Matthew 25:14 – 19.
- In the parable, who is represented by the man who left on a journey and later returned?
- When the Lord calls us to serve him, what does he give us?
- What do the talents (or money) represent? (vv. 14-15)
- Do you believe Jesus would call you to do anything that you were incapable of doing?
- When the Lord gives us gifts and abilities, does he give everyone the same abilities or even the same amount of talents? (v. 15)
- What should we do with our talents and abilities? (vv. 16-17)
- Did burying his talent benefit the servant or his lord? (v. 18)
- When Jesus comes again, what will he expect from us? (v. 19)

Think about it:

God does not give all of us the same gifts and abilities, but he does expect every member to use what has been given to him. Think about it this way. As a baby matures and grows, he discovers the parts of his own body and eventually understands how these function and how to use them skillfully. So it is in the church. You have a special place in the body of Christ. Seek to grow in the Lord and to understand the abilities and gifts that the Lord has given to you. Then work according to your abilities to benefit the church and its mission in the world.

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The Mission of the Church

“The Ministry of the Body” – August 23, 2020

Lesson – Work to the Best of Your Ability

Scriptures – Matthew 25:19-30

Introduction to lesson

Are you giving your very best to God? It’s possible to know how to do a good job and even to use our abilities to do a work, yet only to give half an effort. An old saying goes, “Good, better, best: don’t rest, until your good is better, and your better is best.” In other words, in anything we do, we need to work at being our best. Why do anything less? Why be anything less than your best? We especially should strive to give our all in the work of the Lord. Jesus taught us, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37). Love is much more than a feeling; it is affection in action. If we love God, let’s show him by giving our best to him.

Key Verse: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37).*

Questions to Discuss:

- When the lord of the servants returned (that is, the coming of Jesus), what did he do? (v. 19)
- Did the first servant use his talents wisely? How do you know? (v. 20) What was the response of his lord?
- What did he promise to do for his servant? (v. 21)
- What is the difference between the first and second servant?
- Did the lord make any distinction between them?
- Based on this parable, does the Lord give us all the same amount of gifts and abilities?
- Was the servant with two talents any less faithful than the servant with five? Why? (vv. 22-23)
- What did the servant with one talent do and why? (vv. 24-25)
- Was this what his lord wanted? Was this the purpose of being given a talent? (v. 26)
- We should not be afraid to attempt great things for God. How do you think fear affects people in using their gifts and abilities?
- At the very least, what should the servant have done with his one talent? (v. 27)
- The last servant should have done something with his talent, but instead, he did nothing at all. In the end, what did the lord do about this unfaithful servant? (vv. 28-30)

Think about it:

Let’s not be half-hearted in the work of the Lord. When we give our all, we are patterning ourselves after Jesus Christ. He gave his very best at all times, even down to giving his life for us. Let’s work in the mission of the church giving all we can give, doing all we can do, and being all we can be for Christ and for his church, until Jesus comes again.

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Church Growth Principles - The Joshua Strategy – August 30, 2020

Lesson: Called By God

Scriptures: Joshua 1:1-9

Introduction to lesson

We have a conquest today that includes winning people for Christ and the church. Our plan of action involves invading our communities and taking them over for Christ, one soul at a time. Unlike mortal armies, our power does not come from physical force. Because we are a spiritual army, our power comes by the Word of God and through the Holy Ghost. Are we ready and willing to go out and possess the land? Fulfilling the conquest of the church begins with heeding the call of God. God's Spirit and power worked through Moses as he led the Israelites to many victories over their enemies. Both Moses and Joshua (Moses' minister) answered God's call. Let us follow their diligent examples.

Key Verse: *"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:10).*

Questions to Discuss:

- What event caused Joshua to have to take over as Israel's leader?
- How was he chosen? (v. 1)
- What was the important task God asked Joshua to complete? (v. 2)
- Where would Joshua's ministry lead him? (vv. 3-4)
- What assurance did God give Joshua that he would be able to fulfill his calling? (v. 5)
- How was Joshua instructed to prepare so he and his people could prosper wherever they went? (vv. 6-7)
- What rules did God require Joshua to follow so that he and Israel could be successful? (vv. 8-9)

Think about it:

Moses and Joshua both fulfilled God's call to be strong and faithful leaders of Israel. We also must answer the call to be His church in these last days. Like Joshua, God's elect are called to go out and "possess the land." The only way to succeed at soul winning is to obey God's word and be led by His Spirit. It is important for us to remember that we are called by God and not by man. Some people will reject God's call, but those who heed His call will receive "power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). We are not called to follow men but to follow the Lord. We must not be indifferent to the work He has set before us, but diligently follow on by faith to fulfill His purpose in and through us.

