



Faith

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Focus



*for
Teens*

*Sunday
School
Services*

Zion Assembly Church of God
Writer: Trevor Graves

Epistles of Peter

“The Second Epistle” – January 7, 2018

Lesson – “Diligence”

Scriptures – 2 Peter 3-10

Introduction to lesson

Do you plan on graduating college, serving in the military, or growing your own business one day? Each of these directions in life has something in common. Each one requires diligence. Diligence is defined as a careful and persistent effort. Like most things in life, our relationship with God requires diligence too. After we begin our relationship with God by faith, we must have diligence if we expect God's will to continue being accomplished in us. That is, we must give careful and persistent effort to growing in God's grace by faith. It's not enough to start having faith in Christ and then do nothing. God has more for us, and it will take some effort on our part to receive God's blessings and be all that He wants us to be. In today's lesson, we will learn why diligence is necessary and so important in our relationship with God.

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

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What has God's divine power given to us? (2 Peter 1:3)
- ✚ What is the purpose of God's exceeding great and precious promises given to us who are in Christ? (2 Peter 1:4)
- ✚ Knowing that God has given us all we need for His purpose to be done in our lives, what are we supposed to do? (2 Peter 1:5-7)
- ✚ If we follow these instructions written by the apostle Peter, how will our diligence benefit us? (2 Peter 1: 8, 10)
- ✚ What is God's role in our relationship with him?
- ✚ What is our role in our relationship with God?

Think about it:

Faith in Christ is the foundation of our relationship with God. After we begin a relationship with God through faith in Christ, God wants us to grow to be fully like Christ. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God has provided all that we need to live like Jesus lived when he walked the earth. He has given us many promises recorded in His word, so we can know what it takes to be Christ-like. Though God has provided everything, His plan for us in Christ will not happen if we do not put effort into it. We have a responsibility to give persistent effort in seeking after God and His plan for our lives. We are instructed by the apostle Peter to give diligence in adding to our faith. Through a persistent effort in seeking God and His promises, the characteristics of Christ's nature such as virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love will accompany our faith and become more and more evident in our lives. When these characteristics are in us and fill up our lives, we are kept from backsliding and our salvation through Christ remains secure.

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Epistles of Peter

“The Second Epistle” – January 14, 2017

Lesson – “Remembrance”

Scriptures – 2 Peter 1:9-13; 1Timothy 4:16

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever forgotten something important in your life? Maybe you forgot to do your homework assignment, or you forgot to take out the trash or feed the pets. What happened as a result? When it comes to growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ, it is very important to remember the truth. That is, we must be careful to remember what we have learned from the Scriptures. We need to continue in studying God's word not only to be led into more truth, but also to be reminded of the truth we have already received. As we will see, the consequences of forgetting the truth are much worse than forgetting your homework or your household chores. In today's lesson, we will learn why remembering the truth is significant for us as we grow in our faith.

Key Verse: “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ How does Peter describe those who were lacking the characteristics of God's nature in their lives? (2 Peter 1:9)
- ✦ What are the benefits to Christians who are diligent to make their calling and election stable? (2 Peter 1:10-11)
- ✦ How often did Peter intend on reminding the saints of truth they already knew? (2 Peter 1:12-13)
- ✦ The apostle Paul instructed a young pastor named Timothy to give special attention to his lifestyle and the doctrine given from Jesus Christ. What would be the result of Timothy following these instructions? (1Timothy 4:16)
- ✦ What are some things that cause a person to backslide?
- ✦ What are some things we can proactively do to keep ourselves from backsliding?

Think about it:

As Christians who are called to be Christ-like, we must not forget about the truth that we have learned. Not only are we supposed to be led by the Spirit into all truth, but we must also keep in mind what we have already learned from God's word and to be faithful in obeying what we know. We often need to be reminded of the teachings of our Lord and Savior, so that we remain spiritually on guard against the tricks of the enemy. As we seek to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ, we will have to overcome temptations, persecutions, and many troubling events in this life. Through these trials, Satan and his forces will try to get our focus off God's truth to make us more vulnerable to his deception. If we do not continue in the Scriptures, we will lose sight of what God has done in our lives, where we are supposed to be going, and we will fall back into disobedience. Therefore, remembering the truth is vital to us, if we intend on making heaven our home!

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Epistles of Peter

“The Second Epistle” – January 21, 2017

Lesson – “Eyewitnesses”

Scriptures – 2 Pet. 1:16-18; Mt. 17:1-6 Jn. 1:14; James 2:1

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever heard something about someone else that wasn't altogether true? Sometimes when you hear a story from someone who heard it from someone else, the story gets exaggerated. In fact, the story can get so exaggerated that it becomes more like a fairy tale than reality. It's good to know that the gospel of Christ is not some made up story or fairytale passed down from generation to generation. But the New Testament story was written by several eyewitnesses – people who saw and experienced the events taking place – and their stories agree. Every detail recorded in the New Testament about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ works together to confirm the same message. Today, let your faith in Jesus Christ be strengthened, as you think about the men who wrote the New Testament.

Key Verse: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What made the apostles' testimony about Jesus reliable? (2 Peter 1:16)
- ✚ Peter, James, and John had a special encounter with Jesus in which His appearance was transformed before their eyes. What happened that day that confirmed their faith in Christ being the Son of God? (Matthew 17:1-6; 2 Peter 1:17-18)
- ✚ How does the Apostle John's description of Jesus compare to Peter's revelation of Jesus being the Son of the Living God? (John 1:14)
- ✚ How does the Apostle James' description of Jesus compare with Peter and John's? (James 2:1)
- ✚ If you could have been an eyewitness of Jesus when He came the first time, what would you have most wanted to see?

Think about it:

We have no reason to doubt that Jesus truly was and is the Son of God, but every reason to believe! The writers of the New Testament were not people who merely heard stories about Jesus, but were eyewitnesses of Him. They saw Him in action as He healed the sick and raised the dead. They heard Him teach the Word of God with their own ears. They even ate with Him after He was raised from the dead. Peter, James, and John had a special experience with Christ as they saw Him in His heavenly glory. They heard the voice of God the Father say, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” This experience only confirmed the revelation they already had; Jesus was the Son of the Living God! The apostles all agree in their revelation. They gave their lives to proclaim Christ as the Son of God and only way of Salvation; and most of them were killed because they would not deny their Lord and Savior. So, if you have faith in Christ today, let your faith be strengthened by the fact that those who wrote the New Testament were not following fairy tales, but they were eyewitnesses of His majesty!

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Epistles of Peter

“The Second Epistle” – January 28, 2017

Lesson – “Sure Word of Prophecy”

Scriptures – 2 Peter 1:19-21

Introduction to lesson

When you are sure of something, you must have a really good reason to believe it. The apostle Peter had many reasons to believe that Jesus was truly the Son of God. He had seen many miracles, heard Him proclaim the gospel, and was privileged to see him shining with heavenly glory while hearing the Father's voice saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” But there was something even more dependable than Peter's experience that formed the foundation of his faith in Christ. It was the Old Testament prophecies. We need to build our faith in Christ on that same foundation, so that we can be sure we have a true revelation of Jesus Christ. In today's lesson, we will consider why the Old Testament prophecies are so important to our faith in Christ.

Key Verse: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What do you think Peter meant by “we have a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19)?
- ✚ Is it okay for us to interpret the Scriptures any way we choose (2 Peter 1:20)?
- ✚ Did the Old Testament prophets decide what they wanted to preach/be written? (2 Peter 1:21)
- ✚ How did the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament come (2 Peter 1:21)?
- ✚ Why do you think it is important to pay attention to the Old Testament Scriptures as well as the New Testament Scriptures?

Think about it:

Peter had a unique eyewitness experience when he saw the Lord transformed and shining in glory, but Peter's experience only gave him more reason to believe the revelation that he had already received. He first had a revelation of Jesus given to him by the Spirit through the Old Testament Scriptures. In his second epistle, Peter wrote that “we have also a more sure word of prophecy,” meaning the Old Testament prophecies which reveal Jesus Christ are even more trustworthy than his experience. There are 332 known prophecies from the Old Testament that have already been perfectly fulfilled by Jesus Christ. This could only happen by the will of God! This fact proves that the writers of those prophecies did not just write what they wanted to, but they were “moved by the Holy Spirit.” They did not even understand all they were writing, but God inspired every word. With this in mind, we should pay close attention to the Old Testament Scriptures as well as the New Testament and allow the Holy Spirit to give us a clear revelation of God's plan through Christ from beginning to end.

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Epistles of Peter

“The Second Epistle” – February 4, 2018

Lesson – “Deception”

Scriptures – Mt. 24:11; Mk. 14:56; 2 Co. 11:12-15

Introduction to lesson

“You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time” (attributed to Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States). Don’t be fooled! In the last days, many will be deceived. Nevertheless, the Lord is coming for a glorious, victorious church. His church will not be led astray. But deception will be on the rise in these last days. Deception involves reducing and distorting the truths of God’s Word. False prophets, false messages, and false promises are plaguing churches around the world. But rest assured, you will not be deceived as long as you remain grounded and settled in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:23). Therefore, read and study the truths of God’s Word. Know your Bible for yourself.

Key Verse: 2 Peter 2:2 “And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ What are some of the messages being promoted today that mislead Christians? (Matthew 24:11)
- ✦ What can we learn about our character versus the deception of our character? (Mark 14:56)
- ✦ How does the enemy work in order to deceive? How could his deception influence your belief? (2 Corinthians 11:12-15)
- ✦ Can workers of deception claim to be “transformed...into the apostles of Christ?”

Think about it:

John warned us in 1 John 4:1 – “try [*test*] the spirits whether they are of God.” However, too many Christians are too lazy to test or even defend their own beliefs. Others are confused because deception has changed their foundation from the solid rock to the sinking sand. We must be cautious in whom we place our confidence because Jude stated in verse 4: “For certain men have crept in unnoticed.” Just because church service has begun does not mean deception will abandon our gatherings. On T.V., two ministers were declaring why they needed private jets. Using deception and a mixture of lies, they spun webs of distorted hopes of prosperity and of distorted understanding of the message of Christ. These wolves in sheep clothes do not bring the gospel of peace but the gospel of deception (Ac. 20:29; Ep. 6:15; Tit. 3:3). These men are the representation of deception, seeking their own desires while abandoning Christ’s! “Indeed, it is not in human nature to deceive others for any long time, without in a measure deceiving ourselves” (John Henry Newman). Remember this, many people have lied so long and believed so many false messages, that they have no idea they are deceiving those around them. Don’t be deceived. Read and study God’s Word.

