



IKOYI BAPTIST CHURCH

5/7 LATEEF JAKANDE AVENUE FORMERLY BELL,
IKOYI, LAGOS, NIGERIA



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS MANUAL

JANUARY-JUNE 2023



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS MANUAL

J A N U A R Y - J U N E 2 0 2 3

Prepared By:
EDUCATION MINISTRY
IKOYI BAPTIST CHURCH

THIS MANUAL BELONGS TO:

CLASS:

PREFACE

I have no doubt that 2022 was a unique year. What the Lord did with us last year was to prepare us for glory and peace. Little wonder, our theme for this year is Supernatural Blessings. For the next 6 months, we are going to be studying lessons that would help us navigate the hurdles towards our march to Supernatural Blessings. Our theme for the quarters are:

- From Darkness to Light
- Jesus Calls Us
- The Righteous Reign of God

We will trust the Lord to help us transit from **darkness** to **light** as we heed His call in order to experience His reign.

I welcome you on behalf of our Pastor and warmly encourage you not to miss any part of our 2023 Sunday School Lessons. God bless you.

Michael Onyegbu

Minister, Youth & Education

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January 1st 2023

GOD PROMISES TO HEAR AND FORGIVE

Theme For The Quarter: From Darkness To Light

Theme For The Month: God's Promises

Devotional Reading: Deuteronomy 30:1–10

Background Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:1–22

Lesson Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7: 12-22

Memory Verse: *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the Lord's promises of blessing and discipline spoken to Solomon.
2. Categorize those promises in terms of their enduring or temporary nature.
3. State one or more “lessons learned” from times of being personally blessed or disciplined.

INTRODUCTION

After Solomon has accomplished the work of building and dedicating the temple, the Lord again appeared to Solomon and reassured him that he has heard his prayers.

As much as some of us try, we still fall short occasionally. God already saw that His people would sin due to the nature of men, but He had already made a provision and a promise to hear and forgive in those situations.

This gives us confident that when we fall unintentionally or even intentionally sin, God will look upon our pertinent hearts if we humble ourselves and forsake our sins. The question in our time is can we continue to sin and seek forgiveness? God has made a condition – and forsake their wicked ways, without forsaking our sins and going back to God with a renewed mind – can we really obtain forgiveness for sinning perpetually in a certain area?

LESSON 1: TURNING BACK 2 CHRONICLES 7:12–16

Here we find a warning and a promise that if we genuinely turn back from sinning, we can expect God to hear us and heal our land.

This great promise includes a condition for the prayers to be answered - repentance. As we humble themselves, pray and seek the face of God, we must also turn back from our wicked ways. It is not enough to merely turn our hearts to God; we must also turn our lives to God.

When we do this God promises to hear the prayer of His humble, repentant people and will bring forgiveness to His people and healing to their land. Just as the temple was chosen and consecrated, Christians are God's chosen temple (1 Corinthians 3: 16-17). Our mode of conduct reflects on our holy God who has chosen us as his people and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1:14)

LESSON 2: TURNING AWAY 2 CHRONICLES 7:17-22

The Lord warned here about the consequence of turning away from Him, His intention is that His people live in perpetual strong relationship with Him not a “yoyo” relationship or a need-based relationship.

The consequences of not abiding or ignoring/neglecting or abandoning the relationship with the Lord is fruitlessness and in this case death – “pluck by the roots out of the land”. Jesus warns of same thing – any branch that does not bear fruit shall be cut off John 15:2.

In light of this scripture, we need to continually examine our lives, how we are living even though we might be coming to church and professing to be Christians, are we truly abiding, bearing fruit or are we “acting” and have turned away from the Lord?

If you walk before Me as your father David walked...then I will establish the throne of your

kingdom: God's answer to Solomon's prayer had a great *condition*. If Solomon walked before God in obedience and faithfulness, he could expect blessing on his kingdom, and the dynasty of David would endure forever.

God required Solomon to walk before Him just as his father David did. Walk is a common biblical metaphor for a way of life. This was not out of reach for Solomon as he was fully aware of his father's flaws despite which God still accepted him.

The promise and request is followed by consequences (a negative promise). If Solomon or his descendants turn away and forsake God and His word, then God promised to correct a disobedient Israel.

And this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight: God's answer to Solomon's prayer was not an unqualified promise to bless the temple in any circumstance. God blessed the temple and filled it with the glory of His presence, but He would cast it out of His sight if the kings of Israel forsook the LORD.

With such a glorious temple, Israel would be tempted to forsake the God of the temple and make an idol of the temple of God. Here the LORD made them know that He could never bless this error.

When asking for God's mercy, we must remember our own responsibility: to humble ourselves, to offer honest prayer, and to seek God's face as we turn from evil. He honours our repentance when we honor him.

Note Taking

Questions:

1. Have you had time when you wondered if God heard your prayers? What were the circumstances?
2. How do you identify situation that are calling for your repentance?
3. What are the idols in our times and what are the consequences of following them? How do you think your faithfulness could become a blessing to future generations?
4. How do you take care of God's temple – both your own body and the larger church – as acts of dedication to God?

Key Take Away

1. God want us to be continually connected to and abide in Him.
2. Sin has severe consequences and affects our relationship with God, but when we fall, we should quickly humble ourselves, pray, seek God's

face and turn from our wicked ways in order to mend our relationship with Him.

3. Being disconnected from our relationship with God can take us out of His covering as Israel experienced.
4. God's protection over you as His temple is based on your willingness to follow Him

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Jan 2	God's Blessing, Israel's Unfaithfulness	Isaiah 43: 14-28
Tue, Jan 3	Dry Bones Shall Live	Ezekiel 37: 1-14
Wed, Jan 4	Israel Shall be God's People	Ezekiel 37: 15-28
Thu, Jan 5	God's Compassion	Hosea 11
Fri, Jan 6	Stand Firm In the Spirit	2 Thessalonians 2:3-15
Sat, Jan 7	A Faithful Protector	2 Thessalonians 3:1-5, 13-17
Sun, Jan 8	God's Chosen Witness	Isaiah 43: 1-13

January 8th 2023

GOD PROMISES TO RESTORE

Theme for the quarter: From Darkness to Light

Theme for the Month: God's Promises

Devotional Reading: 2 Thess. 3:1–5, 13–17

Background Scripture: Isaiah 43:1–21

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-4, 10-12

Memory Verse: *This is what the LORD says – he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”*
—Isaiah 43:1

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List parallel elements in the lesson text—elements that say the same thing in different words.
2. Compare and contrast the use of the word ransom in Isaiah 43:3 with that word's usage in Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; and 1 Timothy 2:6.
3. List ways to recognize God's protection when it is occurring today.

INTRODUCTION

Often when we go through the consequence of our actions, life seems unfair and unbearable. I remember a man who was recently caught stealing at work and when he was confronted, he pleaded for mercy for his family sake in the name of God. While there are consequences, our God is a merciful God and often restores in His mercy.

In the lesson, we see Lord speaking to his people and promising restoration even when they face impending danger and destruction. Also, God wants us to be reliable and truthful witnesses of all that God had done for us.

LESSON 1: THE LORD ACTS (ISAIAH 43:1-4)

God speaks to His people as their Creator. God has a special claim upon us because He is our Creator. When men forget or reject God as Creator, they fail in the most basic obligation they have to God.

Not only did God create the people of Israel, he was their redeemer who redeemed them from Egyptian Bondage. Because Israel was a chosen nation, he knew them by name. Does God know your name?

Although, the people of Judah had reason to be afraid of the Babylon's army, exile and captivity, such dangers were not to be feared, because the Lord promised he would be with the people.

Knowing that we belong to the LORD is a wonderful answer to fear. How can we be afraid when we know that God is for us, looking out for our interests?

Trials are inevitable; it doesn't say if you pass through the waters, it says when you pass through the waters. God will be with us in the toughest of circumstances. Trials are varied; sometimes we face waters, sometimes rivers, and sometimes fire. Floods overwhelm, fires consume.

The LORD's presence and protection in the fire reminds us of the three Hebrews boys who were cast into the Babylonian furnace because they would not bow to an idol. They were preserved by the presence of God (Daniel 3:19-25)

God describes the motivation for His work of redemption for Israel – as the chosen nation, they were precious and honored in His sight and he loves them. God was willing to give Egypt, Cush, and Seba as a ransom for Israel, which was a steep price to pay. This price only foreshadowed the price God would pay for the redemption of the entire world: his own Son's blood (Mark 10:45). What are you going to do with your freedom, now that your ransom is paid in full?

LESSON 2: THE LORD CALLS ISAIAH (43:10 – 12)

God's people had witnessed the greatness of God. If only

we would remember the great things God had done for us, we would see each wonderful work of His as a witness to the truth that He is the only true God.

In clear, certain words, God says that not only is He the most high God and that there are no other gods beside Him. There are no “junior gods.” There are no “second class gods.” There was no God formed before the LORD, and there will be no God formed after Him.

The LORD God is the only savior. Only He has declared and saved – there was no foreign god among the Israelites who did any good. He is our help and support. Sadly, we often turn to our only savior as a last resort, instead of as a first resource.

If Israel would remember that only the LORD has ever rescued them, they would not be so quick to turn to other gods and to turn away from the LORD. We should all be witnesses to the saving, rescuing, and healing work of the LORD.

God's mighty acts made Israel the witness for the Lord to all other nations. As disciples of Christ, we are to be witnesses to the unbelieving world.

Note Taking

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Questions:

1. What events from your life give you confidence that God is always with you?
2. How does witnessing about the Lord deepen your knowledge, faith, and understanding?
3. How does your life testify that the Lord is your only Savior?

Key Take Away

1. God has promised to be with us, consequently, we should not be afraid of any danger.
2. Just as the Lord required of Israel, we are to be witnesses of Christ to the unbelieving world (Acts 1:8).
3. What do our lives say about Christ? Can people witness the change he has made?
4. What does our worship services say about our God?
5. How does our presence in the community tell the truth about our Lord?
6. What are our relationships and work and pastimes saying about our holy God?

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Jan 9	The Lord is My Shepherd	Psalm 23
Tue, Jan 10	Guided by God's Word	Psalm 119: 81-96
Wed, Jan 11	Trust in the Lord	Proverbs 3: 1-15
Thu, Jan 12	Tested Faith	1 Peter 1: 3-12
Fri, Jan 13	Chosen for Holiness	1 Peter 1: 13-25
Sat, Jan 14	God Guides and Refines	Isaiah 48:1-11
Sun, Jan 15	God Leads and Directs	Isaiah 48: 12-22

January 15th 2023

GOD PROMISES TO GUIDE

Theme For The Quarter: From Darkness To Light

Theme For The Month: God's Promises

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:81–96

Background Scripture: Isaiah 48:1–22

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 48: 3 – 8a, 17

Memory Verse: *This what the Lord says – your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go”*

—Isaiah 48:17

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List words that indicate a time element.
2. Explain the ideal relationships between hearing, seeing, and acknowledging.
3. Identify a personal disconnect among hearing, seeing, and acknowledging—and make a plan for change.

INTRODUCTION

In our lesson for today, we will learn about God's warning for Israel and for us about being stubborn against his warnings. Nothing is hidden from God and only he controls and reveals the future – at his pleasure.

LESSON 1: THE KNOWING GOD (ISAIAH 48:3–8A)

God is a knowing God. His plans are not haphazard. This is evident from God's relationship with the people of Israel. No matter how long it takes for God's plan to be fulfilled, when God makes His plans known, He will act and make them come to pass.

However, despite the above, the people of Israel often acted as though the people did not have ears to hear. Time after time, Israel ignored the Lord's directive and warnings. Iron-necked people would not change their course of action despite the warning of the Lord's prophets, making punishment inevitable. Are today's Christians any different from the People of Israel

LESSON 2: THE LIVING GOD (ISAIAH 48:17)

As our redeemer, God teaches us what is best for us and directs us in the way that we should go. God does not tell his people the right way to live and then retreat to the background. This is an erroneous understanding of who God is and how he chooses to interact with people. Instead, God leads his people in the way they should go. He is like a shepherd who leads his flock of sheep to safe pastures (Psalm 23;2)

When our lives are in step with Jesus and the Spirit, we find ourselves traveling by the way that we should go. we are empowered by the Spirit to grow in our relationship with the Father and become more like Jesus each day. When we do so, we will be better able to hear warnings when we are following a way not set out by the Lord. And we will have ears hearing what the Lord is doing as He calls to us to join His work.

Note Taking

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Questions:

1. In what situations would your best friend or spouse say you can become especially stubborn? In those moments of stubbornness, are you honoring God? If not, what will you do to address the issue of your stubbornness?”
2. What are modern-day equivalents of idols that receive credit that is due to God alone?
3. How can you guard against either taking too much credit for your own blessings or attributing them to something other than God's grace?”

4. How can you motivate a friend or family member to listen to (obey) God's Word?
5. Who or what is your secondary teacher of “the way” you should go?
6. What can you do to develop “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16) in order to adhere ever more closely to the correct way?”
7. Which concept in today's lesson do you find most challenging?
8. Which concept do you find most encouraging?

Key Take Away

1. We should not be stubborn against God's warnings
2. We should not attribute any action to an idol as the people of Israel did time after time.
3. We should learn from the Lord and follow his ways.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Jan 16	Passing from Death to Life	1John 3:14-24
Tue, Jan 17	You are Light in the Lord	Ephesians 5: 1-10
Wed, Jan 18	Christ will shine upon you	Ephesians 5: 1-10
Thu, Jan 19	God's Word Lights my Path	Psalms 119: 97-112
Fri, Jan 20	Your Light Has Come	Isaiah 60: 1-8
Sat, Jan 21	Jesus, the Light of the World	John 8: 12-20
Sun, Jan 22	Obedying God Brings Justice	Isaiah 58: 1-14

January 22nd 2023

GOD PROMISES LIGHT

Theme For The Quarter: From Darkness To Light

Theme For The Month: God's Promises

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 5:11–20

Background Scripture: Isaiah 58:1–14

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 58: 6 – 10

Memory Verse: *“if you spend yourself in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” Isaiah 58:10*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify what results in light breaking forth
2. Explain the context of the three undesirable actions of Isaiah 58:9b
3. Propose a way to honor Isaiah 58:10a personally today

INTRODUCTION

Every community has poor people in its midst, people struggling to have adequate food, clothing, and housing. Isaiah repeatedly addressed care for all people, exhorting his hearers to recognize the poor among them and offer relief. Our lesson has wonderful, timeless teaching for us as we consider the Christians obligations to the poor in our churches and communities.

LESSON 1: GOD'S CHOSEN FAST (ISAIAH 58:6–7)

Our text focuses on fasting, though not as the audience would have expected. The essence of fasting is self-denial. The intent behind this practice is typically understood as being reminded of complete dependence on the Lord.

Unfortunately, fasting could easily become an empty ritual, more about recognition for our own piety than as a spiritual discipline. The question then, is what kind of fast does God really desire?

Although actions such as loosing the chains of injustice, untying the cords of the yoke, setting the oppressed free, breaking every yoke and providing for the needy (including your flesh and blood), are named as the Lord's chosen fast for Israel, the list does not read as things to avoid doing. Instead, these actions have more to do with adding righteous actions and actively obeying the law than giving up negative or neutral actions.

LESSON 2: A BRIGHT FUTURE (ISAIAH 58:8–10)

Light has long been associated with right conduct and knowledge thereof (2 Samuel 23:4). The blessing and calling to live as light continue into the church. Jesus saw himself as a light to a dark world (John 12:46) Paul admonished the Ephesians to live as “children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). Living as light should be the desire of every Christian; such a life does away with selfishness and hypocrisy.