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Church Growth Principles - The Joshua Strategy - September 6, 2020

Lesson: Rise Up

Scriptures: 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 1 Cor. 2:14

Introduction to lesson

God promised Israel that they would possess the land of Canaan. How did they go about taking what belonged to them? In order to conquer Canaan, Israel had to engage in physical battle. The Israelites fought against their enemies with hand-to hand combat, taking their territory by force. Likewise, the church must not sit around idle, passively waiting for something to happen. If we want to see church growth, we must rise up and take action in Jesus' name. Physical violence is not the way to conquer our enemies. We need a holy determination to get the work done. Like Joshua and his army, we must face God's challenge boldly.

Key Verse: *"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel"* (Joshua 1:2)

Questions to Discuss:

- How does the warfare of the church differ from that of the Israelite army? (2 Cor. 10:3)
- What kind of weapons must we use to fight against evil forces? How are these used effectively? (v. 4)
- What are some worldly strongholds that can only be brought down through Holy Ghost power? (v. 4)
- In what ways has evil imagination caused both Satan and mankind to rebel against God? (v. 5)
- How should our thought life be controlled so that we will obey Christ's teachings? (v. 5)
- Why do the things of God seem foolish to those who are without Him? (1 Cor. 2:14)

Think about it:

Before ascending back to His Father, Jesus told His disciples that they should not expect to discern the kingdom of God with their natural eyes. He explained that His was a spiritual kingdom of grace and power: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). Without spiritual power, churches and ministries are just formal organizations that focus mainly upon finances, numbers, buildings and programs. Zion Assembly Church of God will rise up to fulfill our mission as Christ's witnesses only by staying focused on the spiritual development of our members.

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Church Growth Principles - The Joshua Strategy – September 13, 2020

Lesson – “Cross Over”

Scriptures – Joshua 3:1-17

Introduction to lesson

God promised to give the land of Canaan to the children of Israel. He called Joshua to lead the Israelites into the conquest of Canaan, but they first had to cross over the Jordan River. The Jordan was a boundary that the Israelites had to cross in order to take possession of the land. It was the body of water that stood between them and their conquest – and between them and the promises of God. In today’s lesson, let us see what it took for them to cross over the Jordan.

Key Verse: *“And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan” (Joshua 3:17).*

Questions to Discuss:

When the Israelites crossed over the Jordan, they were to follow the Ark of the Covenant from a distance. What was the practical reason for this? (v. 4)

The Israelites did not see all that was ahead – they had to trust the Lord to lead them. What were they required to do in order to experience the Lord’s glory? (v. 5)

By faith, who were the Israelites to follow? (vv. 3, 6-8)

Before they crossed over, what did Joshua declare to the children of Israel? (v. 9)

What was God’s promise to them? (v. 10)

Did the Israelites believe the Word of God? What was the evidence of their faith in God? (vv. 14-17)

Think about it:

No doubt, there would be no conquest until they first crossed over the Jordan River. There would be no fighting or conflict, until they committed themselves to pass over. But also, there would be no land to possess or promises of God fulfilled in them. Like Israel’s conquest, the church’s spiritual conquest of winning souls for Christ and adding members to the church is not an easy task. Our enemy, Satan, fights against us. We too must overcome each and every obstacle that stands between us and the promises of God. By faith in Jesus Christ and through obedience to God’s Word, we will overcome anything that hinders us from winning souls and experiencing spiritual victory.

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Church Growth Principles - The Joshua Strategy – September 20, 2020

Lesson – “A United Effort”

Scriptures – Joshua 1:2, 12-16

Introduction to lesson

When the Lord told Joshua to cross the Jordan River into the land of Canaan, he said, “Thou, and all this people.” No doubt, Joshua was a great military leader, but he alone could not possess the land. God’s plan was for all of the Israelite army to cross over and take possession of the Promised Land. In today’s lesson, we will consider the “we” factor in the conquest of Canaan. God’s plan called for 100% participation in the conquest – a united effort.