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Epistles of Peter

“The Second Epistle” – February 11, 2018

Lesson – “God’s Judgment”

Scriptures – Psalm 19:9; Ephesians 5:6, 27; 2 Peter 2:9
Introduction to lesson

“God’s judgment is not meant to be harsh or destructive but God desires that our walk match His commandments” (A. W. Tozer). It is hard to imagine a loving God who judges. However, the truth is He will judge. David pointed out this fact: “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous” (Ps. 19:9). Fortunately, God is our judge rather than man. Man’s judgment and God’s judgment are not the same. Man often judges critically by the outward appearance of things, but God sees the inward man and judges righteously. We must make sure our righteousness is settled in the righteousness of Christ (2 Co. 5:21). One day, Jesus will return for His church (bride) and present to himself a people who have made themselves ready (Rev. 19:7; Ep. 5:27). Will you be ready?

Key Verse: “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Peter 2:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Will God really judge His people? Did Israel ever suffer judgment? Look at Ezekiel 20:23-24, and then talk about Israel’s failures and successes.
- ✚ Will church leaders (i.e. ministers) escape judgment just because they are called by God? (Ro. 14:10-12)
- ✚ Will we get a fair trial before God? (John 5:30; 8:16)
- ✚ What is judged? (Matthew 12:33-37)

Think about it:

“Redemptive theology teaches that mercy does not become effective toward a man until justice had done its work” (A. W. Tozer). Think about it. You are a sinner and meant for prison. Christ comes into the courtroom and replaces Himself for you. The justice department knows your guilt, but forgiveness means your freedom. This freedom can then be used to continue in sin or to live holy. Now, think about the judgment of God. There are many Christians walking this Earth that have not heard the full gospel, and they walk in error. These Christians will be righteously judged according to their walk and also according to their understanding. For those who have heard the truth and rejected it, the judgment is far greater (2 Peter 2:21). Certainly, there is sin and rebellion taking place outside the church, and sometimes, even inside the church. We must therefore guard our spirit. God sent His Son to give us freedom and power to overcome sin (John 10:31-36). In the church, we have the great responsibility to lift up the standard of God’s Word (v. 31). But if we neglect to act responsibly in the church and become entangled in sin, we will face a shameful judgment (1 Peter 4:17). Today, many Christians sin recklessly because they believe judgment will not come to them. But those who practice sinning are called sinners, not Christians; and they will be judged as sinners (Ep. 5:6-7).

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Epistles of Peter

“The Second Epistle” – February 18, 2018

Lesson – “Spots and Blemishes”

Scriptures – Romans 13:13; 1 John 3:6; 1 Timothy 6:14

Introduction to lesson

Spots and blemishes are not appropriate on clothes, silverware, or automobiles. Imagine you head to a fancy restaurant and see your silverware marred with leftover food. Would you use it? Would you think less of the quality of the restaurant? Well, the same goes for Christians. The Lord will not use tarnished individuals in a holy place. There are standards He requires from us, and we must walk appropriately (Rom. 13:13). If the church is tarnished, people who come through our doors will see its faults and never return. Why? When there is a high standard, expectations are also high! 1 John 3:6 teaches, “Whosoever abides in Him sins not.” This is a standard purchased by the blood of Christ. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can live without spot and please the Lord until he comes again (1 Timothy 6:14).

Key Verse: “And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you” (2 Peter 2:13).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Can you really live without spots or blemishes? If so, how? (1 Timothy 6:14)
- ✚ What can truly make us anew and restore us from our blemishes? (1 Peter 1:19)
- ✚ Why is the blood of Christ so important? (1 Peter 1:14)
- ✚ Do you have any spots or blemishes holding you back?

Think about it:

The stains of yesterday can impede the vision for tomorrow. Mistakes, fallen promises, faded glories, lies, deceptions, and unrealistic expectations are all blemishes that hinder us from seeing our true potential. Romans 13:13 explains, “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry.” It sounds easy, but for those whose vision is distorted by blemishes, the path is difficult. Driving a vehicle with dirt covering the windshield is not possible because you can’t see where you’re going. The dirt must be removed. Jesus’ blood washes away the sinful dirt of our lives. Our past mistakes and blemishes should not continue to tarnish us, for these can be removed by the precious blood of Christ, so that we may live forever victorious (1 Peter 1:19). When our vision is clear, we “know that He is righteous” and we “know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him” (1 John 2:29). This is our victory! This gives a believer a clear path to live and walk beside our Savior. Our walk will allow us to abide with Him and not sin, because we know Him and love Him (1 John 3:6). Jesus is the only one who can restore vision to our path and give light to our walk. Let Him clean your window!

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Epistles of Peter

“The Second Epistle” – February 25, 2018

Lesson – “Follow the Truth”

Scriptures – Psalm 119:160; 100:5; 3 John 3; John 8:32; 17:17

Introduction to lesson

When giving testimony in court, we state the following: “I do solemnly promise to tell the truth.” We then should tell the truth no matter the risk. But many people only pay lip-service to the truth, without actually honoring truth. Thus, truth is spoiled by deceptions and lies. Once someone has been found to be untruthful, there is a reputation risk. You cannot trust him/her. As Christians, we know the truth because truth has been revealed to us (John 8:32). Moreover, when we are sanctified and set apart by the truth, this sanctification enables us to live according to the truth that we believe (John 17:17). We are Christians because we “continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the gospel” (Col. 1:23). Following Christ is following Truth; anything less is a lie.

Key Verse: “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteous, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Pe. 2:21).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Define truth? What does truth mean to you?
- ✚ Is our walk related to the truth we declare? What are your thoughts of people who live contrary to what they declare to be? (3 John 3)
- ✚ How good is the truth of God, and can we depend on it? (Ps. 100:5)

Think about it:

“A church which abandons the truth abandons itself” (Hans Kung). “Truth is the highest thing that man may keep” (Geoffrey Chaucer). The highest compliment a person may receive is he/she is honest and true. Long before the writer was born, a man’s handshake was his word and bond. But today a handshake means little. Nevertheless, a person’s word represents the person within. For this reason, we must practice what we preach (speak). The walk that we claim must be evidenced by our actions (Ps. 119:160). As Christians, we must do what we say. When you speak, speak with truth; when you live, live the truth; when you love, let love reign in truth and righteousness (Pro. 12:17). Jesus spoke the truth, and he also lived the truth. Today, so many people want to be called Christians, but they fail to be like Christ. Truth is missing! A true Christian’s walk is in the light of truth, and this truth is found in the pages of God’s Word. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105). “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (v. 11). Get into the Word of God; follow the truth; follow Jesus.

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Writer: Miguel A. Garcia

EPISTLES OF PETER

“THE SECOND EPISTLE” – March 4, 2018

Lesson – “BELIEVE GOD’S WORD”

Scriptures – 2 Peter 3:2; Genesis 2:16-17;

Matthew 24:42-44; 2 Peter 3:1-7

Introduction to lesson

It seems that many different voices in the world compete for our attention. But if you listen intently, you will find there are actually only two voices to listen to. In the Garden of Eden, Eve heard two voices: God’s voice giving them instructions and Satan’s voice confusing God’s intended message (Genesis 2:16-17; Gen 3:4-5). We live in a time of diverse messages coming from many religions and philosophies. If we allow the “words” of this world to command our thinking, then we will become spiritually-confused and have a corrupt mindset. The Apostle Peter in 2 Pet 3:1-7 described two major lines of thought: the world speaks to us; but so does God! To be sure, the spirit of antichrist speaks through the many religions and philosophies, but Christ (and his Spirit) speaks through the church (1 John 4:1-6). The message of the church focuses on being ready for the coming of the Lord. Jesus said, “I come quickly” (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20). He warned, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come...” (Mt. 24:42-44). Many will “scoff” and will ask, “Where is the promise of his coming,” rejecting the authority of the Holy Scriptures in order to follow their own sinful desires (2 Pet. 3:4). Choosing to remain in darkness, Peter labeled this worldly mindset “willingly ignorant” (2 Pet. 3:5). He then encouraged the saints to **BELIEVE** the Word of God over the deception of these last days. We have a great responsibility to declare the truth of Christ’s coming and judgment.

Key Verse: “I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your Apostles” (2 Peter 3:2, NIV).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What does Peter call us to do in 2 Pet 3:2?
- ✚ Why is it important to keep these things in mind?
- ✚ What is Peter warning us of?
- ✚ Why do you think this is important in your Christian walk?

Think about it: Jesus Christ plainly declared that he will come again to receive us to himself (Jn 14:3). “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Th. 4:17). But as Peter indicated, Christ’s coming will also bring judgment upon this ungodly world (2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7). The only one who stands between the world and its judgment is Jesus. He is the Word who is holding everything together until the Father’s appointed time (He. 1:1-3). Scoffers and deceivers will arise, but we must resist their opposition by placing our faith in God’s Word.

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EPISTLES OF PETER

“THE SECOND EPISTLE” – March 11, 2018

Lesson – “The Day of Salvation”

Scriptures – 2 Peter 3:4, 9; 1 Thessalonians 5:2

Introduction to lesson

There is no doubt about it young person; we live in a wicked world, much like the conditions at the time of Noah. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Ge. 6:5). There is also no doubt, that if it weren’t for God’s mercies, the judgment of the world would happen immediately. But God is so longsuffering (i.e. patient) that he waits for sinners to repent. We are living in “the day of salvation!” (2 Co. 6:2; Is. 49:8). From the beginning of time God’s judgment has been announced. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, “prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all...” (Jude 14-15). Many have become “scoffers” (i.e. mockers) and are asking, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Pe. 3:4). They scoff because they do not understand that God’s timeframe is eternal. Peter wrote, “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (3:8). This is why the Lord is not negligent because of his delayed coming; he operates under a more infinitely and expansive perspective than our limited point of view. He clearly is giving ALL of humanity a chance to come to repentance. But Jesus will come as a “thief in the night;” and we need to be ready to receive a new day – the great millennial reign of Christ (1 Th. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Mt. 24:42-44).

Key Verse: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why is the Lord longsuffering according to 2 Peter 3:9?
- ✚ What did Jesus compare the last days to? Mt. 24:37
- ✚ What does 2 Peter 3:8 say in regard to how God sees time?
- ✚ Judgment will come to this world; are you ready? Why or why not? (Have Discussion.)

Think about it: We eagerly expect Christ’s coming. For the righteous, his coming promises glory and victory. However, for sinners, the day of the Lord brings great tribulation. Moreover, Christ will judge the ungodly, and he will ultimately destroy this present world. The day of the Lord is surely coming; but for now, this is the day of salvation!