Apart from healing which will quickly appear, righteousness which will go before us, the glory of the Lord which will be our rear guard, The Lord, hearing our call and cry for help, if we do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk and if we get our priorities right as stated in Isaiah 58: 6a-7, our lives will be lives of light dispelling all that darkness represents: selfishness, insincere worship, hypocritical fasting, and all manner of other sinfulness.

Isaiah pushed Israel to understand that what God deems important is not a temporary willingness to fast from food, but a spiritual health that leads to righteous behavior. So, we might ask ourselves two questions: Do I go through ritualistic motions on a regular basis instead of allowing my heart to really be turned toward God during those practices? What “fast” might I need to undertake to align myself with the type of fasting God desires?

A just and caring community will consider the “hungry” in all aspects Isaiah has already defined: food, clothing, and housing (Isaiah 58:7). How can we feel comfortable in our abundance if we know there is suffering in our neighborhoods (1 John 3:17)? It may be impossible for any one individual to meet every community need, but this does not excuse us from keeping our eyes open to the plight of others or striving to meet the needs we see.

Note Taking

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Questions:

1. How can you identify oppression in your community?
2. What resources do you currently devote to caring for impoverished people?
3. Considering that this care is one way of expressing devotion to God, are there any other resources you would consider devoting to aid the poor?”
4. In what ways can you expect the blessings of Isaiah 58:8–9a to come about as a consequence of righteousness in action?

5. How can you continue to do what is right without becoming overly motivated by your own expected blessing?"
6. Which "if" statement of Isaiah 58:9b-10 is more compelling to you? Why?
7. What is a concrete example of working toward greater justice by shining brightly as a light from the Lord?"

Key Take Away

1. What God deems important is not a temporary willingness to fast from food, but a spiritual health that leads to righteous behavior.
2. We should live lives of light that dispels darkness
3. We should carry the burden of caring for the needy
4. God will protect and bless those who fast are acceptable to Him.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Jan 23	God Is Love	1John 4:1-8
Tue, Jan 24	God's Love Revealed	1 John 4: 9-12
Wed, Jan 25	Testimony to God's Love	1 John 5: 10-21
Thu, Jan 26	God Will Go With You	Exodus 33:12-23
Fri, Jan 27	The Lord, Merciful and Gracious	Exodus 34: 5-17
Sat, Jan 28	God is Near Despite Adversity	Joel 1:1-4,14-20
Sun, Jan 29	God Will Pour Out the Spirit	Joel 2: 18-31

January 29th 2023

GOD PROMISES HIS PRESENCE

Theme For The Quarter: From Darkness To Light

Theme For The Month: God's Promises

Devotional Reading: Exodus 33:12–23

Background Scripture: Joel 1:1–4; 2:18–31

Lesson Scripture: Joel 2: 21– 27

Memory Verse: Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. Joel 2:27

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List elements of cause and effect.
2. Compare and contrast the positive and negative imperatives in today's text.
3. Express confident assurance of God's presence in his or her life now.

INTRODUCTION

When we pass through difficult seasons, we often wander when things would turn around and what would even be our lots when that happens. Sometimes we feel left behind and focus on the things we believe we have lost – time, relationships, and opportunities.

In spite of all these, God is promising that even though things might not have worked out as we intended or expected over the difficult seasons of life, that he is able to restore; which implies not only bringing back the times but restoration of the opportunities that we have lost. We see an example in the life of that righteous man Job, who lost everything, but his end was better than his beginning because God did restore everything he lost and also gave him so much more.

LESSON 1: GOD'S RENEWAL (JOEL 2:21–25)

Joel looked forward to the restoration that God promised, and he told Judah to look forward in faith, and to praise God for the restoration He promised - even before they saw it with their own eyes.

With the eye of faith, Joel could already see it happening. All around him were the lush, fruitful pastures and trees that God had restored after the destruction of the locusts.

Joel saw the destruction drought brought. Now with the

eye of faith, he sees God restoring both the former and the latter rain to Israel.

Ancient Israel had no irrigation system and relied on rain to water their crops. In a time of drought, nothing grew. God promises to restore both the former rain (falling in autumn) and the latter rain (falling in spring). When God restores these rains, Judah will have full threshing floors and wine vats.

LESSON 2: GOD'S REMINDERS (JOEL 2:26–27)

God promised to restore what was taken away in chastisement. When the locusts did their work, it looked complete and final, but God promised that He could even restore the years that the swarming locust has eaten.

According to C.H. Spurgeon, this passage seems to suggest that the locusts did not eat the years: the locusts ate the fruits of the years' labour, the harvests of the fields; so that the meaning of the restoration of the years must be the restoration of those fruits and of those harvests which the locusts consumed. You cannot have back your time; but there is a way in which God can give back to you the wasted blessings, the unripened fruits of years over which you mourned. The fruits of wasted years may yet be yours.

A plague of destructive insects with the accompanying feelings of terror—like the one described in this lesson's text—might be incomprehensible to modern audiences.

Therefore, the feelings of joy from God's promised renewal might seem equally as foreign.

However, modern audiences of Joel's prophecy can take away two applications. First, the text serves as an ancient reminder regarding a present reality: the importance of maintaining hope during seasons of suffering. Joel's words, directed to a people in the midst of hardship, reoriented their expectations. Disaster and shame changed to flourishing and celebration, all because of God's great work of renewal. Joel promised the people that hope was possible in the midst of disaster and suffering.

Although sin brings consequences, as it did for the people of Judah, God will not ignore or disregard His people. Instead, God can bring joy to replace sorrow. His timetable may not be ours, and He may not immediately bring joy or fix our suffering. However, His people can take comfort in knowing His presence.

Second, this passage serves as a reminder of God's promises to renew all creation. Joel promised that not only would the people be restored, but creation—the land and the animals would also be restored. Joel calls us to embrace all aspects of God's restoration and renewal. As a result, God's people of all eras can celebrate his presence in their midst.

Note Taking

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Questions:

1. What are some of the great things that God has promised for you?
2. How can believers praise God for His care over creation?
3. How can you share with your neighbors from the overflow of your life's blessings?
4. How do you differentiate feelings of guilt from feelings of shame?
5. What do you need to remove from your life so that you will be better aware of the Lord's presence?

Key Take Away

1. Although sin brings consequences, as it did for the people of Judah, God will not ignore or disregard His people.

2. God can bring joy to replace sorrow. His timetable may not be ours, and He may not immediately bring joy or fix our suffering. However, His people can take comfort in knowing His presence.
3. God's people need not be ashamed—He brings renewal!

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Jan. 30	The Last Will Be First	Matthew 20:1, 6–16
Tue, Jan. 31	God, Teach and Guide Me	Psalm 25:1–15
Wed, Feb. 1	Majestic Is God's Name!	Psalm 8
Thu, Feb. 2	God Will Build a House	2 Samuel 7:1, 4–17
Fri, Feb. 3	Who Am I?	2 Samuel 7:18–29
Sat, Feb. 4	God Confounds the Wise	1 Corinthians 1:18–24
Sun, Feb. 5	God Chooses the Lowly	1 Corinthians 1:25–31

February 5th, 2023

RESUME OF THOSE CALLED.

Theme For The Quarter: From Darkness To Light.

Theme For The Month: God's Call

Devotional Reading: Psalm 25:1-15

Background Scripture: 1Corinthians 1:18-31.

Lesson Scripture: 1Corinthians 1:18-31

Memory Verse:

God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. — 1 Corinthians 1:28-29

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify an appropriate context in which a first century Christian might boast.
2. Explain the difference between the world's wisdom and God's wisdom
3. Share a personal example of worldly wisdom that he or she has rejected.

INTRODUCTION:

Eloquence is a communication tool, and it could make or break/mar a speaker – teacher/lecturer/professor, preacher, debater, or anyone who is engaged in public speaking.

Message delivery is important in retaining the attention of the audience/listeners and helps in benefiting the listeners. Some consider eloquence a bragging point.

Back in the secondary school, students gave nicknames to each teacher on the basis of each one's ability to deliver good stuff to the students. Similarly, several preachers lose their congregants' attention during sermon delivery due to poor presentation or delivery. This accounts for the reason why members prefer listening to some preachers' sermons than to certain others. The dictionary meaning of resume is: a short account of one's career or qualifications: curriculum vitae.

Legend had it that late President Richard Nixon lost the 1959, US, presidential election to Senator John F. Kennedy, because of the former's clumsiness during the debate.

Good message delivery with relevant and important facts goes a long way in retaining the audience's attention to a sermon or lecture or important public communication.

Nevertheless, **what really matters most is the substance of the message.**

It is advisable however that people in the audience are patient and sympathetic with the speakers especially during sermons, so that they can derive the benefits of such sermons. Bias towards the speaker/preacher should be avoided in multi-staff settings where preferences could lead to factions being created leading to divisions in the church.

There is a price to be paid for these errors if not checked: a probable failure in the consequent assessment or missing out on the message of salvation.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: GOD'S POWER (1 Corinthians 1:18-19)

The Apostle Paul planted the Corinthian church. Some twenty odd years later, reports reaching him, in Ephesus about the church, was not edifying. The church was being ripped apart by factions. Each group claiming allegiance to different church leaders.

Paul therefore told them the futility of their allegiances as such claims could not secure their salvation. He asserted that what he gave them was the message of the cross which brought them salvation. The demonstration of God's power in raising Christ from the grave.

Jesus' death on the Roman cross had been and is still being greeted with many responses. Rationally, it sounds

foolish to human reasoning. It is a sign of weakness. Asking someone to entrust his/her life in the hands of someone who was executed on the cross and could not save himself just does not add up.

But this is a spiritual thing. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are only spiritually discerned”. It is therefore only the called who can and will respond positively to the message of the gospel and receive salvation. But to those who are guided by human wisdom, it is their death knell as they stand condemned in their unforgiven sins.

LESSON 2:

WORLD'S FOOLISHNESS & GOD'S WISDOM (1 CORINTHIANS 1:20-25)

God through the ages had turned man's wisdom to foolishness. At Babel when mankind aimed to build a tower to reach heaven, God threw them into confusion and that was the end of the adventure.

Scripture is replete with the wisdom of God turning man's wisdom into foolishness and God's power vanquishing man's overrated might and strength:

- * Joseph in Egypt (interpreting Pharaoh's dreams confounding the Egyptian wise men) Gen 41:8-36

- * Moses and Pharaoh in Egypt at the Red Sea (God's power) Exodus 14:15-28
- * David against Goliath (God's power) 1Samuel 17
- * Esther/Mordecai against Haman (God's power) Esther 3-5
- * Joshua stopped the Sun (God's power) Joshua 10
- * Caleb and his 300 strong army from 32,000 against Moab (God's power) Judges 6-7:25
- * The 3 Hebrew boys in the fiery blaze (God's power) Daniel 3
- * Daniel's exploits in Babylon (God's wisdom & power) Daniel 2; 6.

Whatever a man may conceive in his heart to do, it is doomed to fail if he does not factor God into it. The wise and the knowledgeable are largely those who are perishing because of their arrogance. The book of Ecclesiastes teaches us that the pursuit of wisdom without God is meaningless. —Ecclesiastes 1:16-17. While the wisdom of God is perfect and knows the end from the beginning —Isaiah 46:10, the wisdom of the world does not lead to the knowledge of God. True wisdom must come from God. —Daniel 1:17.

To this end, both the Jews and the Gentiles miss their ways to salvation completely.

The Jews are looking for signs. They saw Jesus perform many miracles but they would not believe because their

hearts were calloused. On the other hand the Gentiles considered themselves intelligent and forever in search of wisdom. Their knowledge has made the message of the cross rather too weak (simple) and unconvincing to be persuasive. It does not ring true.

LESSON 3: CALLING OF THE HUMBLE (1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31)

Jesus stated in the Beatitudes that “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God”. Paul at this stage in the passage begins to disclose the attributes that qualify people for God's kingdom. The kingdom candidates are not the self-satisfied and contented; palace dwellers, the affluent and influential. But God chooses the foolish and weak things of the world to shame the strong and the powerful.

The Sanhedrin took a good look at the Apostles and considered them rabble rousers but were piqued by their tenacity and steadfastness only to find out that, “they had been with Jesus”.

God chose the lowly and the despised to shame the capable and able so that no one may boast before Him. It is not that God abhors using influential members of the community. Not at all!

But all must come to the cross in humility recognising their spiritual poverty. God chooses those who are inconsequential in the world's reckoning and uses them, giving them importance and value.

“Boasting is a display of pride rather than humility. Our salvation through the cross of Jesus is a matter worked out without our participation or prior approval. So, we have no place for boasting about saving ourselves.”

Today's church still confronts the dangers Paul warned about: the church may seek the world's approval. As Paul taught, the true way of salvation will seem foolish, weak and shameful to the world. This Scripture text challenges us to examine how much we have accommodated our priorities to the world.

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are examples of modern wisdom that people pursue to find meaning and purpose apart from God?
2. What beliefs of believers might some people consider to be foolish?
3. How might Jesus acts of humility (Philippians 2:5-11) be considered foolish to the world?
4. How can believers use earthly prestige, like wealth and education, in a way that glorifies God instead of themselves? What might prevent believers from acting in this manner?
5. How would you describe the doctrines of righteousness, sanctification and redemption in your own words? How do these doctrines fulfil God's "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3) for the believer?

TAKE HOME POINTS:

- * That the death of Jesus on the cross initially seemed like an abysmal failure and defeat.
- * Christ's death on the cross is the greatest victory ever won.
- * Without the cross, there is no salvation.
- * The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom
- * The church does not need to be defensive about the message of the cross.
- * We should look to God who can be found in sufferings and the cross and ultimately turn defeat to triumph and glory.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Feb. 6	God's Children and Heirs	Galatians 4:1–7
Tue, Feb. 7	A Holy Nation	Exodus 19:1–8
Wed, Feb. 8	Abide in Christ	John 15:1–14
Thu, Feb. 9	Chosen by Christ	John 15:15–27
Fri, Feb. 10	Be Holy	Leviticus 19:2–4, 9–18
Sat, Feb. 11	Keep God's Statutes	Leviticus 20:22–26
Sun, Feb. 12	Kindle God's Gift	2 Timothy 1:3–14

February 12th, 2023

REMINDER OF THE CALL

Theme For The Quarter: From Darkness To Light.

Theme For The Month: God's Call

Devotional Reading: John 15:1-14

Background Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

Lesson Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

Memory Verse: *“What you heard from me, keep as your pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus”. —2 Timothy 1:13*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify ways that Paul, Lois, and Eunice influenced Timothy's faith.
2. Explain Paul's mentoring technique.
3. Develop a personal plan to guard sound doctrine.

Introduction:

Over the ages, the Christian faith had been beset with various challenges for the adherents. In the first century, martyrdom was common. Only one out of the original twelve apostles did not die a martyr. Across the world the faithful in various places, had to contend with various forms of persecution, and at times, threats to life. Closer home in Nigeria, Christians in the North have had to live with gory tales of loss of lives and properties, deprivations, denials of privileges, destruction (burning) of churches, displacements and other heart-breaking experiences.

In spite of all these, The Church's Bridegroom has remained faithful to His promise that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against His Church.

To keep the embers of faith aglow, there is the need to nurture and train the future generation and equip them to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The book of Proverbs tells us to:

“Train up a child the way he should go, when he grows up, he will not depart from it.” —Proverbs 22:6.

The old tradition of apprenticeship and mentoring yielded continued availability of high calibre professionals, tradesmen and technicians which

provided society, steady supply of well trained, needed labor force. Outstanding, renowned, and highly acclaimed and globally recognised and successful achievers, identify promising younger talents and take them under their tutelage and groom them so that the culture of excellence will be sustained.