Key Verse: “And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go” (Jos. 1:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- The Israelites were camped on the east side of the Jordan River. Who was required to cross over to the west side of the Jordan and take possession of the land? (v. 2)
- Which tribes had already received their land on the east side of the Jordan River? (vv. 12-13)
- When Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River to take possession of Canaan, what were the 2 ½ tribes allowed to leave behind? (v. 14) Although these tribes had already received their land as a possession, what were the men from the 2 ½ tribes required to do? (v. 14)
- For how long were they required to go with the other tribes and fight in the conquest? (v. 15)
- How did the 2 ½ tribes respond to this commandment? (v. 16)

Think about it:

Like the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, we all should be ready and willing to do our part in the church’s conquest (v. 16). Through our united effort, we will win souls to Christ and his church. Though a few can make a difference, a few cannot do all that is needed in the mission of the church. The success and growth of the church depends on our pulling together in the same direction. As we all decide to move forward in a united effort, we will see our greatest results in the mission of the church.

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Church Growth Principles - The Joshua Strategy – September 27, 2020

Lesson – “God’s Increase”

Scriptures – Joshua 6:1-5, 15-16, 20-21

Introduction to lesson

The Lord told Joshua to cross over the Jordan River with all of the people into the land that he was giving to them. God promised to give them the land of Canaan. In his promise, we learn an important truth: the reason that they were able to take the land from their enemies was because God was giving the land to them. Essentially, the Lord said to them, “I give this land to you – now, go, and take possession of the land. It’s yours; go get it!” God gives the increase.

Key Verse: “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses” (Jos. 1:3).

Questions to Discuss:

- Describe the situation at Jericho. (v. 1)
- What was God’s promise to Joshua? (v. 2)
- Who came up with the plan to win the battle? (vv. 2-3)
- What was the basic strategy? (vv. 3-4)
- What were they to do differently on the seventh day? (vv. 5, 15-16)
- What was going to happen at that time? (vv. 5, 20)
- Did the people actually have to fight against their enemies? (v. 21)
- Could they have taken Jericho without this miracle?
- Who gave them the victory?

Think about it:

Like Joshua and the Israelite army, we are God’s army under Jesus Christ. We must fight against the enemy of our souls in order to take possession of God’s promises. Many are lost without Christ, and we must fight against wickedness in order to see them saved. The apostle Paul said, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase...For we are labourers together with God” (1 Co. 3:6, 9). If we want to win people to Jesus Christ and see the church grow, then we have to do something about it. We should pray, witness, and reach out to others, doing what we can to win them to Christ, and then depend on the Lord for the increase. We can accomplish nothing without God’s help.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“The Nature of God” – October 4, 2020

Lesson – “God Is Spirit”

Scriptures – John 4:3-30

Introduction to lesson

If someone asked you, “What is God like,” how would you answer him? Throughout the Scriptures, many words and ideas describe and define “who” God is and “what” God is like. God has revealed himself through a variety of names, like *Jehovah-jireh* (“the Lord sees/provides,” Ge. 22:14) and *Jehovah-shalom* (“the Lord is peace,” Jud. 6:24). Of course, we know God most of all through his Son, Jesus Christ. In today’s lesson, we will see that Jesus explained God in terms of Spirit – Holy Spirit.

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

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Describe the meeting between Jesus and the woman of Samaria? (vv. 4-9)
- ✚ What did Jesus offer her? (vv. 10-14)
- ✚ Being a Samaritan, rather than a Jew, what was her main concern? (vv. 20, 22)
- ✚ According to Jesus, how important is physical location when it comes to worshiping God? Does God have physical limitations and boundaries? (vv. 20-21)
- ✚ What two aspects of worship are necessary to be a true worshiper of God? (v. 23)
- ✚ How do we know that “spirit” and “truth” really matter to God? (v. 23)
- ✚ How did Jesus describe God? (v. 24)
- ✚ Why is the spiritual focus of our worship (spirit/truth) so much more important than any physical concerns in our worship? (v. 24)
- ✚ Can we worship the Lord apart from spirit and truth? (v. 24; see also Jn. 14:17)

Think about it: Jesus went through Samaria and met a sinful woman at the well. He offered her eternal life, but she did not understand how to come to God. Her thinking was limited to the mountain where the Samaritans worshipped. But Jesus explained that God is not limited to a physical boundary, like a mountain, city, or temple, because God is actually Spirit. Therefore, we must approach God and worship him in spirit and in truth. After we accept Jesus Christ as Savior, only then can we worship God in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:25-30).

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“The Nature of God” – October 11, 2020

Lesson – “Omnipresence”

Scriptures – Psalm 139:1-10

Introduction to lesson

We serve an omnipresent God, which means his presence fills up the entire world. Although a man cannot be in two places at once, God’s Spirit is not limited. His presence goes far beyond us, yet at the same time his Spirit indwells all who call upon the name of Jesus Christ (Ps. 113:4-6; Ro. 10:13). We serve an amazing and awesome God. His presence fills the universe, yet he lives personally within the heart of every believer.