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EPISTLES OF PETER

“THE SECOND EPISTLE” – March 18, 2018

Lesson – “Living Holy and Godly”

Scriptures – 2 Pe. 3:14; Tit. 2:12-13; Mt. 25:4

Introduction to lesson

As a church, and particularly as young people, we must live holy and godly in this present world because Christ is coming for a holy people set apart to him alone. When we read Peter’s second epistle, we find that his purpose for writing was not to give us a chronological order of the coming of Christ, but to give us a warning. This world will one day pass away! It will come under the judgment of God (2 Peter 3:10). Peter’s whole point was readiness. Be prepared because the Lord wants no one to perish (3:9). Jesus himself spoke these words: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mt. 24:35). Understanding this, the apostle provoked us with a question: “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Pe. 3:11)? As we prepare ourselves for Christ’s coming, we know that holiness is God’s standard for his church (Tit. 2:12-13). Clearly, Christians should not find their fulfillment in the things of this world. The lines should not be blurred between the church and the world. We should have a lifestyle of purity and holiness, and we should “keep our lamps full of oil” (Mt. 25:4). As we prepare for Christ’s coming, Peter admonished us to “look.” He said, “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth” (v.13). He also wrote, “Beloved, seeing that ye look for such things” (v. 14). The reason we look forward is to remain ready – Jesus is coming! But forgetful Christians who lose this focus will be caught off guard when Christ comes again (Mt. 25:10-13).

Key Verse: “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ According to scripture, what is the standard God has set for his people?
- ✚ What is the Apostle Peter’s warning to the church in 2 Peter 3:14?
- ✚ According to Titus 2:12, what are we supposed to deny and how are we supposed to live?
- ✚ Is your lifestyle of holiness something people notice? (Have class discussion.)

Think about it: The Apostle Peter’s admonition to be ready for Christ’s coming centers on “diligence”- “Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (2 Pe. 3:14). This admonition takes us back to 2 Pet. 1:10, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” Young people: let us be diligent to live holy and godly in this present world, because Christ is coming for a holy people set apart to him.

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EPISTLES OF PETER

“THE SECOND EPISTLE” – March 25, 2018

Lesson – “Steadfastness”

Scriptures – 2 Peter 3:15-18

Introduction to lesson

The church will fulfill her missionary purpose through remaining steadfast in the faith to the finish. To remain steadfast means “to be firm in belief and determined.” Because Christ has not already come, we have a great opportunity in our local communities to see people saved from eternal punishment. Some people think of Christ’s delayed coming as “slackness,” but actually it’s God’s longsuffering attitude toward humanity. Christ will surely come back at God’s appointed time, but until then, let us remain unmovable in the faith and win as many lost souls to Jesus as possible. Peter explained the reason behind Christ’s “delayed” coming: “the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15). Until the Lord comes, we, the church, have a missionary purpose that centers on reaching billions for Jesus. It is an enormous task. Our mission is so great that it encompasses “all the world,” yet so specific that it targets “every creature” (Mark 16:15). Of course, we don’t know the time of Christ’s coming, but as long as we are watching and praying, we’ll be ready. Until then, our main focus should be fulfilling our mission in the world, because people in darkness are depending on us to reveal the light of Christ’s salvation (Jn. 12:46; Mt. 5:14). The key to fulfilling our mission begins with obedience: going and telling (Mk. 16:15). Jesus has commissioned us to finish what he began. Even in opposition, let us make sure to continue to spread the “gospel light.” Let’s be steadfast!

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

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Define steadfastness in the Christian life?
- ✚ In 2 Peter 3:17, what is Peter concerned about?
- ✚ Should you and I be more concerned about the day and hour of Christ’s coming, or about reaching lost souls?
- ✚ What do you learn from reading Matthew 9:37? Are you willing to take up the challenge? (Have class discussion.)

Think about it: Peter closed his epistle with two possible outcomes for us: we will continue to grow in the Lord; or we will fall from our steadfastness (2 Peter 3:17-18). How important is our spiritual growth? Our salvation depends on it. In the same way, the success of our mission will likewise depend on our spiritual growth. The church will finish what Christ commissioned her to do, taking the gospel to the ends of the earth and becoming a glorious church. Our job as individual members is to remain steadfast and faithful to the finish.

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“Elisha’s Exploits”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part One – April 1, 2018

Lesson – Elijah’s Successor

Scriptures – 1 Kings 19:15-21; 1 Co. 4:15-16

Introduction to lesson

“WHO’S NEXT?” Who will be the successor or the next in line to fulfill the role and responsibility of serving in positions of church leadership? The next three months we will be studying about the exploits of Elisha, so it is only reasonable for the first lesson to be about Elisha as he began his service for the Lord as Elijah’s successor. Elisha was Elijah’s minister and he learned how to be a prophet by serving him. Everyone knew Elijah by his reputation and his integrity as a true prophet. He was the mighty prophet who prayed for the rain to stop for more than three years, called fire down from heaven, and triumphed over the false prophets of Baal; then he prayed again and God sent rain upon the land (1 Kings 17:1; 18:17-46). Elijah’s days were numbered; there would be a time for him to lay down his mantle (spiritual role) and for someone else to pick it up. God’s plan was for Elijah to anoint a successor to take his place. God chose Elisha. Who was this Elisha? He was a worker, for Elijah found him plowing in the fields. Moreover, he had an understanding of following the call of God: for when Elijah placed his mantle on him, he knew the significance of this action. He was dedicated to the calling. He was not returning to the plow because he built a fire with the yoke, cooked the oxen, and shared a farewell meal with his friends and family. Elijah was an outstanding servant of God, and Elisha gladly became his apprentice. In the same way that Elijah mentored Elisha, leaders in the church need to mentor young believers and prepare them to take the church forward in its mission. Likewise, youth must be willing to follow mentors whose outstanding Christian character and commitment is undeniable (1 Corinthians 4:15-16).

Key Verse: “So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantel upon him” (1 Kings. 19:19).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Looking at the model of Elijah and Elisha, describe the person whom you (Elisha) would be persuaded to follow (Elijah) in order to develop leadership qualities.
- ✚ When Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha, what was Elisha’s reaction? Describe Elisha’s dedication and why was his reaction so important in following Elijah.
- ✚ In 1 Corinthians 4:15 what is the difference between an instructor in Christ and a father in Christ?

Think about it:

ELISHA WAS NEXT! He was anointed to take Elijah’s place but not for several years. Only after he was a servant, helper, and prophet-in-training was he given the mantle (spiritual role). Our future leaders must be nurtured and developed for leadership. So who’s next? Get in line!

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“Elisha’s Exploits”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part One – April 8, 2018

Lesson – Double Portion

Scriptures – 2 Kings 2:1-15; John 14:16-17; Acts 2:1-4

Introduction to lesson

“DOUBLE PORTION” – As Elijah’s minister, Elisha learned everything he could about his future responsibilities. When it came time for Elijah to be taken, Elisha knew he could never fulfill his responsibilities unless he received the anointing and empowerment of God. When Elijah said, “Ask what I shall do for thee,” Elisha knew he needed more of the Spirit of God in order to be the prophet God called him to be. He then asked Elijah to give him a double portion of his spirit. How badly did Elisha want the anointing of God? On the day Elijah was taken, Elisha did not leave his side. Elijah tried three times to persuade him to remain behind, but Elisha stayed close to him. The promise of receiving the double portion was conditional upon seeing Elijah taken. Persistence and anticipation brought Elisha that double portion! The fulfillment of the promise was evidenced by the mantle that fell from Elijah, and by Elisha’s miraculous parting of the Jordan with the mantle. Just like Elijah, the Spirit now rested on Elisha, using him mightily as a prophet in Israel. Today, the Spirit of God is for those who ask the Father for this gift. The baptism with the Holy Ghost was the fullness of the promise Jesus gave in John 14:16-17. How bad do you want the anointing? Jesus promised to send the Spirit, and He came on the Day of Pentecost. It is now up to us to desire, to seek, and to obtain the promise of the Father. If we truly desire a double portion, just as Elisha did, then we must draw closer to God and be persistent in our relationship with the Lord.

Key Verse: “And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (2 Kings 2:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why did Elisha want a double portion of the Spirit?
- ✚ What did Elijah promise to Elisha, and what was the condition that had to be met for the fulfillment of this promise?
- ✚ What is the promise of God to us, and what condition must be met for the fulfillment of God’s promise? (Lu. 11:9-13)
- ✚ Why is it important to have the anointing of the Holy Spirit in our individual lives and in our church services?

Think about it:

♪♪ Anointing fall on me ... Let the power of the Holy Spirit fall on me, anointing fall on me.♪♪ Elisha desired the anointing and empowerment of the Spirit; and because he was willing to seek and be persistent, he received. The doctrine of the baptism with the Holy Ghost was restored in the church at the turn of the 20th century. God’s promise is still good today for those who desire and seek Him. Give me a DOUBLE PORTION Lord!

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“Elisha’s Exploits”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part One – April 15, 2018

Lesson – Healing the Waters

Scriptures – 2 Kings 2:15-22; Matthew 5:13

Introduction to lesson

THE FIRST TEST - After Elijah was taken up into heaven, Elisha received the double portion of the same Spirit that was upon Elijah. Elisha went back to the Jordan River and parted the waters calling on the Lord God. Elisha stayed in Jericho while search was being made for the body of Elijah. While there, the men of the city came to Elisha for help. THE PROPHET: Elisha was God’s leading prophet in Israel; he was the go-to-person when you needed help. Who will people go to today when needing help from God? As Christians, and as members in Zion Assembly, we are representatives of Christ and his church. We must have the anointing of the Holy Ghost working in us when someone comes to us for God’s help. THE PROBLEM: the water was bad, and the ground was barren (without fruit). There was water, but it could not be used and needed healing. This healing is impossible without the anointing. THE ASKING: the men went to the prophet of God for help. The men knew the healing of the water could only be done by God and through His anointed prophet. THE WORD: Elisha said, “Bring me a new cruse (or bowl).” True anointing only comes through a new, fresh vessel. Then he said, “Put salt in it.” Salt has been a necessary means of flavoring and preserving food. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were sprinkled with salt by the priest. Also, salt is a symbol of lasting unity and peace, because it protects food from decay and preserves it unchanged. Jesus said, “Ye are the salt of the earth...” (Mt. 5:13). The anointed new vessel must be flavored with grace, love, and peace, and be zealous to protect and preserve the Word of God as true and unchanged. THE FAITH: the men demonstrated their faith by obedience to Elisha. They did as he required without question and doubting. Faith can move mountains, and bring life and victory. THE WORK: healing started at the springs of the water (i.e. at the source where the water came forth); and this is where Elisha cast the salt. Healing starts at the source of the problem; at the heart of the matter. THE HEALING came by the Word of God. Elisha said, “Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.”