Such was the relationship between Apostle Paul and his protégé Timothy and it was very profitable and the reason we are still able to learn from it today.

LESSON EXPLAINED.

LESSON 1: EXEMPLARY HERITAGE (2 TIMOTHY 1:3-7)

Young Timothy was blessed with godly upbringing through the hands of his grand-mother Lois and his mother Eunice. These godly women inculcated in Timothy attributes that made him attractive to Paul, in his pastoral ministry. This experience makes it incumbent on parents to train their children in the way of the Lord right early like Hanna did to Samuel.

Paul found him an attractive prospect, —Acts 16:1-3 and took him under his arms. The two worked so well together that Paul became so attached to him that he

often referred to him as his son. Time and time again when they were separated, Paul was always longing for Timothy to return to him —v4. He was also aware of Timothy's weakness and sought to protect him especially against “bullies” because of his young age.

Paul further encouraged him by fanning aflame the gift of God which was in him through the laying of Paul's hands complementing the seed already sowed in him by his grandma and mother; assuring him that God had infused him with the “Spirit of power, love and sound mind” (self-discipline).

LESSON II : REASON FOR FAITHFULNESS (2 TIMOTHY 1:8-12)

Preaching the gospel in the 1st century was not quite an easy task. It was challenging enough persuading listeners to believe in a crucified Savior; it became more daunting when an imprisoned Apostle had to be added to the message. On the surface and ordinarily, it was a recipe for real embarrassment.

But Paul encouraged Timothy to be conscious that, deep down, and in reality, the message of the cross is all about **grace, —Romans 5:15; eternal life —Rom 6:23; salvation —Ephesians 2:8; and Spiritual gifts —1 Cor 7:7, 12:28.**

These should be his motivation to preach the word in

season and out of season. The gospel message is so powerful that it is the best antidote to Timothy's fear. It should also be ours.

The Apostle Paul continued to reinforce Timothy's mind with assurances of the power of the Spirit that is in him to make him triumph over all challenges, as we also will.

LESSON 3: REQUIREMENT OF SOUNDNESS (2 TIMOTHY 1:13-14)

The availability of operational manuals and guides to help us use the plethora of gadgets available to us today, has made life a lot easier. Our telephones, PlayStations, toys, and computers no longer require specialist put-through. It wasn't so in the days of Apostle Paul and his protégé Timothy. Such manuals did not exist. But by virtue of intimate companionship and joint operations (working together), the Apostle was able to ingrain into the younger man the need to ground his faith and love in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It was a time of transition, for the baton change. The older man was handing over the gospel entrusted to him by Christ to the younger man particularly with the help of the Holy Spirit. What will be your legacy in terms of discipling someone younger?

Note Taking

Questions for Discussion:

1. What words would you use to describe your prayer life as it is now? As you would like it to be?
2. How might your daily habits need to change in order for your prayer life to be described as relentless?
3. Who are the faithful women in your life who helped shape your faith?
How can you glorify God while celebrating these women or their memories?
4. How do your actions differ when you are unafraid versus when you feel great fear?
How do the spiritual gifts in 2 Timothy 1:7 help prevent being overcome in the first place?
5. Given that we are not called or saved based on our works, what reasons can we suggest for holy living?
6. How can you encourage new Christians to be bold and unashamed in living out their faith?
How will you apply this encouragement to your own life?

Take Home Points:

- Mentoring is a practice that should not be allowed to fizzle or die out.
- Parents should inculcate in their children, godly habits and attitudes.
- Encourage older “people” to adopt younger ones in the church and/or at the workplace as mentees.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Feb. 13	Pure and undefiled Religion	James 1:19–27
Tue, Feb. 14	Defender of the Oppressed	Amos 5:7–15
Wed, Feb. 15	Father of Orphans, Protector of Widows	Psa. 68:1–13
Thu, Feb. 16	Defend the Poor and Needy	Proverbs 31:1–9
Fri, Feb. 17	Good News for the Poor	Luke 4:16–30
Sat, Feb. 18	Coming Miseries upon the Rich	James 5:1–11
Sun, Feb. 19	God Has Chosen the Poor	James 2:1–12

February 19th, 2023

RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE CALLED

Theme For The Quarter: From Darkness To Light

Theme For The Month: God's Call

Devotional Reading: Amos 5:7-15

Background/focus Scripture: James 2:1-12

Lesson Scripture: James 2:1-12

Key Text:

Listen my brothers and sisters: Has God not chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love Him? —James 2:5.

Lesson Aims:

1. Summarise why favouritism is incompatible with Christ honouring life.
2. Compare and contrast the biblical concept of favouritism with modern definitions of discrimination.
3. Propose a way to identify and correct occasions when his or her church does not treat people equally.

INTRODUCTION:

A few years ago, an upper middle-class family, of five suffered unexpected but serious consequences of playing favouritism. To the unsuspecting outsiders or observers everything appeared fine with the family. The children were two daughters and a son. The younger daughter was indisputably the parents' favourite of the two girls. This put the older daughter in a very tough position. It was as if she just could not do anything right. Life for her was a grind.

For the younger sibling the lines were always falling for her in pleasant places. She graduated college with top grades and landed a dream job. Her wedding was announced shortly after and preparations were in full gear with a frenzy. Then tragedy struck! She died a week to her wedding day. The family was enveloped in deep grief and the parents were inconsolable. After the funeral, the parents became withdrawn and the chasm between them and the older daughter remained unbridged. It took the intervention of well-intentioned family members and friends to broker reconciliation.

The father survived the loss but the mother was unable to overcome her pain and the unthought-of and unexpected tragedy and consequence of favouritism; painfully she followed her favourite daughter to the grave shortly after.

Favouritism is a cancer (disease) that is ravaging societies across the globe, homes, work places, schools, nations and most unfortunately the church.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: PROBLEM IDENTIFIED (JAMES 2:1-4)

This Apostle James was the half-brother of Jesus Christ, who did not believe in Him, until after his resurrection. —John 7:3-5. He counselled on several topics that affected the early church which are still relevant to today's church.

His counsel on partiality/favouritism/preferential treatment is our focus in this lesson.

He used the example of a well-dressed man and a shabbily attired other who visited a church at the same time and the differential treatment/reception each one respectively received. He made it unequivocally clear that such practice in a church cannot exist alongside faith in Jesus Christ, who died for all men, both the affluent and poor alike. The books of Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 19:7 in the Old Testament state that God shows no partiality neither does He take bribes

Our contemporary situation is replete with mind boggling tales of favouritism, on a grand national scale.

in appointments, distribution of infrastructural projects, promotions, and provision of security. Victims of terrorism are wallowing in abject poverty in IDP camps while their tormentors, “repentant terrorists” receive pardon, rehabilitation, job offers, scholarships and payment of allowances. Some of them are even turbaned with chieftaincy titles. Armed bandits roam around freely while unarmed activists are hurled into jail for protesting their fundamental human rights.

In other parts of the world, people are discriminated against because of the colour of their skins. This inflicts much pain and sorrow. Unfortunately, even the church was implicated in the slave trade.

Partiality/Favouritism is sin and if as Christians, we practise it, we pass judgement on ourselves. We are simply hypocrites who deceive not only others but ourselves.

LESSON II PROBLEM EVALUATED (JAMES 2:5-7)

God in His wisdom has prepared the hearts of the poor in the eyes of the world and humble to respond positively to faith in His, Son Jesus. God has special considerations for the poor, despised, and needy. Psalms 9:18; 10:114; 18:27 state clearly that God holds the poor very dear to

His heart and He will not stand idly by and watch them suffer. He is our Defender and Refuge. The kingdom of heaven is our guaranteed inheritance.

The New Testament gives us insight into God's appreciation of the lowly and humble position of the Virgin Mary and chose her to be the mother of our Saviour Jesus Christ —Luke1: 46-55. Remember, Jesus Himself was born in a manger, so, He can relate to us. So if and when a Christian mistreats, a fellow Christian or exploits him or her, he dishonours himself.

LESSON III SOLUTION: (JAMES 2:8-12)

Fulfilling The Law: Jesus clearly stated that love for God is the greatest commandment; closely followed by love for our neighbours.

Partiality/Favouritism/Discrimination is failure to love in different words and love is at the core of the love of Christ —Galatians 6:2.

Discrimination comes from prejudice. It might be difficult to perceive unless we are at the receiving end and it could be subtly applied. It is everywhere, and even in the church.

Concerted efforts have to be made to stamp it out. One of the ways out is by confronting it and speaking up.

Victims should protest it and draw attention to it. It should not be allowed to be swept under the carpet, neither should attempts be made to muffle any protesting voices.

Here is a question you may not have considered: in what ways have you tacitly approved of discrimination by accepting preferential treatment yourself?

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What examples of favouritism have you seen or experienced?

What are the potential consequences for the church's witness if these patterns are seen in God's gathered people?

2. How can material wealth be a hindrance to faith?

What attitudes and practices keep material wealth from stunting spiritual growth?

3. What benefit is there in learning to love yourself?
How does loving others help keep self-love from becoming a sinful preoccupation?
4. What idea in this lesson is most challenging to you?
How will you seek God's guidance on this issue in the coming week?

TAKE HOME POINTS:

- P A R T I A L I T Y / F A V O U R I T I S M / P R E F E R E N T I A L TREATMENT/DISCRIMINATION all mean the same thing, but only clothed in borrowed robes.
- It destroys homes, families, friendships and also the church of God.
- It blinds the eye to fairness, equity and good judgement.
- It breeds bitterness, division, and creates irreconcilable differences.
- It undermines people's confidence and can cause a lifelong damage.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Feb. 20	Rescued from Darkness	Colossians 1:9–22
Tue, Feb. 21	A Charge to a Young Leader	1 Timothy 6:11–16
Wed, Feb. 22	God Turns Darkness into Light	Isaiah 42:8–17
Thu, Feb. 23	God's Word Gives Light	Psalms 119:121–136
Fri, Feb. 24	You Are Children of Light	1 Thess. 5:1–10
Sat, Feb. 25	You Are Chosen	1 Peter 2:1–12
Sun, Feb. 26	The Light Brings Freedom	1 Peter 2:13–25

February 26th, 2023

RESULTS OF THE CALL

Theme For The Quarter: From Darkness To Light

Theme For The Month: God's Call

Devotional Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10

Background Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-25

Lesson Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-10

Memory Verse: *“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness to His wonderful light. —1 Peter 2:9.*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the stone that causes people to stumble.
2. Explain why certain thoughts and actions are incompatible with status as a member of a holy priesthood
3. State to the class which of the four identifications in 1 Peter 2:9a is most convicting to him or her, and why.

INTRODUCTION:

Identity: The dictionary definition of the word identity is:

“the fact of being who or what a person or thing is”.

It could be a name given at birth, or a cognomen (alias).

In Yoruba culture a given name is determined by the circumstance of the child's birth. A cognomen on the other hand is a nickname and it is determined by the persons character or peculiarity.

We have in the past three lessons deliberated on:

“Resume of the Called”

“Reminder of the Call” and

“Responsibility of Those Called”.

Our focus in this lesson is how do we identify or recognise the “Called” from the pack.

LESSON I: AS NEW BORN BABIES (1PETER 2:1-3)

The transformation and refining processes have been completed. The old nature had been done away with, and we are now new creation having willingly received the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are now born again having had our souls purified.

The old life of malice, envy, deceit, hypocrisy and slander

consistent with the new life. This is necessary so that we do not corrupt the body of Christ. To keep us alive in the new way, we crave spiritual nourishment with the spiritual milk which is the word of God that will help us develop and grow to maturity. This is a delicious experience as attested by Psalm 34:8 — “Taste and see that's the Lord is good”.

LESSON II: LIVING STONES (1 PETER 2:4-8)

The analogy of using a building construction methodology to explain the relationship between Christ and the Church is quite appropriate.

Christ is the Foundation (**Corner Stone**)—Matthew 21:42 on which the church (the **living Stones**) is built. This is not a physical building, but a spiritual house being built by God using these living stones (these stones have life) who come together individually but also in community.—2 Corinthians 6:16.

The result of this edifice is to become a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices (praise), acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

This is our identity. Unlike in the Old Testament, we Christians are now the priests and the temple and we offer living spiritual sacrifices. We Christians no longer need priests as ancient Israel did. Rather, we, now are

priests ourselves as we serve under our Great High Priest. —Hebrews 4:14.

To us who believe, Christ has become for us; “that we will never be put to shame”. But to those who reject Him, He has become a stumbling block and a rock of destruction for their disobedience, just as God purposed it.

LESSON III: OUR NEW IDENTITY (1 PETER 2:9-10)

Finally, the Apostle Peter again draws from the rich resources of the Old Testament to buttress his point regarding our new identity:

A Chosen People — In Exodus 19:6, God referred to Israel as a chosen people by covenant. The church has not acquired this privilege as a result of her accomplishments, but because God chose her (He wanted it that way). We are to thank God for the honor of being his children;

a royal priesthood —roles/offices that were separated in the Old Testament. In the New Testament however, believers are royal because of our relationship with King Jesus who combines the offices of the Great High Priest and King.

Our role as priests requires that we mediate Christ to the lost and the perishing.

As a holy nation —Just like God wanted the old Israel; we are to be unlike other people on earth, in our dedication and service to Him, and in His favor to us. —Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2. We are to be holy people.

As God's special possession, we should be different from unbelievers

Both the apostate Jews, have been reinstated because of God's forgiving mercy while the Gentiles who never knew God have now become God's people because of the redeeming sacrifice of His Son on the cross.

Our task is to declare the praise of Him who called us out of darkness in to His wonderful light.

Note Taking

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Are there any aspects of your life in which you give yourself a pass to indulge in the vices named in 1 Peter 2:1?

What risks are there in engaging in in such, especially when the person speaks or acts anonymously?

2. How do you experience being completely reliant on God?

What other biblical illustrations are helpful when considering both your reliance on God and your responsibility to take initiative in your spiritual walk?

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Feb. 27	Lord, Hear My Prayer	Psalm 28
Tue, Feb. 28	Come to Me, You Weary	Matthew 11: 25-30
Wed, Mar. 1	Jesus Shows Compassion	Matthew 14:13-21
Thu, Mar. 2	I Take Refuge in the Lord	Psalm 71:1-12
Fri, Mar. 3	I Will Proclaim God's Work	Psalm 71:13-24
Sat, Mar 4	Heavenly Rejoicing!	Luke 15: 1-10
Sun, Mar 5	A Rebellious Son Restored	Luke 15: 11-24

March 5th, 2023

THE PRODIGAL SON

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: Called From The Margins Of Society

Devotional Reading: Psalm 28

Background Scripture: Luke 15:11-32

Lesson Scripture: Luke 15:11-24

Memory verse: “The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Luke 15:21

Lesson Aims

At the end of this lesson class members should be able to;

1. Identify the younger son's choices and the outcome of each choice.
2. Identify who each figure in the parable represents in real life.
3. Make a plan to confront his or her own resistance to receiving grace and forgiveness.

INTRODUCTION

John watched his life spiral out of control. He had rebelled against his parents and disregarded the commitments he had made as a believer. Because of anger, neglect of relationships, and substance abuse, John squandered his life and ignored his relationship with God. However, John reconnected with a Christian friend who treated him with compassion and gentleness. Through this patient friendship, John realised the importance of showing repentance to God and other people for his previous misdeeds. John trusted that God would forgive him, and he recommitted his life to being a disciple of Jesus.

John's account and the example of the young son in today's parable should encourage you to trust the all-encompassing nature of God's forgiveness. There is no situation too shameful for God to forgive. Can the same be said of how you react to others who have wronged you? (See Matthew 18:23-35; Ephesians 4:32.)