Key Verse: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Psalm 139:7).

Questions to Discuss:

- + To what degree does God know us? (v. 1)
- + God knows each time you sit down and every time you get up. Is there any person in your life (a parent, teacher, or friend) that knows every move you make? (v. 2)
- + What are you thinking right now? God reads our minds. He understands us when nobody else does. (v. 2)
- + Think about an embarrassing moment, where you just wanted to run and hide. Did anyone see you and how did you feel? God see all of our ways, good or bad, so there is no point in trying to hide anything from him. (v. 3)
- + The Lord knows what you are going to say, even before you say it. Realizing this, should we be careful with our words, or should we be carefree? (v. 4)
- + As followers of Jesus Christ, we have the assurance that God’s hand is on our lives. What does this mean to you? (v. 5)
- + When you realize just how much God knows you and takes notice of you, how does this make you feel? (v. 6)
- + Like Jonah, people sometimes try to get away from the presence of the Lord. Can anyone outrun God? Can anyone escape his Spirit? (v. 7)
- + No matter where we go, when we arrive, who will be there waiting on us? (vv. 8-10)

Think about it: God is omnipresent – his presence fills the Earth. Like the psalmist, when we understand that God’s Spirit is always present to us, but even more, when we understand that his Spirit lives in every believer, we can know that a loving Father is close to us, no matter what we face. He knows our needs, and he is willing and ready to help us in our time of need. We can take great comfort in knowing the Lord is always near to us and to all who love and serve him.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“The Nature of God” – October 18, 2020

Lesson – “Shekinah”

Scriptures – Luke 9:27-36

Introduction to lesson

Shekinah refers to the visible glory of God. We do not see God the Father, but we see and experience his glory. God has revealed himself by wonders and miraculous demonstrations throughout history, even showing his presence with visible glory. In today’s lesson, we will consider God’s glory revealed in his Son Jesus Christ, in order to understand the glory that God has placed within the church today.

Key Verse: “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them” (John 17:22).

Questions to Discuss:

- + What experience did Jesus promise to give to his disciples? (v. 27; see also Mk. 9:1)
- + Why did Jesus take his disciples to a high mountain by themselves? (v. 28; see also Mk. 9:2)
- + “Transfigured” means changed – a transformation. Describe what happened to Jesus when he was transfigured. (v. 29; see also Mt. 17:2; Mk. 9:3)
- + When the two men (Moses and Elijah) talked with Jesus in his transfiguration, what one word describes their appearance? (vv. 30-31)
- + When the disciples awoke, what did they see? (v. 32)
- + Obviously, Peter was greatly impacted by this wonderful experience. What did Peter desire to do in order to honor God? (v. 33)
- + At that point, what covered the disciples? How did this affect them? (v. 34)
- + Whose voice spoke out of the cloud? (v. 35)
- + Although he was well-meaning, why was Peter wrong in wanting to build three tabernacles? (v. 35)

Think about it: God has demonstrated his glory in many marvelous ways: clouds (1 Ki. 8:11), fire (Ac. 2:3), and even audible voices (Mk. 1:11). But the greatest glory of God was demonstrated in his Son Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14). God wants us to hear and exalt his Son. Today, God has placed his glory within the church through the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised to every believer. The outpouring of Christ’s Spirit (the Holy Ghost) explains how God’s glory is manifested in the church (Jn. 17:22; 15:26). In the next lesson, we will see that God’s glorious presence dwells in the saints of God.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“The Nature of God” – October 25, 2020

Lesson – “Indwelling Spirit”

Scriptures – John 7:37-39

Introduction to lesson

The glory of God’s Spirit that was revealed in Jesus Christ abides in the saints of God today. Jesus explained that his Spirit would not only dwell *with* the believer but would actually dwell *in* him (John 14:17). In today’s lesson, we will see that Christ abides in every believer by his indwelling Spirit.

Key Verse: “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17).