Key Verse: “So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake” (2 Kg. 2:22).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What was wrong with the water? What problem did this cause for the people of Jericho? Do you see these same problems today? Explain.
- ✚ Why a NEW cruse (bowl), and why salt in the bowl?

Think about it:

God’s Word was spoken by the Spirit of the Lord, and the water source was healed! When people come asking for divine help and healing, we must have the anointing of the Holy Ghost and know God’s Word. This will enable us to declare God’s will by divine inspiration, which can bring healing to them.

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“Elisha’s Exploits”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part One – April 22, 2018

Lesson – Cursed Children

Scriptures – 2 Kings 2:23-25; Ro. 13:1-7

Introduction to lesson

IT’S ALL ABOUT RESPECT. In this lesson, we will consider Elisha’s example as the proof that God requires us to respect those over us in the Lord. The next place we find Elisha is on his way to Bethel. As he was going on his way, more than 42 children mocked him showing great disrespect which was driven by the spirit of rebellion. In response, Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord, and two female bears came out of the forest and attacked them! This action may seem harsh, but it is included in the events of Elisha’s life for our learning. The issue here was much more than children’s comments of disrespect. First, we want to take notice of the spiritual distress of Israel. The kings were exceedingly wicked men who led the nation into idolatrous worship and wicked practices. The public disregard for God’s authority in the nation was then evident in a gang of children mocking God’s prophet. Their mocking was not a light matter in God’s eyes. Next, Elisha’s curse was prompted by the Spirit of God. The spirit of rebellion acting in disrespect cannot be overlooked; it must be brought to judgment. Today in our society, we are experiencing this same outright disrespect for governing authority, and especially for the authority of church leadership. Paul also wrote to the saints about respecting and submitting to the “the higher powers” because they are ordered by God (Ro. 13:1-7). When people go against the authority that God has set in place, they bring judgment upon themselves. We are responsible to teach and demonstrate respect for governing authority, especially the authority of church leadership.

Key Verse: “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Romans 13:7).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why such a harsh curse against the children?
- ✚ Compare the disrespect then and now.
- ✚ As Christians, what life lesson can we learn in this story?

Think about it:

“REBELLION vs. RESPECT” – *Rebellion* is a heart issue, and from this rebellious heart comes forth disrespect. It resists authority and is likened to witchcraft in the Bible (1 Sa. 15:23). It brings forth judgment upon us (Ro. 13:1-2). *Respect* – It’s not always easy to come under authority and show respect. Nobody wants to be told what and how to do. But when you are in a relationship with God, he expects you to respect the people he’s placed in authority over you. You may not agree with their decisions, but you still need to show respect for the position and for the person who is in the position. It’s ALL ABOUT RESPECT and giving honor to our spiritual leaders in the church.

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“Elisha’s Exploits”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part One – April 29, 2018

Lesson – Victory in Battle

Scriptures – 2 Kings 3:4-27; 1 John 5:4-5

Introduction to lesson

“IMPOSSIBLE MADE POSSIBLE” – God is able to give us victory over our enemies, even when our situation seems impossible. As we continue with the exploits of Elisha, the next event shows God’s supernatural intervention in circumstances beyond the control of men. Elisha left Bethel and went to Mount Carmel, and then on to Samaria. Jehoram, the son of Ahab, was king and reigned over Israel in Samaria. But he was very evil in the sight of the Lord. Mesh, King of Moab, rebelled against Jehoram. King Jehoram needed to stop the rebellion, but he could not do it alone. So he called upon Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Jehoram, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom joined in an alliance to fight against the Moabites. After seven days of marching toward Moab, they found themselves without water for the troops. Jehoram believed they were heading toward defeat. But Jehoshaphat believed they needed to seek the word of the Lord in order to receive an answer from God. This is where Elisha comes in; to get direction from God, they needed a prophet to give the Word of God. The Lord told them to do something strange; dig ditches all over the valley. Before victory comes, there must be obedience and faith in God’s Word. Not only would they get victory in obtaining water without wind or rain, but God also promised victory over their enemies. Victory came just as God said it would. Although the Moabites tried to fight, it was pointless. They were defeated! When we can do nothing to fix the overwhelming circumstances in our lives, we should turn to God for direction. Through obedience and faith in God’s Word, we too can experience a miraculous victory (1 John 5:4-5).

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

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What was the instruction from the Lord concerning their problem?
- ✚ Why do you believe the Lord gave such strange instructions?
- ✚ How much did faith and obedience play a part in the victory?
- ✚ What can we do when we face overwhelming circumstances in our lives?

Think about it:

God does the impossible for us because God wants us to be victorious. He does not want us to be a defeated people. When our situation is bigger than us, that’s when the Lord can show us nothing is impossible with Him! Our victory comes through faith in Jesus Christ and through obedience to God’s Word.

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“Elisha’s Exploits”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part Two – May 6, 2018

Lesson – “Multiplied Oil”

Scriptures – Philippians 4:19; Matthew 7:7;
2 Kings 4:1-7

Introduction to lesson

Elisha was a great prophet in Israel that spoke the word of God with boldness and unfeigned faith. He took over the office of prophet after Elijah was taken up to heaven. Through Elijah, God did great wonders, and Elisha was not any different. Elisha had a “double portion” of Elijah’s spirit. Through Elisha, we read in 2 Kings 4 that God wanted to show his power in the situation of a local widow woman, a widow “of the sons of the prophets.” She came to Elisha asking for help; her problem was that her husband had left a debt she could not repay. The people she now owed were asking for their money, even threatening to take her two sons and make them “slaves” as payment for what she owed. This was an awful situation, right? The bible tells us, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). If we do not ask, then we cannot expect to receive from the Lord. God is interested in what seems like the most insignificant things in our lives. God is not absent from our everyday concerns, and he is willing to help if we seek, ask, and knock. The prophet asked the woman if she had anything to help her situation. Her response was, “Nothing at all, except a small jar of olive oil.” Elisha told her to borrow a lot of jars, instructed her to lock herself and her sons in the house to prepare for the provision from the Lord, and told her to start pouring into the empty jars. When she did this, all the jars were filled and her needs were met. God is interested in what happens to his children. Place your trust in God’s ability to “provide our every need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Key Verse: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Explain the women’s situation?
- ✚ How would you feel in her shoes? Would your faith stand?
- ✚ Do you know you can go to God for anything?
- ✚ What can you take away from this story that will help you?
- ✚ Can God use any object or only certain ones?

Think about it: Our God can do anything. He is more than able to supply all of our needs. In fact, he can go above and beyond our wildest imaginations. Listen to Paul the apostle: “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...” (Ephesians 3:20). So don’t limit God in your life. Go to him first in every situation, knowing that he is able and believing that he will supply our needs.

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“Elisha’s Exploits”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part Two – May 13, 2018

Lesson – “The Shunammite Woman”

Scriptures – 2 Kings 4:8-17; Luke 6:38

Introduction to lesson

When you do something for someone, is there a particular motive you have? Are you expecting something in return? The “what’s in it for me” train is filled with lots of people – they are not givers, but takers. Elisha met a woman that had nothing in mind but to simply bless the “man of God.” Our motive is the true desire behind our words and actions. Motive is of great importance to God. You see, God knows us “...For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether (Psalm 139:4). Not much is said of the woman (2 Kings 4:8-37), but she was from Shunem and was “great,” which probably meant she was of influence in the town. She showed great hospitality and kindness to the man of God, even to the point of preparing a special room where he could stay when he came that way. The prophet asked if there was anything he could do for her to repay her and her husband’s kindness. Elisha’s servant Gehazi told him that they did not have any children, and her husband was old. Because the intentions of this woman and her husband were pure, simply looking after Elisha and his needs, the Lord gave her a son a year later. “And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life” (2 Kings 4:17). When we do things with pure motives like this woman and her husband, the Lord will reward openly. “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into you bosom” (Luke 6:38). Make sure you give not expecting anything in return, but give simply to honor God and to bless others.

Key Verse: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts” (Psalms 139:23).

Questions to Discuss:

- + What can you understand about this woman’s intentions?
- + Do you think this act pleased God?
- + Do you think this woman was content with what she had?
- + What can you take away from this story that will help you?
- + How can we be more pure in our motives towards others?

Think about it: The gracious woman gave with right motives, and in return, God gave her a miracle she wasn’t even looking for, something beyond her imagination. You see, there is a principle in God’s word that says, “For with the same measure that ye mete whital it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38). We cannot fool God; he knows our thoughts and our heart. When we minister to the needs of others, not thinking of ourselves, God will surely reward accordingly.

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“ELISHA’S EXPLOITS”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part Two – May 20, 2018

Lesson – “The Dead Is Raised”

Scriptures – 2 Kings 4:18-37; Jn. 10:17-18

Introduction to lesson

Last week, we saw how God rewarded a Shunammite woman for her kindness to the prophet Elisha. She was a faithful woman who gave with pure motives, desiring only to serve the prophet whom she acknowledged as “a holy man of God.” Because she gave freely, the Lord gave her a son even though her husband was old. But after her faithfulness was rewarded, her faith would later be tested. In 2 Kings 4:18-37, one day her son went out to his father where the workers were reaping the fields. The boy complained of a headache to his father, who then sent him back home to rest. His mother cared for him until noon, but the boy died in her lap. Obviously, the mother was saddened by this sudden loss. But there is something that shines brightly in the story – her faith that God could bring her son back to life. She ran to see the man of God, and when he asked if her family was alright, she said, “It is well.” She was a woman of great deeds, but more importantly of great faith. Elisha sent his servant, Gehazi, to take his staff and lay it on the child until he got there. After the prophet arrived, he prayed to the Lord, and then he laid himself across the child, eye-to-eye and nose-to-nose. Miraculously, the child was brought back to life. Clearly, God has the power to give and take life (Jn. 10:17-18). Moreover, Christ proved his power over death and the grave when he resurrected from the dead. The Lord can do infinitely more than we can imagine when we believe him for the impossible. When we pray, we should remember that we are calling on the Lord who has all power in heaven and in earth (Mt. 28: 18).

Key Verse: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:52).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ According to Scripture, what was the woman’s attitude regarding the death of her child?
- ✚ Was the boy dead or faking it? What does that tell you about the power of God?
- ✚ How should we approach God with what seems like impossible circumstances?
- ✚ Who is the only one that has power over the grave and death?