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: THE DISHONOURABLE SON: (Luke 15:11-19)

The parable of the prodigal son follows two other parables; in each of them, something was lost, the same was found, and followed by celebration. The implication being that there is rejoicing and celebration in heaven, for every repentant sinner. Jesus was responding to the criticism from the Pharisees concerning His associating

with sinners and tax collectors. The central truth is that God eagerly awaits the return of a recalcitrant or rebellious child (sinners), and when that occur, He rejoices and celebrates the child that was lost and, is found. The son here represents the sinners and (the tax collectors) who have repented and returned to God while the Father represent God the Father.

The morale is that God never gives up on any sinner, no matter how terrible and horrible our sins may be, His eyes are always looking out for us and His Arms, outspread waiting for our return to His loving embrace. So, let nothing keep us away from God; for He is a compassionate and merciful God. Jesus, introduced the three characters in the parable at once, a man with his two sons but, our focus would be only on the younger son.

The younger son made an unusual request of his Father for his share of inheritance while the Father was still alive. The attendant implication of his request shows a rebellious attitude towards his family, tremendous dishonour towards his Father and also, wished his Father were dead. The Father responded to his request with mercy and grace by giving him his share of the inheritance; and leaving nothing behind, not intending to return or have anything to do with his father again, the son left the house for a far country, away from sense of responsibility and moral restraint and squandered his resources in a dishonourable manner.

The son was soon reduced to a servant during a famine and took to a humiliating job of feeding swine, considered unclean animals for Jews. But once he came to his senses and decided to leave for home which was the first step to repentance, he worked out what he would say to his father, which included confession of his sin against God, against his father, renouncing any legal claim to sonship and asked to be hired as a servant.

Just like the prodigal son, whenever we realise our mistake, making a decision to return is the first step to restoration. We must note that our apologies should not be half measured designed to admit some culpability but still keep our dignity and pride, it should be total without any reservation whatsoever.

LESSON TWO: THE COMPASSIONATE FATHER; (Luke 15:20-24)

The Father who has been longing for the return of his son all this while, did not remember his hurt and rejection, but was filled with compassion, mercy, grace and forgiveness. This is how God responds to our rebellious attitude toward him when we genuinely repent and return. He restores us back to a position of honour, power and authority, followed by celebration.

When the son went away, he died to the father but once he repented and returned, he was restored and alive. The implications of this for sinners and tax collectors is one of renewed acceptance upon repentance, and for the

Pharisees and teachers of the law, the promise is one of warning. The lesson for us, is that God does not prevent us for rebelling but that repentance is necessary to return to Him; he always desires reunion where broken relationship exist. Because of his love and abundant mercy, he patiently waits for us to repent and eager to restore us to a position of honour, freedom, love and wealth. To obey God leads to life but to rebel against him without repentance and return, leads to death and destruction. How would you respond to the love and generosity of God today?

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How should believers respond when they are insulted and dishonoured
2. In the first part of this parable, we see that the father let the younger son leave (as well as giving him his inheritance). Why would Jesus put this in the story and what does this say about the heart of God for us?

3. How can we learn from the mistakes of the younger son, specifically when it comes to sin and walking away from God?
4. We see the repentance of the younger son. What does it mean to repent and how do we know we have truly repented of our sin towards God?
5. What does the parable teach us about the forgiving nature of God and what guardrails can you adopt to avoid misapplying parables to today's situations?

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. Recognizing sin and confessing guilt are the first steps of repentance
2. God offers and desires reunion where broken relationships exist
3. God is generous and merciful
4. God Welcomes all people to become his beloved children in his family

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Mar. 6	Jesus Heals a Gentle Girl	Matthew 15:21-28
Tue, Mar. 7	Let the Little Children Come	Matthew 19:13-22
Wed, Mar. 8	Learn Wisdom, My Child	Proverbs 1:7-16
Thu, Mar. 9	Teach Your Children God's Law	Deut.4:7-214
Fri, Mar.10	Consecrated from the Womb	Jeremiah 1:1-10
Sat, Mar.11	The Praises of Children	Matthew 21:12-17
Sun, Mar. 12	The Greatest in the Kingdom	Matthew 18:1-9; Mark 10:15

March 12th, 2023

THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: Called From The Margins Of
Society

Devotional Reading: Matthew 19:13-22

Background Scripture: Matthew 18:1-9; Mark 10:15

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 18:1-9

Memory verse: Therefore, whoever takes the lovely position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarise Jesus' view of greatness.
2. Compare and contrast Jesus' view of greatness with that of the disciples.
3. State one way that he or she will practice childlike humility in the coming week.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wanted to be the greatest at something? It is possible that at one time or the other, we have desired/worked to be the greatest or more commonly, the best at what we do. It could be in our profession, vocation, position or office we held/hold. It could even be the greatest father or mother ever. This is simply so for some who want to excel beyond every other person or are competitive by nature or for some other reason. The question the disciples asked Jesus in today's passage "who, then, is the greatest in the Kingdom of God" would seem out of place but recall that Jesus had been teaching them about the kingdom of heaven drawing near. If the Messiah were to rule in the same manner as an earthly ruler, then he would require positions of lesser authority in his kingdom. The disciples assumed that they would fill such roles.

The question clearly showed that they had not understood the kind of kingdom Jesus was talking about, otherwise, they would not have preoccupied themselves with their status in the kingdom. Jesus' ministry prepared people to receive this kingdom and to do so, we must be born again and obedient to his Will. The disciples' question, afforded him the opportunity to talk about another condition. What is that condition, and what else did he say?

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: MEASURE OF GREATNESS: (Matthew 18:1-5)

Jesus did not answer the disciples' question directly, instead, he used visual teaching aid to drive home his point by calling a child and placing him among them. He then said that unless they change and become like little children, they will never enter the kingdom of God. The change here does not necessarily mean salvation, instead, it means to turn away from something, the conversion of one's thought, the process of one's consideration on a matter and when read with the phrase "and become like little children," it becomes co-extensive and imply that, for one to be the greatest in the kingdom of God, he must turn away and become humble as a child. A child is completely dependent upon his parents for nurture, protection, provision and every other necessity of life. So, Jesus was saying to his disciples/us that they/we must turn from their/our sins, be humble, trusting and completely dependent on Him for everything; and since this is not our natural tendency, that, we must change and become ...

The reference to a child in verse 5 does not necessarily mean an actual child, but to a believer who shows the required childlike innocence. **The reward of God does not consist of worldly acclaim of wealth, but of Christ and the life that he offers.** We have to change our assumption of greatness from the world's criteria to that of God's kingdom.

LESSON TWO: WARNING OF SIN: (Matthew 18:6-9)

Jesus makes a transition here from his discuss of a little child to speaking about his followers "...those who believe in me." But it is also possible, by extension, to apply to the little children. The import of Jesus' warning in the verses under consideration is that, great judgement awaits anyone that will cause a believer to break fellowship and sin, transgress God's law, fall away/lose faith in Him. To stress the severity, he said having large milestone around the neck and drowned in the sea (a horrifying way to die), would be a child's play compared to what awaits such a person. Simply put, you must submit to God to be great and so, whoever leads another away from submitting or continuing to submit to God or causes/entraps a believer to sin would face a special type of judgment reserved for him.

Jesus made a further transition to speak about our own sin and what we must do to overcome. He implored the use of metaphor and hyperbole to impress the seriousness of what he meant/means. Jesus wants us to evaluate our actions and inaction, to do all it takes, even to cutting off part of our bodies (figuratively) that could cause us to sin. He was saying that we must be totally committed to defeating sin in our lives because hellfire is real; whatever sacrifice, so to speak, that we have to make in this life to avoid eternal separation from God is worth it, as the alternative is unimaginable.

The Word has gone forth and there must be an opportunity for a response; what would be your response? The response to these messages requires that believers immerse themselves in Jesus' teaching regarding the required attitude toward greatness; which includes, childlike humility and trust, removing the things that causes us or others to stumble in sin. When we do these, we may likely not receive worldly glory, but will certainly share in the promised glory (which is far superior) from God.

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think motivated the disciples to ask that question, and is it appropriate for Christians to concern ourselves with greatness?
2. What positions of status or influence do you hold? If following Jesus required you to renounce them, how would you do it?

3. Why did Jesus use a child to show them what being the greatest mean and what would leadership look like based on being childlike?
4. When you stumble, what steps can you take to mitigate the offense that you cause to others?
5. How do you discern not just what is sinful for you to see but what is not beneficial to you?

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. The criteria of measuring greatness in God's Kingdom is different from that of the world
2. While evil is unavoidable, a person has no excuse for causing another to sin
3. True greatness results from a life of humility and self-control

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Mar. 13	Rivers of Living Water	John 7:37-43
Tue, Mar. 14	Worship God Alone	2 Kings 17:24-34
Wed, Mar. 15	Handling Opposition to God's Plan	Ezra 4:1-8; 11b-16
Thu, Mar. 16	Water on a Thirsty Land	Isaiah 44:1-8
Fri, Mar. 17	Jesus Offers Living Water	John 4:1-15
Sat, Mar. 18	Worship in Spirit and in Truth	John 4:16-26
Sun, Mar. 19	Jesus, the Saviour of the World	John 4:27-42

March 19th, 2023

JESUS TALKS WITH A SAMARITAN

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: Called From The Margins Of Society

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 44:1-8

Background Scripture: John 4:1-42

Lesson Scripture: John 4:7-15, 28-30, 39-41

Memory Verse: *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." John 4:39*

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the barriers that Jesus ignored when talking with the Samaritan woman.
2. Explain the significance of Jesus' discussion with the woman in light of the prevailing cultural, political, and religious taboos he ignored.
3. Identify elements of Jesus' approach to evangelism that he or she will use.

INTRODUCTION

As a little boy, I lived in a less than dignified environment characterised by ethnic diversity and low-income families. When I learned that my friends who lived across that street from our environment were not allowed to come over and play with me, I was hurt and embarrassed. Apparently, I lived in the wrong neighbourhood (to their mind). Yet I remember the youth minister and some members of a church who accepted me the way I was, accommodated and led me to Christ, treated me with some respect and dignity; they even helped out when I had needs. I do not know where I would be if they hadn't disregarded the social barriers in order to invest time in a person like me and make me feel human.

Today, I am humbled at the opportunity to spread the gospel to other communities and individuals who might otherwise be barred from meeting Jesus. In today's text, Jesus himself modelled breaking barriers (in human terms) in ministry. What would be the impact of reaching into the wrong neighbourhood?

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: THE STRANGER (JOHN 4:7-15)

The Samaritan woman was surprised that Jesus, a Jew asked her for a drink despite the animosity, hostility and antagonism between Jews and Gentiles, they did not associate with one another. But Jesus, being the Christ,

LESSON II: THE PROMISED ONE (JOHN 4:28-30, 39-41)

God sometimes spring surprises at us, just as good things come when we least expect them. That was the situation of the woman at the well; in her despondency, Jesus stimulated a desire in her for spiritual things, she responded with a hunger that showed she was not satisfied with her life and desired much more. Jesus then offered her the gift of God and living water.

Jesus exposed the woman deepest secret, as nothing can be hidden from him. He was/is seeking those who will worship him in Spirit and truth; those who will have the law of God written in their hearts. So, he dealt with her with compassion, just as he did with others in similar situation. The woman could not comprehend what was or just happened to her and certainly, couldn't keep it to herself and so, rushed to town to spread the good news about Jesus, the Messiah that they have been waiting for. Many came to believe in Jesus because of her testimony, and many more believed when they heard from Jesus directly.

Just like Jesus had to go through Samaria, encountered the woman and changed her life, so much so that she became one of the greatest evangelist that ever lived; He is at the door of your heart today, knocking, asking to be allowed in. He is not bothered by limits or human barriers, neither is He concerned about your past, He knows everything and yet, merciful and compassionate.

Note Taking

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Will you let Him in like the woman did and have eternal life? The decision is yours, but please, do not leave this meeting without making a decision for Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can prejudice affect a Christian's witness and what lesson can we learn from John chapter 4 as a whole?
2. What is the message of the woman at the well and how is Jesus' gift of salvation different from what the world offers?
3. What hurdles does your congregation face when reaching out to a community that might be mistrustful of your motives?
4. How did others testimony influence your early love for Jesus

APPLICATION

- How can you encourage others to quench their spiritual thirst this week
- What are some prejudices you will ask God to help you overcome

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. Jesus' earthly ministry did not include limits based on typical human barriers
2. In Jesus' presence, many of the boundaries that we have put up or that others have put up around us disappear
3. As we find our identity in Jesus, we can become the conduit of mercy and grace to those we encounter

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Mar. 20	Resist the Devil	John 4:1-10
Tue, Mar. 21	The Weapon of Our Warfare	2 Corinthians 10:1-6
Wed, Mar. 22	Lord, Remember Your People	Psalm 106:1-7, 36-41, 47-48
Thurs, Mar. 23	The Lord Delivers the Fearful	Psalm 34:1-15
Fri, Mar. 24	Let God's Enemies be Scattered	Numbers 10:29-36
Sat, Mar. 25	Jesus set a Demoniac Free	Mark 5:1-13
Sun, Mar. 26	Sent to Bear Witness	Mark 5:14-20

March 26th, 2023

THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: Called From The Margins Of Society

Devotional Reading: 2 Corinthians 10:1-6

Background Scripture: Mark 5:1-20 (cf. Luke 8:26-39)

Lesson Scripture: Mark 5:1-13, 18-20

Memory verse: *The man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. Mark 5:20*

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List some key element in Jesus' encounter with the demoniac.
2. Explain the Messianic secret and how this story breaks with this theme in Mark's Gospel.
3. Share testimony about Jesus' intervention in his or her life.

INTRODUCTION

Either through social media or the television, we would have come across skits or shows that reveal “before and after” Images to show positive transformation results. For example, home renovation, weight loss, hair care makeovers or antique restoration. In today's lesson, imagine what the “before and after” pictures would look like for the man who encountered Jesus.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: ARRIVALS: (Mark 5:1-5)

The word “they” was referring to Jesus and his disciples, who went across the lake to a region of the Gerasenes, which was broadly called the Decapolis (10 cities). Imagine what greeted Jesus as soon as he alighted from the boat, a man with an impure spirit/demon possessed (this is when a demon resides in a human body, showing his personality through his host/object) who lived in the tomb. This man lived amongst the dead, wore no cloths, broke chains with which he was bound, cried and cut himself with stones and couldn't be contained/subdued by anyone. One thing is clear from this account, that when one is demon possessed, he loses control of his instinct to care for himself and reduces one to beastly station. It foists a situation of isolation from loved ones, feelings of rage, hopelessness/worthlessness and suicidal thought or action. In all of this, Jesus didn't consider the issue of

ritual uncleanness when the man came to him, like the Jews would ordinarily, his major concern in such instances, is wholeness in the Lord than with outer, ritual uncleanness.

The forces of darkness know who Jesus is and that he has authority over them and their works. They know that he is the only one (and those to whom he has given authority) who can cast them out of anyone/thing, permanently heal and release anyone under their bondage. Does the devil reckon with who you are in Christ?

LESSON II: CONFRONTATION: (MARK 5:6-13)

There is the superstition that a person has spiritual authority over another if he knew his exact name. One can only wonder if that was what the possessed man was trying to do with Jesus when he called out his name. However, something one thing is very clear, the devil knows the true identity of Jesus, that He is The King, who is the absolute ruler over the heavens and the earth and under the earth, including all creatures within those realms (supernatural or otherwise. So, he honours the One who has the supreme powers over him and to whom, he is subject in judgment soon.