Questions to Discuss:

- + On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:2), what did Jesus do? (v. 37)
- + When Jesus preached to the people, who was he speaking to? (v. 37)
- + What did Jesus offer to the thirsty? (v. 37)
- + What kind of thirst and what kind of drink was Jesus speaking about? (v. 37)
- + To whom did Jesus promise to give drink? (vv. 37-38)
- + When Jesus promised to give drink to the spiritually thirsty, how did he describe it? (v. 38)
- + From where would these waters flow? Or what thirst would Jesus satisfy? (v. 38)
- + When Jesus promised to put his life down in us, what was he referring to? (v. 39)

Think about it: The Spirit of God is the life and glory of Christ in us. By coming to Jesus as Lord and believing in him as Savior, God satisfies our spiritual thirst by placing his Spirit down inside us. By faith, we have received the same Spirit from God who descended on Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is living water (eternal life) in the soul of every believer, satisfying the spiritual thirst within us. Indeed, when we come to Jesus Christ, we will never thirst again. When Jesus promised to send his Spirit, he further promised to baptize and fill us with the Holy Ghost (Jn. 1:32-33; Ac. 1:5). Through being baptized with the Holy Ghost and remaining filled with the Spirit, we can be full of Christ’s presence at all times.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Work of the Spirit – November 1, 2020

Lesson – “Convicted by the Spirit”

Scriptures – John 16:7-11

Introduction to lesson

Conviction is an extremely important part of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Jesus taught that it was necessary for him to go back to the Father so that the Holy Spirit would then come to complete his work in the life of the believer. First of all, an essential point about conviction is that it comes by the agency of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God reproves or convicts the world of sin. Jesus departed, yet he did not leave us comfortless or without assistance, but gave his Spirit to us in order to move our missionary work forward through his conviction and reproof. Furthermore, conviction is God’s revelation in the heart of a sinner, causing him to see the error of his ways. The Holy Ghost shines light on one’s heart letting him know that he needs a Savior.

Key Verse: “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do” (Acts 2:37)?

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ Why was it necessary for Christ to “go away”? (v.7)
- ✦ Who is the Comforter?
- ✦ Who sent the Comforter to us? (v.7)
- ✦ The Comforter will “reprove” the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. What does it mean to reprove? (v.8)
- ✦ Why does the Holy Ghost reprove of sin? (v.9)
- ✦ Why does he reprove of righteousness? (v.10)
- ✦ Why does he reprove of judgment? (v.11)
- ✦ When the people heard Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, how did it make them feel? (v.37)
- ✦ What does it mean to be “pricked in their heart”?
- ✦ Have you ever felt conviction from the Holy Ghost? How did it make you feel? What did you do about it?

Think about it: Although conviction comes from the Holy Ghost, our Comforter, it will not make you feel comfortable. The Holy Ghost convicts us so that we may see that ways of our sinful life. Without that conviction, we will not know that we are wrong, and we will not be able to realize the salvation that Christ has provided for us through His death on the Cross. Therefore, we must experience Holy Ghost conviction in order to be saved. As the church, it is imperative that we continue to teach and preach the power of Holy Ghost conviction so we may see lost souls come into the Kingdom of God and then into the Church. Our walk with God begins with conviction. Have you begun your walk with Him?

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Work of the Spirit – November 8, 2020

Lesson – “Regenerated by the Spirit”

Scriptures – John 3:1-8

Introduction to lesson

In Romans 5:12, the apostle Paul taught that because of Adam’s sin, all men born thereafter have been born in sin and will ultimately face the judgment of death – for the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Because of Adam’s sin resulting in our sin and death, we must look to Jesus Christ in order to receive new life. Regeneration is God’s solution to the problem of spiritual death. Jesus explained it to Nicodemus in terms of being “born again.” By the Spirit of God, a sinner is born again by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereby, he becomes a child of God and “is passed from death unto life.” Clearly, regeneration means a completely new life in Christ – a fresh, new beginning in the Lord.

Key Verse: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Did Nicodemus have a prominent position among the Jews of that day (v.1)?
- + When he questioned Jesus, how did he know that Jesus was sent from God and that God was with Jesus (v.2)?
- + How do others know that God is with us?
- + What is another term used in the Bible for regeneration?
- + What must happen to a person in order for them to see the kingdom of God (v.3)?
- + Do you think Nicodemus was surprised by Christ’s answer (v.4)?
- + Explain what it means to be born of water and spirit (v.5).
- + Flesh cannot enter the kingdom of God, so by what must we be born (v.6)?
- + Have you been born again of His Spirit?

Think about it: After we are regenerated by the Spirit, we should “walk in the newness of life” in the Spirit, not walking after the sinful desires of the flesh. The spiritual evidence of a regenerated life is the fruit of the Spirit (Ga. 5:22-23; Ep. 5:9-10). Simply put, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior, his life will change. The way he talks and behaves will be transformed even as his soul has been transformed by the Spirit. However, one should keep in mind that regeneration is not the same as sanctification. We will discuss how we can live with victory over sin through sanctification next week!