Think about it: No doubt, the greatest power of God we can experience is the power of salvation through Christ Jesus. He gives us eternal life. Our natural bodies will die one day. The Shunammites son lived the rest of his life, and then he died again. You see, natural life is not our goal in Christ – “He gives eternal life” (John 17:2; 3:16). The good news of the gospel is one day we will be raised in immortality and never see death, but we’ll live eternally! (1 Co. 15:50-57).

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“ELISHA’S EXPLOITS”

Elisha’s Exploits, Part Two – May 27, 2018

Lesson – “Healing of the Pottage”

Scriptures – 2 Kings 4:38-41; 2 Chronicles 16:9

Introduction to lesson

In today’s lesson, we read about the sons of the prophets who lived through some tough times. Years earlier, there was famine – lack of food – in the land of Israel during Elijah’s ministry. At that time, the land experienced 3½ years of drought (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17). God used famine and drought as a way to judge and humble his people (2 Chr. 6:26-31; 7:12-14). Now, during Elisha’s ministry, we again see famine in the land. Elisha came to visit the sons of the prophets in their time of distress. God took this opportunity to intervene in a marvelous way. You see, time and time again, God shows up in situations where we are powerless, and he receives glory by demonstrating his power in our lives (2 Chr. 16:9). Elisha asked his servant to prepare a pottage (soup/stew) for the prophets. But because of the lack of food, someone went to the fields and gathered wild gourds that turned out to be poisonous. Without any knowledge, they added them to the pot. When the people ate it, they shouted, “There is death in the pot!” Instead of throwing it away, Elisha asked for meal (milled grain), and he put it in the pottage. Of course, there was no power in the actual meal, but it was the physical representation of God’s miraculous healing of the pottage. God had the power to heal the deadly pottage and to turn it into nourishment. In this way, he both provided for and protected them.

Key Verse: “But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot” (2 Kings 4:41).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ According to Scripture, what was the condition of the land?
- ✚ What was Elisha’s response to the need of the sons of the prophets?
- ✚ How do you see God’s hand moving in this story?
- ✚ Have you experienced a supernatural moving of God’s hand on your need?

Think about it: The sons of the prophets had to experience great faith in eating the “poisonous pottage.” They obviously had great confidence in Elisha’s relationship with God. It was an intimate and close relationship. No doubt, this miracle was significant in its timing. God showed the sons of the prophets that he would continue to take care of their needs even during a difficult time of famine. The Lord is faithful; he does not forget about us, and he will continue to supply our needs.

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Elisha's Exploits

"Elisha's Exploits, Part 3" – June 3, 2018

Lesson – "God Is Able and Faithful"

Scriptures – 2 Kings 4:42-44

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever made a promise that you were unable to keep? This is likely to happen with people, but it will never happen with God. It is actually impossible for God to lie, and he is more than able to do whatever he says he will do. He is the all powerful Creator and Possessor of all things. Therefore, he is not limited in his ability and resources. Although we are limited, all things are possible with God. When he says he will do something, you can trust that he will somehow make it happen, no matter what the circumstances may look like. In today's lesson, we will see that God will always follow through with what he says he will do, even when it appears to be impossible.

Key Verse: "So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord" (2 Kings 4:44).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What did the man from Baalshalisha bring to Elisha? (v. 42)
- ✚ What is the meaning/significance of the word "firstfruits?" (v. 42)
- ✚ What did the prophet Elisha tell the man to do with the offering of food? (v. 42)
- ✚ Judging by the man's question, was his offering enough to feed the people? (v. 43)
- ✚ Despite the shortage of food, what did God say was going to happen? (v. 44)
- ✚ When the man from Baalshalisha gave to the people as Elisha told him to do, what happened? (v. 44)

Think about it:

During a time of famine, this man from Baalshalisha brought an offering of his firstfruits. The "firstfruits" was an offering to honor God and showed that he trusted God to supply his needs. Though it wasn't much, God had planned to take the small offering and multiply it to supply the needs of his people. God used the prophet Elisha to proclaim his Word, and then by a miracle, there was more than enough food to feed the 100 men. You see, God will take care of his people in miraculous ways. We just have to live by faith and obedience to his Word in order to experience his perfect plan for our lives. He is always faithful to perform what he has spoken, so don't ever doubt the promises of his Word. Even when we can't see how he's going to do it, and those around us don't understand how we can believe what we believe, we must keep our faith in the God who is able and always faithful to keep his Word!

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Elisha's Exploits

“Elisha’s Exploits, Part 3” – June 10, 2018

Lesson – “God’s Purpose for Miracles”

Scriptures – 2 Kings 5:1-15

Introduction to lesson

Have you ever been amazed from the news that someone has been healed of cancer? Or maybe, you’ve been wowed by the testimony of a broken marriage being restored or a drug addict being completely set free. It’s certainly wonderful when God chooses to do something that goes beyond the ability of what we can do on our own. We will always marvel at miracles such as these, because we can never explain how they are made possible. Although we can’t understand how miracles happen, we can see a trend in how people are affected by them throughout the Bible. Examining what happens after miracles take place can help us understand God’s purpose for using miracles. In today’s lesson, let’s take a look at a special miracle that took place during the time Elisha was a prophet in Israel, and let’s see if we can recognize why true miracles happen.

Key Verse: “**And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant” (2 Kings 5:15).**

Questions to Discuss:

- + Who was Naaman and what kind of sickness did he have? (v. 1)
- + Why did the king of Syria send Naaman to Israel? (v. 6)
- + When Naaman came to the house of Elisha, what message did Elisha send to him through a messenger? (v. 10)
- + Why was Naaman angry at Elisha’s instructions? (vv. 11-12)
- + After listening to his servants, did Naaman obey or disobey the Word of God spoken by the prophet Elisha? (vv. 13-14)
- + What happens when people respond in faith and obedience to God’s Word? (vv. 14-15)

Think about it:

Naaman was basically a war hero, who needed healing from a deadly disease. When he came to Elisha’s house, Elisha did not even go out to meet him, but sent him a simple instruction to dip himself in the Jordan River seven times. This is not at all what Naaman had in mind. He thought Elisha would be present for the healing or at least he deserved to wash in a better river than the Jordan River. But the promise of healing was conditional. Naaman had to humble himself and do things God’s way if he wanted his flesh to come back and be clean from the disease of leprosy. After he followed the Word of God spoken by Elisha, his flesh returned like the flesh of a little child. He then testified that Israel’s God was the one true God. God still works the same way today. He uses miracles to prove his Word and to show how great he is. If we respond in faith and obedience to God’s Word, he will do great things not only for the purpose of meeting our need, but also to reveal himself and the truth of his Word to others!

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Elisha's Exploits

"Elisha's Exploits, Part 3" – June 17, 2018

Lesson – "Trusting God for Miracles"

Scriptures – 2 Kings 6:1-7

Introduction to lesson

God is a miracle worker! There's not a problem too great for God to work out. This is a basic belief that we should all hold if we profess Jesus Christ to be our Lord and Savior. But how often do we exercise our faith when problems come up in our own lives? Do we look to God first, or do we call on him as a last resort? Since God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and in complete control, we should look to him continually to work things out according to his will. Also, we should expect great things to happen when we are dwelling in his presence daily and depending on his great ability. In today's lesson, we will see how God can and will do miracles in our daily lives when we are putting our faith in him.

Key Verse: "And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim" (2 Kings 6:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ The sons of the prophets needed a bigger place to live. What did they plan on doing to fix their situation? (vv. 1-2)
- ✦ Who went with the sons of the prophets? Where did they go? What did they do? (vv. 3-4)
- ✦ What problem came up while one of the prophets was cutting down a tree? (v. 5)
- ✦ Besides the fact that ax heads were very difficult to replace in those days, why was losing this particular ax head such a big deal? (v. 5)
- ✦ Why do you think Elisha cut down a stick and cast it in the river?
- ✦ When Elisha threw in the stick, what miracle took place? (v. 6)
- ✦ What did Elisha tell the man who had lost the ax head to do? (v. 7)

Think about it:

It must have been very disturbing for this prophet-in-training to have lost something very valuable that he had borrowed from someone else. But since he looked in the right direction for help, God miraculously defied the laws of nature and made the iron ax head come back to the surface and float on the water. Difficult situations pop up in our everyday lives. Things that we're not expecting interrupt our plans, and in those moments we may feel stressed, not knowing how we are going to fix our situation. In those times of frustration, we must learn to quickly call upon our Lord like the son of the prophet cried out to Elisha. As the prophet Elisha was right there in his time of need, so God is "a very present help in [our time of] trouble" (Ps. 46:1). He will still work miracles in our everyday lives if we will call upon him in faith. Exactly how he'll work things out, we do not know, but let us look to him in faith and receive his miracle-working power each and every day!

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Elisha's Exploits

"Elisha's Exploits, Part 3" – June 24, 2018

Lesson – "Let God Open Your Eyes"

Scriptures – 2 Kings 6:8-20

Introduction to lesson

Do you think you know a lot? If you could compare how much you do know with how much you don't know, which would be more? For Christians, it's comforting to know that God knows everything! We don't, but he does. He knows exactly what we are going to face each and every day. What's awesome too is that God will reveal what we need to know when we seek after him. The fact that God who knows everything communicates his great knowledge to his people is really a miracle if you think about it. We can actually know his absolute Truth and be enlightened to live in the peace of God that passes our human understanding no matter what happens in this life. In today's lesson, we will see how the all-knowing God kept his people from defeat by opening their eyes to his knowledge and perspective.

Key Verse: "And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ Why was the Syrian king unable to accomplish his military plans against Israel? (vv. 8-10)
- ✦ Who did the king of Syria think was revealing his secret plans to the king of Israel? (vv. 11-12)
- ✦ What did the king of Syria plan to do once he found out Elisha was revealing his plans to the king of Israel? (vv. 13-14)
- ✦ What frightening sight did Elisha's servant see, and why was Elisha not afraid? (vv. 15-16)
- ✦ What did Elisha's servant see after God opened up his eyes? (v. 17)
- ✦ What happened to the Syrians who came to capture Elisha? (vv. 18-20)

Think about it:

It's awesome that God gives us the knowledge and understanding we need to be victorious! If God could reveal the hidden plans of the Syrian king to the prophet Elisha miles away, then God can show us the plans of Satan and his evil forces. If God can open the eyes of Elisha's servant to see the angel armies defending them from the Syrian troops, then God can open the eyes of our heart to see that "greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4). We just need to get into his word and let God reveal Satan's tactics to us, so that we will avoid falling into his traps. We just need to pray so we can see our circumstances through the eyes of faith rather than letting fear get the best of us. Just think; with God's insight, Elisha was able to lead an army of men into the hands of the king of Israel! If we are on God's side, then we have every reason to overcome the enemy and live victoriously in Christ. "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Ro. 8:31)?