His (Unclean spirit) plea to Jesus not to be tortured, apparently stemmed from Jesus' command for him to

come out of the man. This shows a clear acknowledgement of Jesus' authority over him/them. The Legion of Demons begged Jesus profusely not to cast them into the abyss (a place of punishment for demons) to which he acceded by allowing them to enter the pigs. The drowning of the pigs only underscores the ephemeral nature of material wealth in comparison to human soul. Again, the demons knew who Jesus was and couldn't even enter the pigs without his permission; how much more valuable are you to God, than for Him to allow the devil to torment you. Their plea also speaks to the fact that we can know and even pray to Him and yet not surrender to Him.

LESSON THREE: DEPARTURES: MARK 5:18-20

The man who had been healed wanted to be with Jesus, which should be the natural response after such an encounter; for no one who encounters Him and remain the same. The man who had been healed didn't just want what Jesus could do for him but, also wanted to be with Him. Remember, that when Jesus called his disciples, it was first for them to be with him. But in this case, Jesus refused the man's intense plea but instead, told him to remain among his people/community, where he had been previously known as the demon possessed man, and continue to be a witness of what the Lord has done for him. Just like the Samaritan woman (last week's lesson), the man obeyed Jesus, remained among

his people and became a great evangelist in the ten Gentile cities of the Decapolis.

Has Jesus done anything for you? You may be thinking in your mind that, you were never demon possessed like the man in today's story, but know that the greatest miracle ever, is that of salvation. Are you saved? if so, you, like the man have been commanded by Jesus to share this good news by telling the world about Him; that is what the great commission is all about. And if not, do not let this opportunity pass you by, accept Him today and be saved.

Will you be obedient to this heavenly command, just like the man in today's lesson.

No matter the legions aligned against us, Jesus is in control! All we have to do is place our faith in him, with joy and obedience.

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe this man before Jesus encountered him.
What do you think he looked like? what did he do all day and what did the people in the town think about him.
 - a. If God could save him, why are we prone to think of others as “too far gone”
 - b. And before you object, that you don't think that way, consider what our actions toward the lost prove we believe about their possibility of accepting Jesus
2. We may not have a story like the man, but what are some examples of internal storms that Jesus has freed us from?
3. Following from today's lesson, in what ways had God been kind enough to reveal some areas of prejudice in our lives; has he revealed/changed the way we think about people from certain background, races, income level and occupation?
4. How have you heard demon possession explained in relationship to mental health issues?
5. Who has benefitted from your witness to Jesus' work in your life?

TAKE HOME POINTS

- We too have been delivered by Jesus. And like the former demoniac, we have stepped out of a life that was more like death.
- We should show our gratitude to God by proclaiming to others the good things that God has done for us.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Mar. 27	The Stones Would Shout	Luke 19:28–40
Tue, Mar. 28	Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem	Luke 19:41–48
Wed, Mar. 29	As Fleeting as Shadows	Job 14:1–15
Thu, Mar. 30	This Is My Body	1 Corinthians 11:23–34
Fri, Mar. 31	Why Have You Forsaken Me?	Psalms 22:1–2, 7–19
Sat, Apr. 1	Deliver Me, O Lord	Psalms 22:20–31
Sun, Apr. 2	A Surprising Encounter	Luke 24:1–12

April 2nd, 2023

THE TOMB IS EMPTY

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: Experiencing The Resurrection

Devotional Reading: Psalm 22:20-31

Background Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

Lesson Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

Memory Verse: *The men said to them, “why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!” Luke 24:5b-6a*

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. To list important facts surrounding the discovery of the empty tomb.
2. Compare and contrast the women's expectation of the tomb versus its reality.
3. Identify his or her personal expectations that Jesus might upend.

INTRODUCTION

Queen Elizabeth, Britain's longest –reigning monarch who was on the throne for 96yrs died on Sep.08, 2022 and was buried on Sep.19, 2022 beside her husband who died in April 2021, at the King George VI Memorial Chapel at Windsor, United Kingdom. Many dignitaries from all over the World attended the burial ceremony which was with pomp and pageantry. This was the death of a Queen and many, including family members mourned her departure. She did not promise her loved ones or subjects that she will come back to life after some days in the grave and her family members should go and wait for her at Buckingham Palace. She was a mere mortal and not to be seen here on earth again; gone and gone forever only to face judgment of her deeds here on earth. However, there is a King that died and resurrected after three days, leaving behind an empty tomb; ascended into Heaven and will come back to judge the World.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: EARLY MORNING DISCOVERY – (LUKE 24:1-7)

Jesus had a humble beginning; born in a manger to an earthly parent with modest means. He came to change the course of mankind by God's ordained mercy. He came to that which was His own but His own did not receive Him. He was crucified and made to die like a common criminal. His earthly ministry was heavily

supported by women even up to His last moment on the cross. Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the council of Sanhedrin, was granted permission to take Jesus' body and bury Him in his private tomb. A heavy stone was rolled over this tomb to seal it in order to prevent His disciples taking away His body in the guise that He had risen from death as He had foretold. It was Friday evening and because of Sabbath, the following day, the women who had been with Jesus looked forward to the first day of the week to have the opportunity to administer more spices to preserve His body. The women arrived very early the first day of the week and alas, the stone had been rolled away and before them was an empty tomb. Seeing an empty tomb did not fit their expectation. Who had taken His dead body away, they wondered. Then suddenly, an Angel of the Lord appeared to them and declared, "why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen. Remember he told you...the Son of Man must be delivered to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again". The grave could not hold Him down. John 11:25b - *"I am resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe?"*

LESSON II: BEARING WITNESS – (LUKE 24:8-12)

These women worked so closely with Jesus even to the point of His death and were blessed with the

opportunity to be the first witnesses of His resurrection. It was through these women that the other eleven disciples would hear of Jesus's resurrection just as He had told them. These women of honour were Mary Magdalene – the one that Jesus had delivered from serious demonic possession; Joanna who was the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod Antipas household. Given her marriage to Chuza, this would have alienated her from the household but she preferred to take the risk to identify with Jesus; and Mary, the mother of Jesus. ***While the eleven at the first instance, including Peter, could not believe what had happened, the women remained steadfast in their belief of the resurrected Christ. What is your personal testimony of the risen Christ so that you too can be a witness and share the good news to the fallen world?***

Note Taking

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DISCUSSIONS

1. How would you respond to the statement that the account of Jesus' resurrection is only “nonsense”?
2. What would be the most effective way to encourage nonbelievers to investigate the Gospels' claims in this regard?
3. What steps will you take in the upcoming Easter to proclaim the good news that Jesus is alive?

APPLICATIONS

- 1.0 Since the grave could not hold Jesus down, as a believer, death cannot prevail over you.
- 2.0 Your relationship with Jesus will elicit an encounter that is experiential over your life.
- 3.0 Just like Joanna, always be on the side of Jesus in spite of seeming persecutions that might come your way.

TAKE HOME POINTS

- 1.0 Jesus lives and lives forever
- 2.0 The women traveled and supported Jesus's Ministry even to the point of death and reaped the benefit of being the first witnesses to His resurrection.

April 9th, 2023

DISCIPLES BELIEVE THE RESURRECTION

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: Experiencing The Resurrection

Devotional Reading: John 20:11-18

Background Scripture: Luke 24:13-49

Lesson Scripture: Luke 24:13-27, 30-31

MEMORY VERSE: *Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight*
Luke 24:31

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

- 1.0 Summarize the conversation that took place on the road to Emmaus.
- 2.0 Compare and contrast the disciples' experience of Jesus when they did not and then did recognize Him.
- 3.0 Write a prayer for his or her eyes to be opened to Jesus' presence during personal "road-to-Emmaus" times.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Apr. 3	I Have Seen the Lord!	John 20:11–18
Tue, Apr. 4	Blessed Are Those Who Believe	John 20:19–31
Wed, Apr. 5	The Lord Is My Strength	Psalms 118:1–14
Thu, Apr. 6	I Shall Not Die, But Live	Psalms 118:15–29
Fri, Apr. 7	Jesus Meets Two Disciples	Luke 24:13–24
Sat, Apr. 8	Jesus Opens the Disciples' Eyes	Luke 24:25–35
Sun, Apr. 9	You Are Witnesses of These Things	Luke 24:36–49

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered that at one moment someone is living and just at another, he's motionless and never responding to any form of stimulus? We all say, he is dead. Life has gone out of him. But what exactly is this 'Life'? Has science been able to define and explain 'Life'? If scientists could, they should have been able to stop people from dying. They should also be able to bring people back to life as they would have discovered the therapy to bring back from the dead. The death of one, signifies an end to his dreams and aspirations. The priests and the Jewish elders thought so of Jesus and this underscored the reason for His crucifixion; to bring an end to His ministry in the most shameful and painful way. Did they succeed?

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: THE JOURNEY BEGINS: LUKE 24:13-16

These two men were also followers of Jesus Christ and had heard about the empty tomb as narrated by the women. In their perspective, the final chapter of Jesus' life and ministry had been written by his death on the cross. Now, they were faced with the mystery of the empty tomb and discussed these and other things as they travelled from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Suddenly, the resurrected Jesus came up and walked with them but were kept from recognizing Him. ***As we journey through life and contemplate things in our hearts***

as disciples of Christ, do we know that the unseen Christ is ever present with us every step of the way? Are we going to allow Him to explain the mystery of Life and direct our steps at the crossroad for us?

LESSON II: THE TRAVELERS' LAMENT: LUKE 24:17-24

Not knowing that the third person in their midst was Jesus, the continued their reference to Jesus as a prophet that was powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. They lamented His treatment in the hands of the chief priests and Jewish rulers who handed Him over to be crucified. They were also disappointed that the death of Jesus meant an end to their expectation of seeing Jesus as the one who could redeem Israel from the Roman occupation. They were fixated on their secular challenges and not spiritual. **What are your expectations as a believer? Are they founded on the temporal or the eternal?**

LESSON III: THE STRANGER RESPONDS: LUKE 24:25-27, 30-31

Jesus whom they were yet to recognize called their attention to the teaching of the prophets regarding the promised Messiah. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself. He had Himself proclaimed before His disciples that everything that is

written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled; even talking about His arrest, death and resurrection (Luke 18:31-33). The travelers must have found this interaction with the Stranger both educating and insightful as they invited Him to pass the night with them as an act of hospitality. At the dining table, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to serve them. The Stranger now playing the role of the Host. Then, their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. ***Have you invited Jesus into your life? Will you allow Him to be the Host of your life so that your Spiritual eyes will be opened to see Jesus?***

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION

1. Can you explain, quoting relevant Bible Scriptures what 'resurrection' means to you as a believer?
2. How should believers respond when God's plans turn out differently than they had expected?

3. Who is the host of your life i.e who or what is controlling your life? Do a self-introspection to answer.
4. How can you lead an unbeliever to accept Jesus Christ as the desired Host of his life if he is to live a life of victory here and hereafter?

APPLICATIONS

- 1.0 Because Christ lives, I can face tomorrow.
- 2.0 My life expectations should be anchored on the eternal and not the temporal.
3. A simple act of hospitality to a stranger could monumentally change your testimony.

TAKE HOME

1. The Word and plan of God must be fulfilled and the gate of hell cannot prevail over it.
2. The unseen Christ that lives in us is our hope of eternity.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Apr. 10	Hospitality and Redemption	Luke 7:36–50
Tue, Apr. 11	Raised with Christ	1 Cor. 15:27–31, 35–44
Wed, Apr. 12	Death Swallowed Up in Victory	1 Cor. 15:45–58
Thu, Apr. 13	God, Hear My Morning Prayer	Psalms 5
Fri, Apr. 14	Great Is God's Faithfulness	Lamentations 3:21–36
Sat, Apr. 15	Joy Comes with the Morning	Psalms 30
Sun, Apr. 16	Jesus Appears by the Sea	John 21:1–14

April 16th, 2023

JESUS COOKS BREAKFAST

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: Experiencing The Resurrection

Devotional Reading: Psalm 30

Background Scripture: John 21:1-14

Lesson Scripture: John 21:1-14

Memory Verse: *Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast. None of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?” They knew it was the Lord. **John 21:12***

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

- 1.0 To list the key points of the disciples' third encounter with the resurrected Christ.
- 2.0 Provide reasons as to why the disciples did or did not recognize Jesus.
- 3.0 Write a prayer asking for eyes that recognize Jesus at work this week.

INTRODUCTION

A business lunch provides an opportunity to network with colleagues, meet prospective clients or get to know your workers better. It is often in a relaxed atmosphere so that office protocols and hierarchies do not interfere with the main objectives of arranging the luncheon. It could be a business dinner or breakfast meeting, depending on convenience and purpose of meeting. Jesus cooked breakfast and invited His disciples to join Him by the shores of the Sea of Galilee in a surprise appearance after His resurrection.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: GONE FISHING: (JOHN 21:1-6)

This was not the first encounter Jesus had with His disciples that were fishermen in a fishing scene. The Gospels record different accounts of how Jesus called His first disciples starting with the fishermen. The account in the book of Luke showcased instruction, obedience, reward and submission. Their encounter with Jesus made them to heed Jesus' invitation and they abandoned their trade and followed Him in total submission to be fishers of men. This scene was pre-crucifixion, burial and resurrection. In this episode as recorded in the gospel of John 21, Jesus appeared the third time to His disciples (read John 20:19, 26-27) post-resurrection; and the third now at a fishing scene by the Sea of Galilee. They had returned to their old trade. Notable among them was Simon Peter. Recall that he

was the one who denied Jesus three times before His crucifixion despite his avowed commitment to go with Him all the way. On this account, Jesus stood at the shore of the sea Galilee and called out to them, “Friends, haven't you any fish?” and they replied “No”. They never noticed it was Jesus interacting with them. **On Jesus' instruction to throw their net at the right side of the boat, they made a big catch that they were unable to haul the net into their boat. Something extraordinary has happened again, reminiscent of a similar encounter with Jesus in Luke 5:6-7. Obedience has produced another bountiful reward. When Jesus gives, He gives bountifully in measures beyond your expectation.**

LESSON II: IT IS THE LORD: JOHN 21:7-14

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord”. **When you encounter Christ, the experience is unique, God-sized and there is no mistaking the fact that you have encountered God.** “It is the Lord” was the testimony of John to Simon Peter, who immediately keyed into it, and then the rest of the disciples who were at the scene. **What is God's revelation to you that you want others to key in?** Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast”. None of the disciples dared ask Him “Who are you?” because they already knew it was

the Master calling. Jesus is inviting you into a fellowship with Him today. Will you take the offer?

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION

1. When have you been part of a group to whom it seemed that the Lord was present in a special way?
2. Which Spiritual practices help you to persist when your efforts seem to end in failure?
3. What would it take for you to shed those things that prevent a closer relationship with Jesus?
4. What groups are you a part of in which you intentionally seek time with Jesus?
5. How might your possessions be preventing you from seeking to close the distance between you and Jesus?

6. APPLICATIONS

1. Jesus provides bountifully beyond one's imagination
2. Obedience to the Command of God breeds bountiful rewards
3. Jesus is constantly seeking a fellowship with you.
4. Always emulate Christ, who though being God, always pursues His disciples with unconditional love in servant-leader style.