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Work of the Spirit – November 15, 2020

Lesson – “Sanctified by the Spirit”

Scriptures – Romans 7:23-24; 8:1-14

Introduction to lesson

It is God’s will that all believers be sanctified (1Th. 4:3). This lets us know that God has provided us a way to live a life victorious over sin. Sin cannot be allowed in the life of a believer. All of us are wrapped in flesh, therefore, the opportunity to sin will always be there; but as a sanctified child of God, we do not have to give over to that temptation. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, the desire (drive) to sin is removed. We are then able to live righteous lives free from the pull that drags us back to our old sinful ways before accepting Christ. We can live a life free from sinning and be holy. Wow, doesn’t that sound exciting? A sanctified life doesn’t mean we won’t have struggles, but God has made a way of help for us through sanctification by the Spirit?

Key Verse: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Ro. 8:13).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ In Romans 7, Paul details the struggle one will have after they have been converted. Why does that struggle take place (7:23)?
- ✦ Because you may feel the desire (drive) to sin again, does that mean you’re not saved?
- ✦ Who can deliver us from this inward struggle to sin (7:24, 25)?
- ✦ What does it mean to “walk after the flesh” (8:1)?
- ✦ What does it mean to “walk after the Spirit” (8:1)?
- ✦ Many today say that Christians can’t live without sin. Is this statement true or false? Why?
- ✦ Are you able to live a sin free life on your own strength? Then how can we live this sin free (holy) life?
- ✦ Can you please God by fulfilling your fleshly, sinful desires (8:8)?
- ✦ What does it mean to “mortify the deeds of the body” and how can this be done (8:13)?

Think about it: When we come to Jesus Christ as Savior and are born again, the conflict of the flesh and Spirit indwelling us must be resolved. The Spirit that regenerates us to new life also compels us to be sanctified – to be made holy. God will not allow a believer to continue sinning, but will by his Spirit sanctify the inner man and empower him to live holy and victorious over sin and unrighteousness. Have you experienced being sanctified by the Spirit?

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Work of the Spirit – November 22, 2020

Lesson – “Fruit of the Spirit”

Scriptures – Matthew 7:15-23

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever purchased fruit from the local grocery store? When you do, you should always inspect the fruit to see if it is ripe and ready, or rotten and ruined. Even if the fruit looks just fine at first glance, when you make a closer inspection you may find that it is too soft and mushy. If so, it may ruin before you're able to enjoy it. You must learn to recognize the bad fruit, so that you don't waste your money. Just because it looks good on the outside doesn't always mean that you should buy it. What's the inside like? Is it too soft and ready to ruin? The same can be said about people that claim to be children of God. Upon inspection, are they really what they claim to be? Does their inside (heart, soul, motives) look as good as their outside (appearance, personality, speech)?

Key Verse: “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ep. 5:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Matthew was very stern in his warning to “beware” in verse 15. Why is this warning so important?
- + What does “in sheep’s clothing” represent?
- + What does “inwardly...ravaging wolves” mean?
- + Are we supposed to inspect the fruit in others (v.16)?
- + Is it possible for a bad tree to bear good fruit? How about a good tree to bear bad fruit? (Spiritually speaking)
- + People who deceive others by appearing good but really being bad will be judged in the end. How did Matthew compare their judgment with trees (v. 19)?
- + How will we know if others are for real or not (v.20)?
- + What is the only way we will make it to heaven (v.21)?
- + The motives behind our actions will determine the fruit we bear. Even if things look great on the outside, what are our motives? Many seemingly work for the Lord while their motives are corrupt. What does the Bible say will happen to them (v.22, 23)?

Think about it: A tree is known by its fruit, good or bad. As we walk in the Spirit, we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and establish ourselves as true children of God. When we bear the good fruit, we distinguish ourselves from all that is bad in the world, enabling us to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, and truth and error. Every one bears fruit. What kind of fruit are you producing: good or bad?

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spirit Baptism” – November 29, 2020

Lesson – “The Promise”

Scriptures – Acts 1:4-5; 2:16-18, 38-39

Introduction to lesson

Everyday, people say one thing but then do another. They make promises that they will never keep. Although man’s word is unreliable, God’s Word is trustworthy. He will do all he has promised in his Word. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is the Father’s promise to every believer. Jesus said, Aft ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?@ (Lu. 11:13). The Father desires to give the gift of his Spirit to his children. We can be sure he will fulfill his promise and give his Spirit to all who ask and believe. God is faithful and true; he will keep his promises.