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Elisha's Exploits

"Elisha's Exploits, Part 3" – July 1, 2018

Lesson – "Fervent Faith"

Scriptures – 2 Kings 13:14-19

Introduction to lesson

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your service to God? When you pray, do you pour out your heart expecting God to work according to his Word, or do you just pray because that's what you're supposed to do? When you read your Bible, do you listen to God speak and rejoice in his truth, or do you just read to say you've read? When you sing songs of praise, do you sincerely mean it, or does it just come from your lips? Going through the motions may look good on the outside, but it doesn't necessarily mean there is a real and faithful relationship with God taking place. If we are missing the mark in our service to God, how do you think that will affect the will of God in our lives? How might the church be affected? In today's lesson, we will see the effect of doing the right things the wrong way.

Key Verse: "And he said, **Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed**" (2 Kings 13:18).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ When Elisha was very sick and approaching his death, what was King Joash's concern? (v.14)
- ✚ What did Elisha do once Joash had a bow and arrows in his hands? (v.15-16)
- ✚ What did shooting an arrow out of the window represent? (v.17)
- ✚ What did Elisha tell the king to do with the remaining arrows? (v.18)
- ✚ How many times did Joash smite the ground? (v.18)
- ✚ After Joash used the arrows to smite the ground, what happened as a result? (v.19)

Think about it:

Just before Elisha died, God used him one last time to test the faith of the king of Israel. King Joash was troubled about what might happen to his army after Elisha passed on. Would Syria finally defeat them with Elisha gone? As Joash took the bow and arrow in his hands, Elisha placed his hands on the King's hands to symbolize God's favor upon him. He had Joash to shoot an arrow eastward to represent the Lord's deliverance from Syria. Elisha then revealed God's plan to give a complete victory to Israel. Then Joash had to smite the ground with the remaining arrows. Evidently, Joash did not display faith in God's plan because Elisha was angry with him. God must have known that Joash didn't have his whole heart in what he was doing. He only smote the ground 3 times and stopped, therefore they would only smite Syria 3 times instead of having complete victory. This should show us that it's not just outward action that God wants, but first he wants us to have a heart of faith. God has victory for his church, but we must exercise real faith in his Word in order to experience his victory. First and foremost, we do this through prayer. We need to pray whole-heartedly to see God move! Don't be satisfied with just going through the motions of service to God. Let's cry out to him with fervent prayer and begin to serve with a greater zeal than we have ever known. Then we will see the God of Elisha move to bring about victory on top of victory!

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Messiah's Miracles

Part One – July 8, 2018

Lesson – “Water into Wine”

Scriptures – Jn. 2:1-11

Introduction to lesson

Jesus' miracles are all unexplainable. His first and last miracles are impossible to explain. There is and never will be an explanation that will satisfy man or science. It was undoubtedly on purpose. Jesus wanted to make sure that God would receive all the credit. Remember, Jesus' authority is directed by God. Thus nothing Jesus did could be performed without the permission of the Father. Water into wine is impossible. How do you change the molecular substance of water to make wine? Producing wine requires time. Grapes are grown, harvested, and the juice is squeezed from the sweet fruit. But Jesus produced wine from water in a moment of time. How did Jesus do this? We don't know; but we do know that the One who created all things has the power to change water into wine.

Key Verse: “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (Jn. 2:11).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Read Jn. 2:1-11. What would you think of a wedding you attended, and it ran out of food and drink? Would you stay?
- ✚ Discuss the meaning of this miracle. What is so significant in turning one substance into another?
- ✚ What does the water into wine represent to us?

Think about it:

Today it is hard to imagine running out of anything and being unable to replace it. Their weddings could last up to seven days, and they required an adequate substance to make it to the end. The cheap wine was always given at the end. It should be noted that wine is also grape juice, but they share the same name. So the wine was not indicating a drunken party. We should understand that Jesus was asked to help out a family and a community of people at this wedding. He had the authority to help and to supply their need. He has all authority to meet our needs today. When we think about Jesus' turning water into wine, we may ask, “How?” Of course, it is the nature of men to question, but as Christians we should not be filled with questions, but rather filled with faith. Rather than questioning the miracle or the means of fulfilling it, we should rejoice in the power of God. For how can we pray and believe God for such miracles today, if our minds dwell on questions and doubts? If we are Christians, then we must be "...confident before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments..." (1 Jn. 3:21-22). We should be less concerned about explaining the miracle, and more focused on God's power working in our lives today. Miracles are just that – Miracles. They don't need to be explained, but rather embraced by faith.

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Messiah's Miracles

Part One – July 15, 2018

Lesson – “The Miraculous Catch”

Scriptures – Luke 5:1-11

Introduction to lesson

This is not a story about Doug Flute's pass against Miami in 1984. No, this is a story about a miracle that defies all understanding. Our God is truly amazing. He continues to defy all understanding by making absolutely anything and everything out of nothing. God can command the waters to rise and fall, the fish to come, birds to feed, lions to tame, donkeys to speak, rain to fall, and plants to wither or grow fruit. In today's story, Peter was like so many of us; his obedience to Christ was tested by his human reasoning. Peter had fished (toiled) all night with no luck. They finally returned and were mending their nets for the next day when Jesus arrived. When Jesus asked Peter to push out further, Peter spoke with a mindset of “why.” Why would a carpenter tell a fisherman how to fish? But Peter obeyed the Lord and witnessed a miraculous catch. As a result, he was radically changed.

Key Verse: “And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net” (Lu. 5:5).

Questions to Discuss:

Read Luke 5:1-11. Then answer the following questions.

- ✚ What would you have done if you were Peter?
- ✚ Can you name the three feats of obedience by Peter?
- ✚ How far are you willing to go in following Jesus?

Think about it:

God can do miracles; but do we believe he will? Our human reasoning can hinder our faith and undermine our ability to receive from God. Consider Peter. He was a fisherman by trade. Fishing was not his hobby, but it was his business. The mending and washing of their nets were the finish of a long day of hard work. On this particular occasion, they were unsuccessful; and no fish meant no money. Then Jesus came along and wanted to use Peter's boat. The use of Peter's boat was an example of his obedience and respect for Jesus. However, pushing out into the deep was asking a little too much. He explained that they already had performed this feat and failed. After all, Jesus was a carpenter, not a fisherman. Nevertheless, Peter again obeyed the Lord, launching out and letting down the net. No doubt, his expectations were low. However, when you are obedient to Christ things happen. The net did not catch a few fish, but rather too many. The abundance of the catch was too much for any fisherman. Their net broke, and when another boat came to help, both boats were filled with fish until the boats began to sink. No doubt, this was a miraculous catch unlike any Peter had never seen. He knew it was supernatural. This carpenter was more than a carpenter. He spoke with God's authority and did God's mighty works. In verse 8, Peter fell down before Jesus, and he confessed his sin. He was a changed man. He was ready to obey the Lord's call and to follow Jesus!

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Messiah's Miracles

Part One – July 22, 2018

Lesson – “Calming the Storm”

Scriptures – Mk. 4:35-41

Introduction to lesson

Last week's lesson focused on a miracle that took place on a boat in the sea. In today's lesson, we look at another miracle on a boat in the sea. At least four of Jesus' disciples (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) were fishermen by trade. They knew all about storms on the sea of Galilee. As they were crossing the sea, they were caught in a severe storm that left them paralyzed in fear. Have you ever been in a severe storm that made you fearful? Although it may seem like an eternity, storms don't last forever – they are only a short period of confusion and disorder. Sadly, although beautiful days far outnumber the bad, we often tend to remember the bad days. However, after every storm comes peace. We need to focus on the peace. No matter how bad the storms become, we know the One who has the power to calm the storm and to speak peace into our lives!

Key Verse: “And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mk. 4:39).

Questions to Discuss:

Read Mark 4:35-41, and answer the following.

- ✚ What is the purpose of this story?
- ✚ What would be your action: as calm as Jesus, or panicking with the disciples?
- ✚ Can God calm all storms in our lives?

Think about it:

During World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower faced a decision among the worst of storms. The landing for D-Day was upon him, but he had already canceled twice and sat before his generals the decision to go or to postpone. The weather was against the allies; the storm was used to promote a time of rest for Germany. The belief was that the storm was a stumbling block for the allies, and they did not have the faith to launch the attack. Like that day with Christ on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples set sail when the weather was good. They were not expecting a bad storm. But life holds unexpected changes when suddenly unforeseen obstacles become overwhelming. What will you do? On that night, Eisenhower looked at the storms and decided that the victory was just beyond it. The troops were sent (including the writer's grandfather) on ships during high tide and rain. But they went in hope of victory. Actually, it was the weather that helped to win the war. What seemed to be against them worked in their favor. Not fearing an invasion, the Germans left their post. The weather hid the ships until they reached the shore. Truly, our God uses storms of many shapes and sizes to help us exercise our faith in him, so that others can see Jesus. Our faith in him transforms us and lifts us above the storms of this life. Always remember that God is all powerful – “even the wind and the sea obey him” (Mk. 4:41).

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Messiah's Miracles

Part One – July 29, 2018

Lesson – “Casting out Devils”

Scriptures – Luke 8:26-39

Introduction to lesson

The disciples had just arrived following a turbulent journey by sea. As they came from the boat onto land, a wild man met Jesus. He was possessed by many demons. He tormented the Gadarenes by his power and authority; however, his authority had a very short leash. When Jesus came before him, he had no choice but to bow down to Christ and state, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me" (Lu. 8:28). Suddenly, the tormenter was now being tormented, not by hate but by love. This same man who had a legion of demons was subject to the true power and authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded the demons to come out. As we see in today's Bible lesson, the devils had to obey Christ's command.

Key Verse: “Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid” (Luke 8:35).

Questions to Discuss:

Read Luke 8:26-39 and answer the following.

- ✚ What is the purpose of the story?
- ✚ How can we relate this to our spiritual walk?
- ✚ Why did the demon-possessed man fall on his face?
- ✚ What is so special about verses 34-36?