TAKE HOME

1. Every encounter with Jesus is unique and God-sized
2. Always share God's revelation in your life to draw people closer to God.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Apr. 17	Jesus Brings Danger and Conflict	Matt. 10:28–42
Tue, Apr. 18	Peter Denies Jesus	John 18:13–27
Wed, Apr. 19	Repent, Turn, and Live	Ezekiel 18:13–27
Thu, Apr. 20	Godly Sorrow Produces Repentance	2 Cor. 7:1–11
Fri, Apr. 21	Blot Out My Transgressions	Psalms 51:1–9
Sat, Apr. 22	Create in Me a Clean Heart	Psalms 51:10–19
Sun, Apr. 23	If You Love Me, Follow Me	John 21:15–25

April 23rd, 2023

JESUS REINSTATES PETER

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: Experiencing The Resurrection

Devotional Reading: 2 Corinthians 7:1-11

Background Scripture: John 21:15-25

Lesson Scripture: John 21:15-25

Memory Verse: *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you” Jesus said “Feed my lambs” John 21:15*

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the conversation between the risen Jesus and Peter and the reason(s) for it.
2. Explain the relationship between loving Jesus and caring for his sheep.
3. Describe one way he or she will act on that relationship in the coming week.

INTRODUCTION

Tiger Woods is a name that is well known in the golfing world. His Father, Earl, had spent time crafting his son to become a great golfer since he was a child. By 2013, Woods had acquired a world number one ranking in a record 683 weeks. This blistering career however was not without its major setback. In 2009, one of the greatest golfers of all-time was in the news for sex scandals even though he was married. This led to the dissolution of his marriage to his wife in 2010. He took a long sabbatical from golf, lost fame and sponsorship. Many believed he was down and out and may not be able to stage a comeback. By 2012, Woods had started winning championship again and reclaimed his number one ranking in 2013. This week's lesson deals with one of the greatest disciples of Jesus Christ who was seen to be the most outspoken and courageous but buckled when it mattered most and yet the Master reinstated him after resurrection.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: JESUS QUESTIONS PETER: JOHN 21:15-17

In Matt 26:35, Peter had said “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” Jesus had warned Peter that before the rooster crows, he will deny Him three times and it came to pass that Peter denied Him three times as foretold by the Master Himself. Now, Peter had led some of the disciples back to their old trade of fishing after Jesus' death and were at it when Jesus appeared by

the Sea of Galilee to engage them. Jesus had prepared the breakfast and after they had finished eating, he picked out Peter for posing questions; the ***“do-you-love-me questions?”***. ***Jesus asked this same question three times calling Peter – “Simon son of John”***. These questions and reference to Peter as Simon son of John have implications in the past, present and future of Peter. Peter had buckled in the past when he denied Jesus and needed to understand the true meaning of love as exemplified by Jesus' death on the cross. He would also be found in his old trade of fishing despite the promise by Jesus to rise again the third day. Recall that even after Peter had seen the empty tomb, he wondered as to what had really happened. Was Peter's present state in denial of Jesus' promise to rise again? Looking into the future, Jesus knew the enormous task He had for Peter and His church after ascension. **It is a sacrificial task that will require selfless shepherding – feed the lamb, feed the sheep and care for the sheep – all in reference to the Body of Christ, the Church. The love of Christ will be the driving force and motivation to see Peter through the enormous assignment that lay ahead of him.**

LESSON II: JESUS SPEAKS TRUTH TO PETER: JOHN 21:18-19

Jesus spoke truth to Peter regarding the implication of choosing to follow Him and the sufferings that awaited Him. When he was yet a believer, he did what pleased

him but accepting to follow Christ would come with the consequences of carrying his cross like Christ did. This will lead him to unsavory experiences in the hands of unbelievers. Jesus highlighted this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. ***Then He said to him “Follow me” ... v19b.*** Peter accepted to follow Christ and was martyred in the course of living the mandate of Jesus Christ. During this period, death by crucifixion was seen as a very shameful and painful death in the Roman Empire. Peter accepting to die this kind of death considered himself unworthy to die in the same manner with Jesus Christ and requested to be crucified upside down. ***Peter upended his situation to glorify the name of Jesus Christ. His love for Jesus made him see glorification for his Master rather than shame and pain for himself. This should be the standard for believers who are prepared to run this race of eternity with Christ.***

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION

1. Who are Jesus' lambs and what role do you play in caring for those lambs?
2. What evidence is there in your life that you truly love Jesus?
3. How can you prepare for undesired experiences so that they can bring spiritual growth?
4. What are you doing now to ensure that your eventual death will glorify God?

APPLICATIONS

1. When you fight the good fight of faith and overcome, you will be glorified with Christ.
2. Christ, the offended Party, initiated the reconciliation and reinstatement of Peter. Believers should emulate Christ in this regard even when they believe they are the offended party.
3. When we confess our love for Christ like Peter did, we will place the will of God above ours.

TAKE HOME

1. If you make it your goal to glorify God, your journey of faith may take you to where you would rather not go.
2. When we suffer like Christ and for godly purposes, we bring glory to the Lord, no matter how humiliating, the world might believe our plight to be.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, Apr. 24	Go and Make Disciples	Matthew 28:1–10, 16–20
Tue, Apr. 25	The Day of the Lord Approaches	Joel 2:1–15
Wed, Apr. 26	The Son Sits at God's Right Hand	Hebrews 1:1–14
Thu, Apr. 27	Jesus, Our Great High Priest	Hebrews 8:1–13
Fri, Apr. 28	An Eternal Inheritance	Hebrews 9:8–22
Sat, Apr. 29	Lift Up Your Heads, O Gates!	Psalms 24
Sun, Apr. 30	You Shall Receive Power	Acts 1:1–11

April 30th, 2023

JESUS MAKES A PROMISE

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: The Birth Of The Church

Devotional Reading: Psalm 24

Background Scripture: Acts 1:1-11

Lesson Scripture: Acts 1:1-11

Memory Verse: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. **Acts 1:8a.***

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. State the initial sequence of the geographical progression of the gospel message.
2. Analyze what the disciples meant when they asked Jesus about the restoration of Israel.
3. Recommit to the work Jesus has given him or her in accomplishing the gospel mandate.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations use Vision and Mission statements to summarize where they want to be and how they should be perceived in the market place. It often starts with the analysis of the current state of the organization and where they want to be at a specific time in the future. Call this the gap analysis that requires a strategy to take the organization to that desired state in the future. God's vision for mankind at inception was to create man in His image and likeness; and He did. The fall of man at the Garden of Eden resulted in the gap between man and God that needed restoration to God's original vision for mankind. He restored His Kingdom on Earth through Jesus Christ who came in the form of man; disciplined the twelve and left them with a mandate to go and equally make disciples of all nations. All those that believe, He will empower with the Holy Spirit and they shall be His body here on earth to continue with His Ministry of reconciliation till final glorification. He made promises to them.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: PROMISE NUMBER 1: ACTS 1:1-5

The promise of the Holy Spirit. Jesus post-resurrection appeared to His disciples over a period of forty days to present Himself to them and also gave convincing proofs that He was alive. He continued to talk about the Kingdom of God. He transferred the mandate of His father to them so that they will continue with the

mission work of God's kingdom here on Earth. He charged them not to leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift His Father promised, which they have heard Him speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. **The Holy Spirit indwells every believer. This is the promise from our Master.**

LESSON II: PROMISE NUMBER 2: ACTS 1:6-8

The disciples will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them and they will be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth. The disciples were witnesses to Jesus' supernatural power and had expected that He will be the Messiah to rescue them from Roman rule. Then, they gathered around Him and asked, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?" Jesus told them it was not for them to know the times and dates the Father has set by His own authority which refers to His return in glory and judgment. The freedom that Jesus gives is eternal and not temporal. This is consistent with the statement He made during his trial that His kingdom is not of this world.... John 18:36a. **As believers, we belong to the Kingdom that is not of this world and must get our priorities right. We are exhorted to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things will be added unto it...Matt 6:33.**

LESSON III: PROMISE NUMBER 3: ACTS 1:9-11

This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into Heaven. Jesus had completed His assignment and was being taken to Heaven by the clouds. This was not a random cloud but one that exemplified the presence of God. In Luke 9:34-35, the disciples also experienced the presence of God in the cloud that enveloped Jesus, Elijah and Moses at the mount of Transfiguration. A voice came from the clouds saying “This is my son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him”. The promised return of Christ with the clouds is further corroborated by the revelation to Apostle John on the Island of Patmos. “Look, He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him....” Revelation 1:7a. **The first coming was to bring life in abundance to a lost generation while the second coming will be to judge the world. “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.... Rev 22:12. ”** Are you ready?

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION

1. Why are you a Christian, to be rich and powerful or there is a greater calling?
2. What is the evidence in your life as a believer that the Holy Spirit indwells you?
3. How will order your life so that you might be a witness to your “Jerusalems,” “Judeas” and the outer most part of the world?
4. The disciples were told to wait for the gift that was promised them by God, the Father. How do you discern God's will regarding whether to wait or act?
5. How can believers be ready for Christ's return?

APPLICATION

1. Christ has called me into His ministry as a believer to be His witness to the fallen world.
2. I should choose eternal instead of temporal in my walk with the Master.

TAKE HOME

1. Jesus Christ that ascended with the clouds into Heaven shall one day return the same way to judge the dead and the living.
2. Every believer shall be rewarded according to His deeds here on earth.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, May 1	God's Strength Revealed	Psalm 68:17–19, 24–35
Tue, May 2	The Spirit of Truth	John 14:15–27
Wed, May 3	The Spirit Testifies of Jesus	John 16:1–15
Thu, May 4	The Lord, My Chosen Portion	Psalm 16
Fri, May 5	Amazement at the Spirit's Power	Acts 2:1–13
Sat, May 6	The Promise Fulfilled	Acts 2:14–28
Sun, May 7	Receive the Gift of the Spirit	Acts 2:29–42

May 7th, 2023

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: The Birth Of The Church

Devotional Reading: Psalm 16

Background Scripture: Acts 2:1-42

Lesson Focus: Acts 2: 1-8, 14-24, 37-39

Memory Verse: *The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call. —Acts 2:39*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each participant should be able to:

1. List the ways the Holy Spirit was active on Pentecost.
2. Explain why the Day of Pentecost was necessary for the birth of the church.
3. Commit to completing a scriptural study to get to know the Holy Spirit and his out-workings better, and pray to receive His baptism.

INTRODUCTION

The birth of the Church, the Body of Christ is the focus this month in Sunday School. While Jesus was sacrificed on the cross and rose from the dead during the Jewish feast of Passover, the promised Holy Spirit arrived on the day of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of First Fruits. These events happening during the feasts that God had previously established for the Jews is insightful and speaks volumes of the God we serve!

The Church is the body of believers in Jesus Christ, who have been baptised and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Luke 24: 46-49 records Jesus Christ telling the disciples about the great commission to spread the gospel. He however commanded them not to commence the work till they had received power from the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist who baptised in water, boldly and prophetically declared that the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus will give, was a baptism superior to what he was doing at that time. (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8)

This amazing event (the baptism in the Holy Spirit) which had been foretold in the scriptures, came to pass on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem to the 12 apostles and the 120 disciples.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: THE SOUND (ACTS 2:1-8)

The Apostles and disciples had already believed in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and had confessed him as Lord. As a separate event a couple of weeks later they were to receive the Third Person of the God-Head, The Holy spirit. God separated those events on purpose.

The Holy spirit arrived in the house where the apostles and disciples were gathered, with a loud and bold sound. He caused them to make divine sounds that ended up being loud declarations of God's praise in many languages, not hitherto known to the apostles and disciples. The Holy Spirit also caused the event of His arrival to be amplified and noised abroad to people in the vicinity of the city of Jerusalem that day.

In Genesis 1:2 the Holy Spirit first shows up in the scriptures moving on the face of the deep and on the day of Pentecost He moved in to each one of the believers and moved in their environment in a demonstration of divine power!

LESSON II: THE SERMON (ACTS 2:14-24)

The Holy Spirit attracted a large crowd of people to the newly formed church, as a multitude gathered in response to the Sound. Clearly God had orchestrated the whole event. Consider the time of the day (9am in the

morning). Consider the location: the city of Jerusalem, where God had chosen to put His name there. Consider the season: the fact that Jerusalem was teeming with visiting Jewish worshippers from all over the world for the Festival of First Fruits.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit could have been misunderstood by the people in Jerusalem that day, but the Holy Spirit again empowered Peter to teach from the known scriptures about Jesus' death and resurrection according to Psalm 16, and the purpose of the Holy spirit according to Joel 2:28-32. When a seemingly strange thing happens around us, God will clarify and confirm it by His word.

Peter was transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit when he preached that sermon to the crowd of people, some of whom had recently shouted concerning Jesus, "Crucify Him!" (At that time, Peter with the other disciples had been frightened and fearful of their lives as Jesus was being tried and crucified). The Holy Spirit was on the move in the Church!

LESSON III: THE GIFT (ACTS 2:37-39)

Jesus had earlier taught the disciples about the Holy Spirit, saying that He would be a Comforter, He would lead them into all truth, He will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement. (John 14:16-17, 26; 16:8-15). The multitude in Jerusalem that day, were

desperate to be brought into union with God. Peter must have surprised himself and others by his newfound ability to preach a compelling sermon, to a hitherto hostile crowd, with boldness, and the required volume to reach over 3,000 people in one place. It was however the Holy Spirit, The Lord of the harvest, that caused the new birth in the multitude that day. The Holy spirit is called many things in the scripture, but here He is called The Gift. He is to be purposely received by the believer, as a gift.

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the significance of the circumstances, the timing, the season, and the location of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What does that tell you about nature and person of our God?
2. Identify 3-4 key contemporary misconceptions about the Holy Spirit. Explain from the scriptures how believers are to engage with the Holy Spirit.

3. List the gifts of the Spirit available to the Church today and discuss the benefits thereof to the Church and the community (1 Corinthians 12:1-13).
4. Discuss the issues/situation that can hinder the free expression of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and the contemporary church, and how this can be remedied. **APPLICATION**
 - As the Holy Spirit miraculously took up residence in each disciple, each believer is to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and yield to Him so He can express Himself to the world through us.
 - Jesus promised that rivers of living water will proceed out of the inner being of each believer who receives the Holy Spirit. This overflow will positively impact our environment and set the believer apart in the market place. What an exciting experience it is when we walk in the Spirit!

TAKE-HOME POINTS

1. God requires His church to preach, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Holy Ghost and power. Signs and wonders are meant to confirm the preaching of the gospel to the world, and that is

the work of the Holy Spirit. The church by faith must encourage this.

2. The Lord requires us to have a vital relationship with the 3rd person of the God-Head, also known as The Holy Spirit, The Comforter, The Helper, The Gift, etc.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, May 8	Sent to Preach and Heal	Luke 10:1-9
Tue, May 9	Rejoice in Salvation, Not Power	Luke 10:10-24
Wed, May 10	God Protects and Preserves	Psalm 41
Thu, May 11	My Soul Longs for God	Psalm 42
Fri, May 12	Sorrow Will Flee	Isaiah 35:1-10
Sat, May 13	Walking, Leaping, and Praising	Acts 3:1-11
Sun, May 14	Prophets Foretold, God Fulfilled	Acts 3:12-26

May 14th, 2023

JUMPING FOR JOY

Theme For The Quarter — Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: God: The Birth Of The Church

Devotional Reading: Luke 10:1-9

Background Scripture: Acts 3

Lesson Focus: Acts 3: 1-11

Memory Verse: *He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God—***Acts 3:8**

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each participant should be able to:

1. Describe the life of the man who was lame.
2. Compare and contrast the people's reactions to the healing with the reactions of the people in Acts 4:1-22 and 14:8-13.
3. Write a prayer for discernment to recognize when to offer Jesus before offering material help.