Key Verse: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why did Jesus command his disciples to remain in Jerusalem (Ac. 1:4)?
- ✚ From whom did the disciples hear the promise (v. 4)?
- ✚ What was the promise of the Father that Jesus taught to his disciples (v. 5)?
- ✚ When the disciples were baptized with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, what did Peter say that this experience was fulfilling (Ac. 2:16)?
- ✚ When would Joel’s prophecy take place (v. 17)?
- ✚ What is God pouring out in these last days (vv. 17-18)?
- ✚ On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the multitude about Jesus Christ and his promise of the Holy Ghost. Who is ready to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (v. 38)?
- ✚ To whom did the Lord make this promise (v. 39)?

Think about it: When the Holy Ghost was poured out on the church according to the Word of God, Peter understood that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was God’s promise to every believer, even to all future generations (Ac. 2:38-39). Therefore, every believer should pray and seek to be baptized with the Holy Ghost – the promise of the Father. Are you trusting in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If so, have you been baptized with the Holy Ghost? As a born-again believer, pray to be sanctified, and seek to be baptized with the Holy Ghost – this great promise of the Father.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spirit Baptism” – December 6, 2020

Lesson – “Outpouring of the Spirit”

Scriptures – Ac. 1:4, 12-15; Ac. 2:1

Introduction to lesson

Before he ascended back to the Father, when Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost (Jn. 15:26; 14:26), he told his disciples to “wait” and “tarry” for the promise of the Father” (Ac. 1:4; Lu. 24:49). They were to remain in Jerusalem for a few days until they were baptized with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:5). In today’s lesson, we want to think about what was taking place in the days leading up to the outpouring of the Spirit in the church.

Key Verse: “And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit . . .” (Ac. 2:18).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ Jesus commanded his disciples to “wait” in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father (the outpouring of the Holy Spirit). What does it mean “to wait” for something (Ac. 1:4)?
- ✦ After Jesus ascended back to the Father, where did the disciples go and why (vv. 12-13)?
- ✦ Who was present in the upper room (vv. 13-14)?
- ✦ How did Jesus’ disciples understand “waiting” on the promise? In other words, what did Jesus’ disciples do while they were waiting for the promise of the Spirit (v. 14)?
- ✦ The prayer service lasted for some 10 days. About how many were present for these prayer meetings (v. 15)?
- ✦ How does the Book of Acts describe those who were praying for the promise (v. 14)?
- ✦ What were the factors that united them (see Ac. 1:1-4)?
- ✦ When you consider all of the above, how would you describe the faith of the disciples?
- ✦ The Holy Ghost was poured out in the church on the Day of Pentecost, a Jewish festival. Once again, how does the Book of Acts describe the saints when the Holy Ghost was poured out (2:1)?

Think about it: Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost upon the church, and he commanded them to wait in Jerusalem to receive the promise. Their “waiting” was expressed in prayer, unity, and faith. Do you have faith in God’s promise? Do you believe to the point that you are willing to seek God for the outpouring of his Spirit in your life? As God’s people, we need to unite together and pray in faith for a mighty outpouring of God’s Spirit in the church today.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spirit Baptism” – December 13, 2020

Lesson – “Speaking in Tongues”

Scriptures – Acts 2:1-13

Introduction to lesson

Although the Spirit was poured out in the church almost 2000 years ago, many people including Christians are still unfamiliar with speaking in tongues. This manifestation of the Spirit may seem foreign to them. But for those who are baptized with the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues is a normal part of worship in the church. In today’s lesson, we will consider the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the importance of speaking in tongues today.

Key Verse: “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” (1 Co. 14:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- + When the Holy Ghost was poured out in the church on the Day of Pentecost, what happened first (vv. 1-2)?
- + In addition to the “rushing mighty wind,” what appeared and rested on each of them (v. 3)?
- + What do you suppose was the significance of the wind and fire?
- + When they were baptized with the Holy Ghost, what two things occurred (v. 4)?
- + When they were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues, who heard them, and what did they hear (vv. 5-6)?
- + What was the reaction of the people who witnessed this mighty outpouring of the Spirit (vv. 7, 12-13)?
- + Why did the manifestation of speaking in tongues capture the attention of the people in Jerusalem (vv. 8-11)?
- + Typically, when we speak in tongues we speak in “unknown” tongues, and no one, including ourselves, understands what we are saying – that is, no one but God. When we speak in tongues, what are we saying to God (Ac. 2:11; 1 Co. 14:2; Ro. 8:26-27)?