Think about it:

This story has two perspectives that should be considered. First, we read about the spiritual transformation of the possessed man and how he became a great evangelist. We rejoice over the miraculous deliverance of this man who was bound by the enemy. But there is another side to the story. Rather than rejoicing over the salvation of the Lord, the Gadarenes were fearful. They failed to see the possessed man as a child of God, set free, and sitting at the feet of Jesus (v. 35). Instead of accepting God's deliverance and desiring the Lord to continue to move within the region, they wanted Jesus to leave. Didn't the people want to see the salvation of the Lord? Sadly, Jesus departed from them; but he left his witness behind. This man wanted to depart with Jesus and follow him, but the Lord sent him back to his own people to testify of God's delivering power (vv. 38-39). Without a doubt, there is no greater miracle than when we are delivered from the power of sin. Like the man in today's story, we should be faithful to tell others about God's delivering power in our lives.

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Two

Lesson - "Loaves and Fishes" – August 5, 2018

Scriptures - Mk. 6:35-44; Mt. 14:15-21; Lu. 9:12-17;
1:37; 18:27

Introduction to the Lesson: It's hard to imagine that Jesus or the disciples ever grew tired physically. However, in several places in the New Testament we find them sleeping, eating, and drinking fluids in order to be sustained. At the time of this miracle the disciples had been on an evangelistic crusade. Their bodies were weary and they needed rest. They boarded a ship to go to a less populated area; but once they arrived, the crowds had already gathered awaiting them. What would Jesus do? Would he turn them away in order to rest, or would he minister to their needs?

Key Verse: "And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full" (Mt. 14:20).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Are we to always meet our needs before we meet the needs of others?
- ✚ Are there exceptions to this?

Think About It: The crowd that gathered in this remote area was numbered at around 5000, but this number did not include the women and the children. This means the number could actually have swelled to more than 15,000! Although exhausted, Jesus took time to preach the kingdom of God and to heal their sick. At the end of day with the sun beginning to set, the disciples asked that the crowds be sent home. However, because the crowds remained with them, showing a sincere desire for the ministry of Christ, Jesus told his disciples to feed this massive crowd. Of course, the price to feed this large number and the availability of that much food was out of the question. The disciples failed to remember that the miracle worker was there, and he was in charge of all things! A boy with a basket of five loaves of bread and two small fish was called upon. Jesus took his small amount and multiplied it so that all were able to eat. Afterward, a total of 12 baskets of leftovers were counted! But how could this be? Simply put, with man these things are impossible, but with God all things are possible (Lu. 1:37; 18:27). This miracle brings out another important thought. The mission of the church to reach the world with the gospel will be completed before the coming of Jesus. Even though the enormous task of reaching billions of people seems impossible, the mission will be finished. The magnitude of the challenge should never discourage us from "feeding" the hungry souls of lost people with the truth of Jesus Christ! Even as young people, we should get involved in this great mission and put our faith into action. We might feel like we have very little to offer in this mission, but if a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish were used by Christ to meet the need of more than 5,000 people, then Jesus can take our offering (talent, zeal, strength) and use it for his glory!

Conclusion: Jesus fed the crowd of hungry people; but his message to us is so much greater than filling their empty bellies with food. Like Jesus, our compassion for multitudes of lost people encourages our responsibility to feed their hungry souls with the inexhaustible bread of life.

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Two

Lesson - "Walking on the Water" – August 12, 2018
Scriptures - Mt. 14:22-33; Mk. 6:45-49; Jn. 6:16-19; 1 Jn. 4:18

Introduction to the Lesson: Prior to this account of Jesus walking on the water, the disciples faced a terrible storm on the sea where death seemed unavoidable. However, they awoke Jesus, and the Master of the Sea rebuked the storm. With Christ on board the ship, they were safe. But here Jesus wasn't on the boat when the winds blew and the waves beat against them. What would they do? How would they make it through the night?

Key Verse: "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea" (Mt. 14:25).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✦ How do we know when we are beginning to sink?
- ✦ In what ways does fear keep us from obeying the Lord?

Think About It: Jesus and the disciples had just finished feeding a crowd of more than 5,000 people. He then instructed the disciples to board a boat and go to the other side of the sea while he stayed behind to disperse the crowd. He then went to a mountain to pray alone. By the time the sun had gone down the boat was being tossed by the winds and the waves. During the "4th watch" (around 3:00 a.m.), the disciples saw a figure walking upon the water. At first, they thought it was a ghost, and they cried out in fear. But when Jesus spoke, their fear dissipated. It was at this point that Peter made the request to walk with the Lord upon the water. Christ allowed this and Peter stepped out on the water. However, when he looked at the winds and waves, and realized what he was doing, he began to sink. He cried out to the Lord, and Jesus rescued him. There are some powerful lessons for young people to grasp, especially when approaching adulthood. First, they were just as safe on the stormy sea as they were on the dry land. Why? Because by obeying the command of God, they were in God's will. Jesus told them to enter the boat and go to the other side. He fully intended to see them on the other side. He never said the journey would be smooth sailing, he only said he would meet them on the other side. The safest place to be at all times is in the will of God. Certainly, this miracle shows that wherever God sends us, he has the power to keep us. Second, it is not God's will for his children to live in fear. Fear is the opposite of faith, and it keeps us from walking according to the will of God. The apostle John proclaimed that the love of God drives out all fear (1 Jn. 4:18). Third, when Peter removed his attention from the Lord, and began to focus on his own actions and surroundings, he began to fail. Each time that Christ and his will is not the focus of our lives, we will always begin to sink.

Conclusion: For the child of God, we should take great courage in knowing the Lord is always working in our lives, even through our adversity and trials. We struggle against the winds and waves, but the Lord walks upon the water. He is triumphant over every opposition. Indeed, he has everything under control. So we need to trust him and place our faith firmly in Jesus.

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Two

Lesson - "Christ's Transfiguration" – August 19, 2018

Scriptures - Mk. 9:1-9

Introduction to the Lesson: It is truly amazing to consider the eternal nature of God. As human beings, we are bound to this life as we know it by certain laws of nature, namely, time and space. In regard to space, we are limited to one place at one given moment; and in regard to time, we are bound to a 365 calendar year and a 24 hour day. However, the God that created all things (including both time and space) is never limited to those elements. He is eternal (Ps. 90:2) and is everywhere at all times (Ps. 139: 7-18; Is. 66:1). But this infinite God became man (Jn. 1:1) and took on the likeness of "sinful flesh" (Ro. 8:3). However, the glory of God still could not be contained.

Key Verse: "And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them" (Mk. 9:2).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ In what ways has the Lord been revealed to you?
- ✚ What is Christ's most perfect and reliable revelation of himself?

Think About It: In Mark 9:1, Jesus promised that some of his disciples would witness something far beyond this world. They would receive a foretaste of Christ in the power and glory of his kingdom. Six days later, Jesus was alone with Peter, James, and John on a high mountain when he was miraculously transfigured before them (Mk. 9:2-3). In other words, Jesus was temporarily changed; he went through a momentary metamorphosis. In the opening of his gospel, John declared, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). Perhaps, he was reflecting on supernatural experiences like the transfiguration when he wrote these words. On the mount, the three disciples actually witnessed God's spiritual realm breaking forth into their natural sphere. This was not a vision, but they saw with their eyes, heard with the ears, and felt the natural sensations of Christ's transfiguration (Mk. 9:4-8). Thus, they were temporarily permitted to see into the coming glory of God in Christ – a reality hidden from them because of Jesus' humanity (Jn. 17:5). On the mountain, Peter, James, and John actually witnessed the transcending glory of God's kingdom: "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mk. 9:3). Mark described God's glory as white like snow. How white was Christ's glory to the human eye? His raiment was whiter than any launderer could possibly "white" or "bleach" a garment. In other words, his glory was whiter than anyone can imagine. Likewise, Matthew wrote, "and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Mt. 17:2). He compared Christ's glory to nothing less than the radiance of the sun in all of its brightness. In this way, the brilliance of God's glory was manifested in Jesus. To the natural eye, his glory was brighter and whiter than anything the disciples had ever seen. What was the spiritual impact of this experience on the disciples? Miraculous encounters like the transfiguration confirmed to the disciples whom they were following, serving, and witnessing to the world.

Conclusion: Today, as young people living in wicked world, we need a vision of Christ in his glory. We are standing for and representing Christ, the Son of the living God. In order to stand for Christ and represent him to the world, our prayer should be that of Moses, "Show me thy glory" (Ex. 33:18).

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Two

Lesson - "Money from the Fish" – August 26, 2018
Scriptures - Mt. 17:24-27

Introduction to the Lesson: Each and every miracle Jesus performed further proved he was the Christ, the Son of God. He demonstrated his divine power and authority over natural things beyond the control of man. In today's lesson, we will consider a rather unique miracle of Christ when his disciple supernaturally took money from a fish's mouth. When was the last time you found money inside of a fish? Probably never! Money may turn up in many unexpected places, but finding it in the mouth of a fish is incredible, to say the least. Nevertheless, this is exactly what happened when Peter went fishing.

Key Verse: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee" (Mt. 17:27).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Was Jesus a taxpayer (Mt. 17:24-25)?
- ✚ Should we pay taxes? If so, why (consider Mt. 17:27; Ro. 13:4-7)?
- ✚ Why was finding money in the mouth of the fish so miraculous?

Think About It: On this occasion, Jesus and his disciples were in Capernaum. While there, the publicans came to Peter to collect taxes, asking, "Doth not your master pay tribute?" (Mt. 17:24). Peter replied, "Yes" (v. 25). Jesus' life and ministry serve as our pattern of good works that we should know how to please God in all things. We should not only learn of his ways, but we should also follow him and be "doers of the word" (Ja. 1:22). Accordingly, Jesus taught us to follow in his footsteps, saying, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mk. 8:34). It is apparent that Jesus was not antigovernment, but he understood that authorities at various levels of society ruled for the overall good of humanity. The apostle Paul explained this exact point in Romans 13:1-7. Now consider. Jesus created all things in the universe, "visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. 1:16). Yet he gave us his example of paying taxes so that we too would pay taxes. Although we answer to an infinitely "higher power" than man's authority – and this cannot be compromised – we should willingly submit ourselves to civil authorities in order to maintain an influential witness before others. What do we learn from Christ's example of paying taxes? In following the pattern of Christ and being Christ-like, we will accomplish two things: first, we will please God; and second, we will exemplify Christ and his righteousness before the world (1 Pe. 2:9). To pay their taxes, Jesus told Peter to go fishing. He explained that the **first** fish he caught would have enough money in its mouth to pay the tax. We should remember that Peter was a fisherman by trade. He could have easily gone back to the fishing business, selling his catch in the market to support himself. But the Lord had called Peter to follow him in the ministry (Mk. 1:16-18). Paying the tax was necessary, but fulfilling Christ's mission was top priority. Because Peter was committed to Christ and his mission, the Lord miraculously provided all he needed to meet the financial requirements of following him.