INTRODUCTION

God in the Old Testament commanded that the Jews should give alms to the poor. In the world today, we are told of some beggars who have made an industry of begging, and are even financially able to take care of their families from the proceeds of begging! A case in point is Bharat Jain, who owns 2 luxurious flats in Mumbai all from the proceeds of begging.

In our passage the lame man had clearly settled into a life of begging due to his disability. Little did he know that this was all about to change through an act of the Holy Spirit working through the lives of the apostles that produced a notable miracle to the glory of God. The man was healed by God! The people of the great city and their leaders could not deny the miracle, but their reactions were all very different. An in-depth study of the text can reveal the motivation behind the varied responses and a deeper understanding of how the Holy Spirit operates through the believer.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: A NOTABLE MIRACLE (ACTS 3:1-7)

The backdrop of this miracle was the resplendent temple in Jerusalem that Herod built. It was set on a hill, sparkled in the sunshine and was clearly a wonder of the

known world. The Jews took a lot of pride in that temple. Not only was it the centre of the religious life of the Jews, but it was also the centre of their political, social and economic life. At the time of this miracle, there were many people who had gathered in this temple for prayer. Our local culture offers platforms and occasions where many people gather, and believers are free to minister and expect God to confirm the word with miracles and signs.

The lame man had never walked in his life, he did not know how. He had been born lame, was more than 40 years old (Acts 4:22), and had been placed strategically by his helpers daily at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg for alms.

Peter and John were not strangers to God's healing ministry having served with Jesus (Luke 10:1-9), and had most likely seen this beggar many times as they went into the temple. This day however, things were going to be dramatically different. Powered by the Holy Spirit and faith in the Name of Jesus Christ, not only did the disciples command the lame man to walk (they did not pray to God for healing), but Peter also pulled him up to his feet! What boldness! (Mark 16:17-18)

LESSON TWO: THE PEOPLES RESPONSE (ACTS 3:8-11)

The moment the lame man realised that he could walk, He started to praise God loudly. He leaped and rejoiced

making his way into the main court of the temple. At that time of the day about 3pm, the temple had filled up being the hour of prayer. The commotion caused by heart felt loud praise, drew a crowd of people over 5,000 persons. Many of them knew the lame man very well and were amazed that he was walking, leaping, praising God, and holding on firmly to Peter and John.

Peter and John seized the preaching opportunity that the miracle and the crowd provided and preached a powerful sermon to the audience in the temple and in so doing gave God the glory for the miracle.

This situation also was observed by the religious leaders of the day who acknowledged it was a notable miracle but were clearly uncomfortable with the occurrence and were desirous of silencing Peter and John.

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As relates to addressing the lame man's need, compare and contrast the Old Temple of the Jews built by Herod, and the New Temple of God; the

Church, established by Jesus.

2. Discuss the difference if any between Peter being involved with healing of sick people in Luke 10:1-9, and Peter involved with the healing of the lame man in our passage?
3. Explain the varied reactions to the miraculous healing by all the characters in the focus passage today.
4. Discuss what it means for a believer to do something “in the Name of Jesus”. How might this privilege be abused in the church today?
5. How can you practice being more attentive to people you might be tempted to ignore?

APPLICATION

- Faith in the Name of Jesus caused the man to be healed. Intimate fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit builds our faith and provides boldness which are required in the preaching of the gospel.
- Walking in the revelation knowledge of the authority of the believer in Christ will radically change our words and deeds, including our approach to ministry.

TAKE-HOME POINTS

1. The Church exercising faith in the Name of Jesus,

will bring deliverance, healing and salvation to a lost world. Religious practises without the power of the Holy spirit actually keeps followers in bondage as in the case of the lame man.

2. The atmosphere of the miraculous is very appropriate for sharing the gospel with the world. Jesus promised that He would work with the believers on the great commission, confirming the word with signs and wonders following.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, May 15	The Witness of Stephen	Acts 6:8-15
Tue, May 16	The First Martyr	Acts 7:48–8:2
Wed, May 17	The Far Countries Wait for God	Isaiah 60:9-14
Thu, May 18	Many People Will Come	Zechariah 8:1-8, 20-23
Fri, May 19	God Is Present Everywhere	Psalms 139:1-10
Sat, May 20	Samaritans Embrace the Gospel	Acts 8:4-17
Sun, May 21	The Spirit Guides Us	Acts 8:26-40

May 21st, 2023

AN ETHIOPIAN IS BAPTIZED

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: God: The Birth Of The Church

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 60:9-14

Background Scripture: Acts 8:26-40

Lesson Focus: Acts 8:29-40

Memory Verse: *He gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. —Acts 8:38*

LESSON AIMS:

After participating in this lesson, each participant should be able to:

1. Establish the context and circumstance of this encounter between the Eunuch and Philip
2. Explain the importance of biblical knowledge for recognizing Christ as the Messiah.
3. List one or more hindrances to recognizing the Spirit's leading in cross-cultural evangelism and suggest ways to overcome them.

INTRODUCTION

Opposition arose against the newly established church, and this up turned the sweet fellowship together that the apostles and disciples were enjoying in Jerusalem. As the church was being persecuted and scattered, God's divine purpose of preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth was consequently being enabled. Philip, one of the deacons (not the apostle) identified to serve tables was in that process released into his God ordained calling, successfully evangelising in Samaria and other areas.

Royalty, Government officials, and captains of industry are amongst the most powerful persons in the world today; They impact millions of people's lives by their words and deeds. God is very interested in reaching out to them, and there are various examples of that throughout the bible. Our study today shows how God showed up in a miraculous way in support of that mission. The Lord helped to overcome the barriers of executive protocol and access for the gospel to get through. Philip responded to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to minister to this one man in a desert place.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: THE DIVINE LEADING (ACTS 8:29-34)

Our church is situated in Ikoyi, a high-brow location of

Lagos and near the commercial nerve centre of West Africa. High powered social, political, and economic leaders have their homes, offices, and clubs in Ikoyi, and neighbouring Victoria Island and Lagos Island. It is not a coincidence that IBC was planted in that area. The Holy Spirit is more than able to orchestrate effective outreaches tailored to the peculiarities of our location; we all need to be sensitive and obedient to the promptings of the Lord in this wise.

Our passage today informs us that an angel had prompted Philip to leave the city and to go towards the desert road. Philip obeyed even though he did not know why. The Holy Spirit then took over and instructed him to join the Eunuchs chariot; the Holy Spirit still operates that way with believers today (John 14:26). This government official, a worshipper of God, was reading the scriptures but clearly did not understand them. By a divine intervention Philip was on location, was versed in the scriptures and able to explain the passage that was being read.

The passage does not indicate whether or not Philip was intimidated by the government official and his entourage. Neither were differences in language nor culture barriers to this encounter. The combination of Philip's obedience, the Eunuch's curiosity about the scriptures and the operation of the Holy Spirit were

more than enough for the gospel to be preached and accepted by the Eunuch. It is noteworthy that this was a one-on-one ministration.

LESSON II: THE BAPTISM (ACTS 8:35-40)

The love of God for all mankind reflects throughout the scriptures. It is unscriptural to erect barriers and conditions for salvation that would hinder a person from being admitted into the spiritual body of Christ, once they are willing. It is also not in line with God's will that the church should entrench practices that lead to discrimination in any manner. Had Philip been mindful of such acts of discrimination, he would have declined sharing the gospel with the eunuch.

After the baptism was completed, Philip was miraculously transported from that location to another one by the Holy Spirit. The new birth and the Eunuch's realisation that this was truly a divine encounter caused an overflow of joy. The rejoicing Eunuch was indeed a changed man. One can only imagine the impact of this conversion on the others who observed it in the entourage, at the oasis, and others in the sphere of influence of this government official when he returned to Ethiopia.

Note Taking

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What principles about Christian evangelism can we learn from the passage?
2. In contemporary times, identify some key hinderances to Christian evangelism, and how to overcome them, especially to high-ranking members of the community.
3. Discuss various approaches and tools available to the Christian believer when studying difficult bible passages. Share specific examples.
4. How would you explain the significance of baptism to someone who wants to commit to following Jesus? What other Scriptures would you reference to help this person better understand the importance of baptism?
5. Identify how subtle individual biases in the life of a believer, hinder the effectiveness of ministry and how to remedy the situation.

APPLICATION

- One-on-one ministration is a powerful platform to impart understanding (not just knowledge), especially to influential and High Net-worth Individuals. To them we must preach Jesus.
- It is required of all believers to diligently study the scriptures and to know how to rightly interpret and apply it. Take the time to get an understanding of God's word
- Humility and asking sincere questions of the Holy Spirit about the word of God and situations, creates an environment for deeper understanding of the word.

TAKE-HOME POINTS

1. The local churches need to be more strategic with evangelical outreaches. Going for crowded arenas is not necessarily the only way. Paying attention to community leaders and influencers is equally important.
2. Evangelism needs to be carried out by faith and under direction from the Holy Spirit who is also called the Lord of the Harvest.
3. Expect God to participate miraculously with the Church whilst on outreaches to individuals and to the community.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, May 22	The Heavens Tell God's Glory	Psalms 19
Tue, May 23	Responding to the Gospel	Galatians 1:10-24
Wed, May 24	Only Christ Matters	Phil. 3:1-14
Thu, May 25	Our Citizenship Is in Heaven	Phil. 3:15-21
Fri, May 26	Blinded by the Light	Acts 9:1-9
Sat, May 27	Saul Preaches Jesus	Acts 9:10-22
Sun, May 28	Saul Escapes to Jerusalem	Acts 9:23-31

May 28th, 2023

SAUL OF TARSUS

Theme For The Quarter: Jesus Calls Us

Theme For The Month: God: The Birth Of The Church

Devotional Reading: Philippians 3:1-14

Background Scripture: Acts 9:1-31

Lesson Focus: Acts 9:9-17

Memory Verse: *Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord — Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit. —Acts 9:17*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, participants should be able to:

1. Summarize Ananias's observation and comments as well as the Lord's response to him.
2. Explain the significance of blindness as a possible spiritual metaphor.
3. Cultivate an attitude that seeks clearer spiritual sight.

INTRODUCTION:

The church in Nigeria has been under a lot of persecution in recent times including lynching, terrorist attacks, burning down church buildings and kidnapping for ransom. As we can see throughout the book of Acts, the Lord uses such disruptions to establish His Kingdom. Local churches more than ever before need to leverage their close relationship with the Holy Spirit to understand the times and give the appropriate response in each situation.

Saul was a devout Jew, zealous for Judaism, a religion that was full of dead-works, and was powerless to save! As a matter of fact, God's presence had departed from the temple centuries prior. Despite Saul acting in ignorance and persecuting the church, God had a place for him in the body of Christ and so arrested him on the road to Damascus, delivering a dramatic conversion experience! He was literally spotlighted from heaven, knocked to the ground, and made blind. Jesus introduced himself to Saul, and Saul acknowledged him as Lord and obeyed His instructions to wait in Damascus for his orders.

The famous city of Damascus remains to this day and is currently the capital of the nation of Syria; it provides the backdrop for the journey that the key characters in this passage will embark on as orchestrated by God

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON I: TWO MEN, TWO VISIONS (ACTS 9:9-10).

Speaking to believers in visions and dreams is one of the ways the Holy Spirit operates to ensure the heart of God is communicated. The person who receives such a vision is trusted to act with obedience to benefit the body of Christ.

Saul as instructed, was waiting in Damascus for His call-up orders from Christ in prayer, and he had another vision of Ananias coming to lay hands on him.

Ananias in turn had a vision and God told him in very detailed way, to go and minister to the notorious Saul of Tarsus!!

LESSON II: INVOLVED IN THE MASTERS' PLAN (ACTS 9:11-16)

Ananias during the vision made some valid observations about the character and mission of the notorious Saul of Tarsus. God spoke to the unvoiced concerns of his heart and informed Ananias of the grand master plan of the kingdom and the role Saul was to play. This is very characteristic of God when He is questioned from a sincere and submitted heart, to provide sufficient clarification, and providing His rod and staff to comfort you as you pass through trying times. The Believer still has to step out in faith on the God-assignment, and that is what we see Ananias doing.

LESSON III: OBEDIENCE AND BOLDNESS (ACTS 9:17)

We are not told a lot about Judas, the host of Saul at the time, but he definitely witnessed first-hand the conversion of a notorious man who was set against Jesus Christ, and his baptism. One can only imagine the impact on him and his household of the whole event.

Ananias on the other hand was a regular believer. It was through the laying-on of his hands the baptism and of the Holy Spirit baptism happened for Saul. He also would have been a changed man because of the experience.

Saul was a changed man, through the orchestration of events by God, and went on to fulfill all that God said in the passage concerning him.

Note Taking

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the encounters that Ananias and Saul had with Jesus Christ, in Acts 9,

and their responses.

2. Identify areas of ministry that you are currently involved in and reflect on past and current seasons of equipping, that have prepared you for it.
3. Discuss ways in which spiritual blindness can be identified and remedied in the Church.
4. Do you practice fasting as a spiritual discipline? Why or why not?
5. When have you acted timidly because of your knowledge of the risk involved in acting boldly?

APPLICATION

- God speaks to us in dreams and visions, and this is one of the blessings of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Such visions are in line with the letter and the spirit of scripture and should be acted upon in faith.
- Like Ananias, prayer, baptism and laying on of hands are forms of ministration that are not reserved for Apostles, Pastors, and Prophets. Spirit filled believers who understand the move of God are empowered to minister. Yielding ourselves to the holy Spirit in this way is very rewarding.
- God also calls people alongside to help; we are all and their responses.

to play our part as members of The Body of Christ.
Be “an Ananias” or “a Judas” to someone today.

TAKE-HOME POINTS

1. God ensures that He calls AND equips us for the work of the ministry.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, May 29	God's Servant Will Establish Justice	Isaiah 42:1-7
Tue, May 30	Live by Faith, Not Works	Galatians 2:16b-21
Wed, May 31	My Servant Shall Restore Israel	Isaiah 49:1-13
Thu, June 1	God Will Not Forget You	Isaiah 49:14-23
Fri, June 2	God Desires You Live in Purity	1Thessalonians 3:11-4:8
Sat, June 3	Clothe Yourselves with Love	Colossians 3:8-17
Sun, June 4	You Shall Be Redeemed	Isaiah 52:1-12

June 4th, 2023

GOD REIGNS

Theme For The Quarter: The Righteous Reign Of God

Theme For The Month: The Prophets Proclaim God's Power

Devotional Reading: Colossians 3:8-17

Background Scripture: Isaiah 52:1-12

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 52:7-12

Memory Verse: *Isaiah 52:7* - *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each participant should be able to:

1. Identify the "good tidings."
2. Explain the reason for those good tidings.
3. Describe ways to proclaim good tidings today.

INTRODUCTION:

Announcements are proclamations of new information or known facts that impact the course of events, situations, or positions for the recipients. Announcements that declare what has been earnestly desired and long awaited is refreshing to the soul, (e.g., when a long-awaited flight or train is announced ready for departure or arrival). Announcements often carry instructions with consequences when ignored.

God's people had been taken captive successively by people who not only oppressed them, but also despised and blasphemed against their God (Egyptians, Assyrians and now Babylonians). In all these times, the Jews by their actions (going after other gods) invited God's judgment upon themselves. Today's lesson introduces an announcement that ushers in the end of that judgment by God declaring Himself sovereign over all nations; but first there are instructions for God's own people: God demands that amongst His people, His name and voice must be known (*my sheep know my voice*) and honoured. Isn't it commonplace today that we expect redemption and salvation from economic repression or suppression as God's people without consideration (or personal responsibility) for our contribution to the plundering we suffer? (Ecclesiastes 10:8)?