Think about it: Tongues are the witness of the Holy Spirit and serve as the evidence of the baptism with the Spirit. In other words, when believers are baptized with the Holy Ghost, they speak with tongues. When we speak with tongues, the Spirit is actually the one who is speaking through us as we yield ourselves to God (Ac. 2:4). Paul explained, “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” (1 Co. 14:2). So when we speak in tongues, we can have the confidence that we are speaking directly to God and praying according to his will.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spirit Baptism” – December 20, 2020

Lesson – “Filled with the Spirit”

Scriptures – Ac. 2:4, 12-16; Ep. 5:17-18

Introduction to lesson

Through the experience of the baptism with the Holy Ghost, God desires to fill his people with his Spirit. When Jesus promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, he said, “Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Jn. 14:17). While God desires to dwell with his people, he desires even more for his people to be filled with his Spirit continually. Certainly, every born again believer should seek to be filled with the Spirit.

Key Verse: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ep. 5:18).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost first filled the room where they were gathered together. Next, what did the Holy Ghost fill, and what was the evidence of this filling (Ac. 2:4)?
- ✦ Being baptized with the Holy Ghost as Jesus promised (Ac. 1:5), the saints were filled with the Spirit. Did everyone who witnessed their experience understand all that happened (2:12)?
- ✦ How did some of the Jews react? When the saints were filled with the Spirit and as the Holy Ghost was working in them, what did this look like to some of the Jews (v. 13)?
- ✦ How do people act when they are intoxicated? How does drunkenness affect their speech and actions?
- ✦ Why do you suppose Peter stood up and spoke out (v. 14)?
- ✦ What was Peter’s first argument against their accusation (v. 15)? Note: The third hour of the day is 9:00am.
- ✦ What was Peter’s second argument against their accusation (v. 16)?
- ✦ When we study the Scriptures, like the writings of the prophet Joel, what does God want us to understand (Ep. 5:17)?
- ✦ Are people who fill themselves with alcoholic beverages being wise and understanding God’s will for their lives? Why or why not (vv. 17-18)?
- ✦ What is God’s will for our lives (v. 18)?

Think about it: When the saints were baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter stood up to declare all that was happening. When he spoke, it was apparent that neither he nor the people were drunk, for Peter spoke with bold, clear speech and sound reasoning from the Scriptures. The work of God’s Spirit in our lives will not always be accepted and understood by unbelievers, nevertheless God’s will is that the Spirit fill our lives completely. We should therefore seek to be filled with the Spirit.

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“Spirit Baptism” – December 27, 2020

Lesson – “Empowerment”

Scriptures – Luke 24:44-51; Acts 1:8

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever felt weak or inferior as a Christian, not because of anything you did wrong, but you simply felt inadequate to meet a spiritual challenge in your life? Maybe you wanted to tell a friend about Jesus, but you just did not know what to say or how to say it. At some point, every child of God feels this way because we are limited people. But our weaknesses are not a problem for God. In today’s lesson, we will see that God has provided all of the power which we need in order to meet every challenge in our Christian walk.

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).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ Before he ascended back to the Father (Lu. 24:50-51), Jesus spent time with his disciples after his resurrection. What did Jesus do with his disciples during their time together (vv. 44-45)?
- ✦ Specifically, what did Jesus want his disciples to understand about his purpose in coming into this world (v. 46)?
- ✦ Why was Jesus’ death and resurrection necessary (v. 47)?
- ✦ What is the gospel (“good news”) that we preach in the church (v. 47)?
- ✦ Who should hear and receive the gospel of Christ (v. 47)?
- ✦ Who should be Christ’s witnesses in the world today (v. 48)?
- ✦ What is required to be a witness for Jesus?
- ✦ When Jesus told his disciples that they were his witnesses, what promise did he make in order to help them be his witnesses (v. 49)?
- ✦ How were the disciples “endued with power from on high” (Lu. 24:49; Ac. 1:8)?
- ✦ What does the power of the Holy Ghost help us to do (Ac. 1:8)?

Think about it: God has given the power of the Holy Ghost to help us fulfill the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20). He baptizes believers with the Holy Ghost to make them powerful witnesses for Christ. Of course, God knows that we have many weaknesses and limitations. The apostle Paul wrote, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Co. 12:9, 10). Jesus said, “For my strength is made perfect in weakness” (v. 9). In other words, God wants to demonstrate his power through our weaknesses. By the Holy Ghost, God can accomplish through us “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ep. 3:20).

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