Conclusion: In the church, we should face every financial obligation with the expectation that "God shall supply all [we] need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Ph. 4:19). We should have complete faith in Christ's miraculous ability to provide for us as we seek to do God's will. Sometimes we may have abundance, and sometimes we may lack, but we can be confident the Lord will ultimately satisfy our needs (Ps. 37:25).

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Three

"Messiah's Miracles" – September 2, 2018

Lesson – "Raising Lazarus"

Scriptures – John 11:1-44; Matthew 19:26

Introduction to lesson

Jesus was a close personal friend of this family; he loved them very much, and they loved him. At this point, Lazarus became very sick and was dying. Mary, Lazarus' sister, called for Jesus to come and heal him. Jesus waited two days before leaving and making his way to Lazarus. The journey from Galilee unto Bethany was approximately four days. So by the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been buried for four days. By the way things appeared, Jesus was too late. Mary and Martha told Jesus, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (Jn. 11:21). They did not understand God's greater purpose in Lazarus' death. As they walked toward the grave weeping several said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died" (v. 37)? When situations turn out wrong and leave us disappointed, this does not mean God has stopped working in our lives. God is getting ready to do something great. He may be working beyond our expectations.

Key Verse: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Questions to Discuss:

- + Why did Jesus wait to leave (v. 21)?
- + Was Martha's faith shaken (v. 22)?
- + Could they deny that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (v. 45)?
- + What is impossible for God (see Matthew 19:26)?

Think about it: In John 11:43-44, Jesus "cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." Jesus proved his authority over the power of death. He raised people from death to life. Again, Jesus said, "LOOSE HIM, and let him go." The power of death had control until Jesus spoke the words, "let him go." God wants you to be free today. Have you ever experienced that freedom? God wants to give you a new life. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). In Christ, we become a new creature with a new course of life and a new direction. In Christ, our eyes are opened to a new and living way. We have a life full of love, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost. We are free from the chains and bonds of this world. The opportunity for this new life is open to everyone. Jesus loves you and wants you to be free. God is powerful and more than able to do anything we need. But we must come to Jesus by faith and believe in his promises in order to receive.

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Three

"Messiah's Miracles" – September 9, 2018

Lesson – "Withered Fig Tree"

Scriptures – Mark 11:12-14, 20-21

Introduction to lesson

In the week before his crucifixion, Jesus made his way into Jerusalem. After he came into Jerusalem, he cleansed the temple casting out those who were buying and selling, making the house of God into a den of thieves. Within this context, Jesus did something remarkable; he cursed a fig tree, and it withered and died. When Jesus saw the fig tree in the distance, he came close hoping to find figs, but it was empty. Jesus then cursed the tree and immediately the tree dried up. The disciples were amazed at how quickly it died, saying, "How soon is the fig tree withered away!" (Mt. 21:20). The fig tree was symbolic of the nation of Israel, and its withering signified the nation's spiritual death. The nation as a whole no longer produced fruit that was pleasing to the Lord. Therefore, they were rejected by the Lord and judged to be spiritually dead. The fig tree signified judgment upon those who rejected Christ and his gospel.

Key Verse: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if he have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast unto the sea; it shall be done" (Mt. 21:21).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ Why did Jesus curse the fig tree (Mt. 21:19; Mk. 11:13-14)?
- ✚ What was the significance of this miracle (Mk. 11:20-22)?
- ✚ What is faith (He. 11:1)?
- ✚ How strong is our faith in God (Mk. 11:23-24)?

Think about it: The disciples were amazed at what they had seen Jesus do. Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). The disciples had faith in God, but he wanted them to know that faith in God is the key to receive from him. Jesus explained that faith in God produces miracles. But even more, Jesus assured them that faith in God will move mountains (v.23). Faith is to believe in something when there is no proof. Faith is the essential requirement to please God and to receive from him. How strong is our faith in God? When we ask something from God, do we believe it will happen? James 1:6 says, "let us ask in faith not wavering." All things are possible according to his will. Not only are we to have faith in God, but we should also have faith in the promises he made and in his power to perform it. Faith that is wavering is inconsistent and tossed back and forth. This kind of faith does not please God. If God can raise the dead and make a fig tree wither at his words, what is too big for him? Believing and trusting in God are not the same as believing we have received the answer to a specific need at a given moment. Miracles are obtained when we exercise a faith that believes we receive, even as we are asking for it. We must pray and believe as though it is already accomplished.

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Three

"Messiah's Miracles" – September 16, 2018

Lesson – "Christ's Resurrection"

Scriptures – Mark 16:1-14; 1 Cor. 15:52-54

Introduction to lesson

Jesus did many wonderful miracles during his earthly ministry. Many celebrated his supernatural works while many others made fun of and refused to believe him. No doubt, the greatest of Christ's miracles was his resurrection. Jesus' resurrection was the ultimate confirmation that he was the Son of God, for who else could lay down his life and then take it up again. The miracle of Christ's resurrection assures us that the dead in Christ will also be raised at his coming. Paul stated, "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed...So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:52-54). Paul taught that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies on that day. Truly we serve a risen Savior. Because Jesus lives, we have assurance of life eternal. Praise the Lord! We serve a risen Savior, and one day we will rise with him. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25).

Key Verse: "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What did the angel ask the women to do (Mk. 16:7)?
- ✚ Why didn't the disciples believe Jesus was risen (vv. 9-13)?
- ✚ Why is the resurrection so important to us (1 Cor. 15:52-54)?
- ✚ How has the resurrection of Christ changed our lives?

Think about it: Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James witnessed the crucifixion of Christ. Now they were going to the tomb to show their devotion to Jesus and complete the anointing of his body for burial. On the way, they were wondering who was going to move the stone away from the tomb once they arrived. But when they got to the tomb, the rock was already rolled away from the entrance. When they entered, there was an angel dressed in a white robe sitting there. The women were taken back and alarmed at this unexpected sight. The angel spoke to them saying, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you" (Mk. 16:6-7). Even though Jesus spoke repeatedly about rising again on the third day, they were not expecting or even hoping for a resurrection. When Jesus finally did appear to them, it changed everything; and the world hasn't been the same.

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Three

"Messiah's Miracles" – September 23, 2018

Lesson – "Vanished"

Scriptures – Luke 24:13-32

Introduction to lesson

In the New Testament, we read the eyewitness accounts of Christ's life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Of course, the biblical eyewitnesses are foundational to the faith and doctrine of Christ. For the apostle Thomas, seeing was believing. Nevertheless, the faith of these witnesses went beyond all they could see with the natural eye. They ultimately believed in Jesus because of their spiritual vision and revelation. Thus, they declared their eyewitness accounts because they were convinced from the Scriptures that he was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus wanted them to believe in him, not merely because they physically saw him and recognized him with their natural eyes, but because they believed God's Word and saw him with spiritual eyes of faith. When Jesus met two men on the road to Emmaus, they did not recognize him at first. He explained the prophecies written about Christ in the Old Testament. He wanted to open up their understanding from the Scriptures. When they finally reached Emmaus, they were eating, and the Lord blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to them. Instantly, their eyes were opened, and they knew Jesus through the breaking of bread. Suddenly, he vanished.

Key Verse: "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight" (Luke 24:31).

Questions to Discuss:

- ✚ What helped the disciples to see Jesus (Lu. 24:30-31)?
- ✚ Why do you think Jesus vanished as he did (v. 31)?
- ✚ What was the reaction of the disciples (v. 32)?
- ✚ What ultimately established their understanding (v. 27)?

Think about it: One moment he was there and in the next he was gone. After this, any shred of doubt was removed. They knew this was the Lord. Jesus had risen from the dead. What was their reaction to this wonderful experience? They said to each other, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures" (v. 32)? As he declared the Word of God along the way to Emmaus, their spirit was greatly stirred within them. God was working deep in their hearts revealing Christ from the Scriptures. Then as he broke bread with them, they spiritually discerned that this man was actually the Son of the Living God. When they finally knew him, he vanished. His miraculous disappearance further confirmed he was Jesus. He departed supernaturally to prove he was in a resurrected and glorified state. He was no longer limited by the flesh. They saw him with their eyes and heard him with their ears, becoming eyewitnesses of his resurrection. But ultimately they were convinced because Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures.

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Messiah's Miracles, Part Three

"Messiah's Miracles" – September 30, 2018

Lesson – "Christ's Ascension"

Scriptures – Acts 1:1-11; Luke 24:50-51

Introduction to lesson

Following his death and resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples forty days, and demonstrated beyond any doubt that he had indeed risen from the dead. When the appointed time came for him to depart to the Father in heaven, how would he accomplish this? How would the risen Lord go back to the Father? His departing was clearly a supernatural event. Luke explained, "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50-51). He could have simply vanished once again, but instead the disciples watched him as he went up into heaven "and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). When his feet left the ground, no earthly power could hold him down. He defied all the forces of gravity when he ascended back to heaven. Jesus' ascension demonstrated how the saints will be caught up in the clouds at the rapture when he comes again.

Key Verse: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

Questions to Discuss:

- + How did Jesus accomplish this miraculous feat?
- + What do you think the apostles were thinking?
- + What was the significance of his ascension?
- + What are we expecting to receive in a similar way?

Think about it: The ascension served to confirm that he actually returned to the Father in heaven just as he promised. Jesus declared, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:1-6). Jesus' ascension into heaven proved his promise to the disciples. It proved that he is the way to the Father and that he is preparing a place in heaven for us. In fact, as the apostles watched him go to heaven, two angels appeared to them saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Just as Christ ascended, we too will be caught up and "appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). Our bodies will rise to meet Jesus in the air, and then we will be with him in glory forever. Therefore, our hope of salvation is not of this world, but of the world to come. One day very soon, Christ will step out on the clouds and call his children home.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“The Nature of God” – October 7, 2018

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 worshiped. 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 14, 2018

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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Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“The Nature of God” – October 21, 2018

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 28, 2018

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 4, 2018

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 11, 2018

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 18, 2018

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 25, 2018

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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Sunday School Services

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spirit Baptism” – December 2, 2018

Lesson – “The Promise”

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

Introduction to lesson

Every day, 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, “If 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 9, 2018

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 16, 2018

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 23, 2018

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 fills our lives completely. We should therefore seek to be filled with the Spirit.

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Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

“Spirit Baptism” – December 30, 2018

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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