LESSON I: A CALL TO REJOICE (ISAIAH 52:7-10)

We often see in scripture that bearers of good news and glad tidings have a sense of urgency with them (2 Sam 18:26) and the declarations are often from the hills and

mountaintops (Isaiah 40:9) so that all the people can be stirred up. In return, the people respond with songs of praise and shouts of joy (Isaiah 42:11). The proclamation “Your God Reigns” (v.7) is an astounding and encompassing declaration about God's ability to orchestrate the salvation of the Jews in captivity in Babylon. The people were taken captive *for nothing* (v.5) and treated cruelly, but this proclamation was a reminder that God remembered them, He saw all that had befallen His people, and that an end had come to it all. The pronouncement also came with a promise that the people would see with their own eyes the return of the Lord to Jerusalem (v.9). Unpacking these proclamations was music to the ears of the people and there was only one way to respond: with songs of joy and shouts of rejoicing.

In Romans 10:15, we see the same scripture describe preachers of the good news of salvation. God is still seeing and remembering those who are yet in the bondage of sin, taken captive by the devil for '*nothing*' (nothing here describes the emptiness of life of sin as it ends in death). He (God) has sent His son Jesus to end it all. And those who believe will see with their own eyes the return of the Lord. This calls for rejoicing!

LESSON II: A CALL FOR A NEW EXODUS (ISAIAH 52:11-12)

“... The Lord knows those who are His and let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.”- 2Tim 2:19. Following the announcement

of salvation, and the declaration of God's reign over His people, it was now time for those who are called by His name to depart from uncleanness. Announcements come with instructions for compliance. The announcement of the salvation of God's people from Babylon came with an urgency to leave behind the land of captivity without taking with them any mementos or memorabilia. There was once an Exodus from Egypt and the people of God took with them riches and spoils from Egypt, but these corrupted their customs and derailed their relationship with God, much to their ruin. This new exodus needed to be different. God expects a certain urgency from His people in our desire to leave the place of bondage and sin, but He also does not expect us to attempt this removal unguided or unaided. We must be ready to depend on God for our salvation and for our cleansing. He will cause in us the desire to leave our sins and bondage earnestly and urgently; and will perform in us, our purification as bearers of His vessel, and the perfection of our salvation (Philippians 2:13).

Note Taking

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are some announcements of good news and glad tidings recently received as a church and how have we responded to them?
2. How do you plan to be a part of God's purpose to show His salvation to all the ends of the earth?
3. Are you truly done with the place of sin and bondage? What are the enticing and unclean things in this strange place that you feel the Lord calling you to leave without touching?
4. What are practical ways that we as a church can demonstrate our trust in God to go before us and be our rear guide?

TAKE-HOME POINTS

1. As it was then, so it is now – God has sent forth messengers with beautiful feet, taking the good news of His salvation plan to all mankind.
2. There is an urgency to that message and there are instructions for compliance.
3. The good news is Jesus saves, and the instruction is that we must immediately depart from our sinful ways (that keep us in bondage) and trust God to guide us as we navigate our exit from this earth into our glorious eternity with Him which He has prepared from the beginning of time.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, June 5	The River of Life	Ezekiel 47:1-13
Tue, June 6	Receiving Everlasting Joy	John 16:20-33
Wed, June 7	The Right Kind of Spirit	James 3:13-18
Thu, June 8	Peace in the Midst of Distress	Psalms 4
Fri, June 9	God is our Refuge	Psalms 46
Sat, June 10	Christ is our peace	Ephesians 2:11-22
Sun, June 11	A New Heaven and Earth	Isaiah 65:17-25

June 11th, 2023

GOD'S KINGDOM OF PEACE

Theme For The Quarter: The Righteous Reign Of God

Theme For The Month: The Prophets Proclaim God's Power

Devotional Reading: John 16:20-33

Background Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25

Memory Verse: *Isaiah 65:25* - *The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the Lord.*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each participant should be able to:

1. State the reason why weeping will be undetectable.
2. Defend identifications of figurative imagery in the text.
3. Write a prayer of thanks to God for the future He plans for him or her.

INTRODUCTION.

Ever drifted into daydreaming of a time where your current realities all suddenly ended and everything became perfect? No more economic and material hardships, no more insecurity and political volatility and certainly no more physical or emotional pain. For God's children, this need not be a dream for much longer; the Sovereign Lord has declared that His righteous reign of judgment and salvation will usher in a New Heaven and a New Earth.

A key element of righteousness is justice. As we explore the righteous reign of God this quarter, we see God in His sovereignty declare judgment on one hand and salvation on the other. This shows that though wickedness thrives in this present world, and there seems to be unending suffering of the consequences of a morally decaying world, God will salvage His remnant people for perfection in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will be perfect, living in a real and perfect world. It is not figurative; it will no longer be a dream – we will be in God's kingdom of peace.

LESSON I: CELEBRATING NEWNESS (ISAIAH 65:17-19)

The promise of a new heaven and a new earth (v.17) was a relieving contrast to the preceding declaration of judgment (Isaiah 65:1-16). A ray of light for God's servants who heeded His call and listened to His voice. This called for rejoicing because it was an eternal

arrangement that forever overshadowed “former things” (which represented the history of rebellion, disobedience, sin, and the judgment that accompanied all these things). They would be remembered no more (v.17b). God further promised a re-creation of Jerusalem as a delight and His people as a “people of joy”. It meant the re-created people now perpetually brought joy to God and no longer caused Him sorrow with their disobedience and Sin; and by extension would no longer experience any sorrow or weeping – just like the first man before the fall. This called for rejoicing!

LESSON 2: THE NEW REALITY (ISAIAH 65:20-25)

God wanted His people to have a picture of what the new Jerusalem – the new reality looked like; so He detailed the components of His kingdom of Peace. Infant mortality and sudden death, housing crises and starvation, equity and fairness in reward for labour, dashed hope and unanswered prayers – all these are relatable realities of the current dispensation of God's people, realities that we in today's present time are rather too familiar with. We know that sin is a blocker between us and God, leading to unanswered prayers. As newly created people who now constantly bring joy and delight to God, there is no sin standing in the way and therefore there is the assurance of answered prayers. A true kingdom of peace where there will be no predators nor prey, no violence, only harmony.

Note Taking

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss the feeling of a promise of restoration after a period of punishment. Highlight practical examples where possible and applicable.
2. How does this promise apply to Christians today living in a world rife with consequences of godlessness and perverse sin?
3. What would you be willing to do to heal a relationship with an enemy, demonstrating the reality of God's "peaceable kingdom"

TAKE-HOME POINTS

1. God's promise of a new heaven and a new earth to the Jews in this scripture applies to us today. This scripture is echoed in Revelations 21:1-4. This new Jerusalem is our home for eternity, and it is real. This is a real place where tears will be wiped away from every eye and there will be no more pain.

2. There is an alternate place though, with constant pain, weeping and gnashing of teeth. The choice is laid before us this day and I encourage you today to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:15-20).

DEVOTIONAL

DATE TOPIC TEXT

Mon, June 12	The Confidence of God's Servant	Isaiah 50: 4-9
Tue, June 13	God's Servant will Make Many Righteous	Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Wed, June 14	Forsaking All for the Kingdom	Mark 10: 17 - 27
Thu, June 15	The Greatest Must Be a Servant	Mark 10: 35-45
Fri, June 16	Who is like the Lord?	Psalms 113
Sat, June 17	An humble Act of Love	Mark 14: 1-9
Sun, June 18	God's Servant David Shall be King	Ezekiel 37:15-28

June 18th, 2023

GOD'S SERVANT-KING

Theme For The Quarter: The Righteous Reign Of God

Theme For The Month: The Prophets Proclaim God's Power

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9

Background Scripture: Ezekiel 37:15-28

Lesson Scripture: Ezekiel 37:21-28

Memory Verse: ***Ezekiel 37:27** – “My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.”*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each participant should be able to:

1. State the identity of “My Servant”.
2. Defend that identification.
3. Make a plan to change one area of his or her life that is inconsistent with being one of God's people.

INTRODUCTION.

“Separated due to irreconcilable differences” is a phrase often used when couples or partnerships have disintegrated to the point of dissolution. It represents a state of broken-down trust, and it is often difficult (if not impossible) for such relations to ever be rebuilt again. Efforts from family, friends, or any external parties to help mend such relationships are often a waste and even when legally bound by responsibilities, it is mostly a trust-less working relationship filled with suspicion, resentment, strife, and other grouses.

Israel at the time of today's lesson had experienced a break-up, a separation into two kingdoms: southern kingdom (Judah) and the northern kingdom (Ephraim). They were hostile, unfriendly, divided and with seeds of enmity against each other. Today's lesson sees the Prophet Ezekiel proclaiming God's power in His promise to do the impossible – reunite the two kingdoms of Judah and Ephraim as God ushers in His righteous reign over a united people recreated for His delight (Isaiah 65:17). God knew that the assignment He handed to Prophet Ezekiel would turn heads and raise questions from his people, so God gave the interpretation of the assignment. God's intention when He gives assignments is not confusion or lack of clarity. He does not hide Himself to tease us.

LESSON I: RETURN TO THE LAND (EZEKIEL 37:21-25)

It is possible that descendants of the tribe of Israel who had heard from generations before them about the

promise of God to make Israel His people, may have been wondering How God's promise would be fulfilled given the divided kingdoms. Sometimes God's promises look unattainable due to our current situation. God gives us a picture of an end, and we must not forget in the dark what He told us in the light. The fact that we go through dark phases on the journey to experiencing God's promise does not mean that God has failed in fulfilling His promises to us. With God, the end and the means are part of His plan.

To fulfil the restoration of One Israel, there was a need to regather the Children of Israel who had fled tribal conflicts or had been displaced because of captivity. God emphasised 'one nation in the land' (v.21-22) to indicate that it would not just be a geographical unification but a true reconciliation forever. Part of the package was spiritual purification and rededication. This was important because living in foreign and strange lands, the people were likely to have imbibed strange and foreign cultures that were sinful to God. Having mentioned earlier (v.22) there would be one king over One Israel, God revealed His plan of Jesus Christ as the eternal King from the line of David (v.24) to rule over God's people in the new Jerusalem where God's people would dwell forevermore.

LESSON II: COVENANT OF PEACE (EZEKIEL 37:26-28)

God's people in today's lesson were no strangers to turmoil. They had lived in a cycle of sin-judgment-captivity-repentance-salvation. The announcement of

an everlasting covenant of peace was a reassurance that the kinds of division and unrest that led to the sharp division would be no more. What led to lack of peace amongst God's people was their rebellion towards Him. God aimed to remove this problem by establishing His sanctuary in their midst forever (v.26) – a symbol of continuous purification and sanctification. The tabernacle represented His presence: a promise that God would be with them regardless of geographical location; a symbol of an everlasting relationship with benefits that cannot be hidden from the world (v.28).

Note Taking

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How do we respond to God's promises that come amid certain situations or conditions that make the promises appear unrealistic / unattainable?
2. Discuss the process of 'gathering' (v.21) and what it can mean practically for Christians today.
3. Discuss parallels between these promises and the life that we have been promised in Christ Jesus

today. (e.g., God's presence with us regardless of geographical location; continuous purification and sanctification).

TAKE-HOME POINTS

1. Today's lesson describes God's promise to inject a new spiritual existence into His people. Beyond unity with one another across the two kingdoms, God's plan is to bring His people united with Him.
2. As much as God wants us to reign with Him in eternity; it is His plan for us to live as one united body (though we are many parts) under His Kingship and Lordship while we are still here on earth.
3. May God help us to operate in this spiritual and physical unity as a church, as a people and as the Body of Christ.

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, June 19	Loved with an Everlasting Love	Jeremiah 31:1-9
Tue, June 20	A New Covenant	Jeremiah 31:27-34
Wed, June 21	We walk by Faith	2 Corinthians 5: 1-11
Thu, June 22	Renewed in Christ	2 Corinthians 5: 12-21
Fri, June 23	God abounds in Steadfast Love	Psalms 86: 1-7, 9-16
Sat, June 24	Love Is the Greatest	1 Corinthians 13
Sun, June 25	The Lord Is in Your Midst	Zephaniah 3: 14-20

June 25th, 2023

RENEWED IN GOD'S LOVE

Theme For The Quarter: The Righteous Reign Of God

Theme For The Month: The Prophets Proclaim God's Power

Devotional Reading: 2Corinthians 5:12-23

Background Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Lesson Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Memory Verse: *Zephaniah 3:17a* – “*The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you;*”

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify a reason for Joy.
2. Contrast a reason for joy with a reason for sorrow.
3. Sing a hymn or praise chorus that reflects the text's mandate to do so.

INTRODUCTION

When human relationships are restored, lost opportunities renewed, or when one gets another chance to access or do something that they thought was otherwise lost forever, there is the tendency to be cautious and less expressive, especially under the watch of a higher authority. It may sometimes take reassurance from the authority to ease the situation.

In today's lesson, we examine prophet Zephaniah's prophecy of a time of renewal and restoration, with the message that Yahweh will be in the midst of His people. That can be both terrifying and reassuring. This time, His presence is not unto judgement but unto rejoicing.

LESSON 1: PRAISES TO THE LORD (ZEPHANIAH 3:14-17)

We started this month with a lesson on announcements. We begin today's lesson with a proclamation – an instruction: Sing! This is important because of the context of Zephaniah's message. Zephaniah prophesied the Babylonian exile and the return to Jerusalem. What is worth noting is that this proclamation was address to Israel, indicating that at the time of the actualisation of this prophecy, it would be One Israel. Therefore, after a series of judgments and punishments, there was a hope and a promise that called for rejoicing. Why? *Yahweh has taken away your judgments and thrown out your enemy* (v.15a). When Israel demanded a King of Prophet Samuel, it was so they could be like other nations with kings. They wanted a leader, a protector they could see and touch and feel. God was going above and beyond to

establish Himself the true King over Israel, their defender and protector. What can be more reassuring than this?

LESSON II: PROMISES OF THE LORD (ZEPHANIAH 3:18-20)

God wants His people to know He is involved in the details. What happens in judgment and captivity? Displacement, disgrace, sorrow, grief, shame, to name a few things. God addresses all of these in renewing His love and commitment to His people in today's lesson scripture. Not only will there be an end to disgrace and shame, but those who have been oppressors to God's people will be dealt with. This is a reminder that we must not be eager to be instruments for punishing God's servants or people who stray away from God. Immigrants all over the world crave for a return to their home with the right conditions, no one enjoys being estranged in foreign lands if all things worked well at home. God is promising a homecoming for all who have have been forced to flee their place of rest, their familiar place called home. Finally, God is promising a good name, which is better than riches (Proverbs 22:1)

Note Taking

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss reasons for Christians today to rejoice and sing!
2. What changes does God dwelling in our midst bring to our lives as a people?

TAKE-HOME POINTS

1. God's word is true and it will yet come to pass.
2. The evidence of God's word is in how it changes us.
3. God's presence ushers in a renewed way of life that alters fundamentally how His people relate with Him and with each other.
4. God's judgment and discipline deliver us and give us hope; they restore us and are part of his plan for our salvation

DEVOTIONAL

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
Mon, June 26	The Redeemed from Every Nation	Rev. 7:4-17
Tue, June 27	God's Invitation to Peace and Care	Isaiah 55
Wed, June 28	Dreams and Visions Revealed	Daniel 7: 1-14
Thu, June 29	God's Peace Will be with You	Philippians 4: 4-9
Fri, June 30	God Makes All Things New	Revelation 21: 1-14
Sat, July 1	Glory and Honor of the Nations	Rev. 21: 15-27
Sun, July 2	Rejoice The King Is coming	Zechariah 9: 9-17



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