



IKOYI BAPTIST CHURCH

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

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS MANUAL

JULY - DECEMBER 2023





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

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS MANUAL

J U L Y - D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 3

Prepared By:

EDUCATION MINISTRY

IKOYI BAPTIST CHURCH



This manual belongs to:

Class:



PREFACE



As we prepare for the final six months of 2023, it has pleased God once again to bring us to another season of studying deep truths from His word.

We will look at topics that would help challenge our lives, provoke our thoughts and stir our spirits unto a deeper walk with the Master. We are going to come 'face to face' with the call for peace to the Nations. If there is a time that we need such, it is now. Supernatural blessing cannot be fully enjoyed when there is the absence of peace. This will snowball into teachings on the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

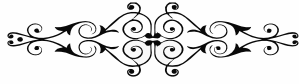
Trust me, you won't want to miss any of the 27 lessons as we race to the finishing line of 2023. Permit me therefore to encourage you to come before the Lord with an open mind and readiness in your heart to be blessed as God has prepared His servants to lead us in these lessons.

On behalf of God's servant, Rev Dr Olusegun Adeleke, I welcome you warmly and lovingly to another 6 months of discipling relationship in our various Sunday school classes.

Michael Onyegbu

Minister Youth & Education

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JULY 2, 2023

TOPIC: PEACE TO THE NATIONS

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: THE PROPHETS PROCLAIM GOD'S POWER.

DEVOTIONAL READING: ISAIAH 55

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: ZECHARIAH 9:9-17

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ZECHARIAH 9:9-13, 16-17

MEMORY VERSE: *The Lord their God will save His people on that day as a shepherd saves His flock. They will sparkle in his land like jewels on a crown. Zechariah 9:16.*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Identify the biblical fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy.
2. Explain the significance of that fulfillment.
3. State one reason why that fulfillment should make a difference in his/her life.



INTRODUCTION

Israel and Judah went through so many challenges and punishments in the hands of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Medo-Persia, and Roman empires due to their consistent rebellion, sin and idolatry against God, the Holy One of Israel. Israel's history is replete with syncretism, apostasy, inconsistency in their walk with God, occasional and infrequent penitence and return to their faithful God.

In today's lesson, The Lord of Hosts promised through his prophet Zechariah that he would restore Israel to peace, joy, contentment, and deliver them from their oppressors and sin. In our contemporary world, we the children of God and even the whole world can only find peace, hope and joy in the Lord Jesus; that was the promise of God to His covenant people and to us today as His beloved children.

In Isaiah 40:1-3, the Lord promised comfort and forgiveness of the sin of His people Israel. God also promised to send a servant to prepare the way before the coming of the Messiah to give His people peace and save them from their sin. God's throne is built on righteousness and justice. He is merciful and truthful in all His ways (Psalm 89:14). We should emulate our Father and Saviour in living a righteous and faithful lives to bear spiritual fruits and glorify Him in all our ways.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON 1: THE LORD'S KING (ZECHARIAH 9:9)

The promised Messiah would be King, just, humble, and bring salvation that would give rise to peace and rejoicing to Israel and the world at large. The divine King, unlike earthly kings, would be people-oriented, victorious and rule in righteousness without partiality. Indeed, the Messiah, even though God, would be lowly and ride on a donkey instead of chariots and horses ridden by human kings. In John 12:14 and Mathew 21:4-5, we see the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming Saviour, King and Priest as prophesized by prophet Zechariah and others hundreds of years earlier.

LESSON 2: THE LORD'S KINGDOM (ZECHARIAH 9:10-15)

The Lord's Kingdom or reign as promised by the Lord of Hosts will be characterized by:

- a. Peace to Israel and the whole world. The peace promised by our faith God through His Son, Jesus Christ is the reconciliation of man to God after the fall of Adam at the Garden of Eden (Mathew 26: 28 – the remission of Sin through the blood of Jesus at the cross of cavalry).
- b. Prisoners will be freed – that is prisoners of hope will become redeemed children of God.
- c. Everlasting reign of our God in His Kingdom at the close of age at Christ's Second coming.
- d. No more wars.
- e. There would be spiritual freedom, that is, anyone the Son of God has set free, is free indeed (John 8:36).

Therefore, the onus is on us to return to God and His Christ, for us to enjoy the double portion of blessings of God.

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LESSON 3: THE LORD'S CARE (ZECHARIAH 9:16-17)

Even though the people of Israel were in exile, God the caring shepherd of His flock would restore and save them. Israel would sparkle in the promise land like jewel (Psalm 100:3 & Psalm 4; 7-8). Israel as His covenant people would experience once again abundant harvest of crops, prosperity and celebration that would come from God's salvation and deliverance like never before.

As His children, we should rise and shine, for His glory has risen on us. We should wholly accept His Son, Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour to enjoy peace, joy, and salvation. Hallelujah! Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does this description of Jesus differ from what you see in world leaders?

2. How can our church promote peace among the nations as a sign of the coming eternal peace Jesus brings?
3. What areas of your life might you describe as a prison, or a prisoner of hope?

TAKE AWAY

- 1) The King is coming and His coming is not going to be in the manner of an electioneering process. You cannot subvert the process. He is coming!
- 2) Evil will not thrive forever. Surely there is an end to all wickedness. When the King comes, all the chariots, horses, and bows of war contending with you shall be silenced.
- 3) In the face of the difficult times and general unrest all over our nation, we must take comfort in God because when He comes He will speak peace!
- 4) Our supernatural blessing is tied to our obedience and openness to His dealings around us.
- 5) Salvation through Jesus is the only source of peace, which passes all human understanding.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Monday, July 3 | Teach us to Pray. | Luke 11: 1-13 |
| Tuesday, July 4 | Your Kingdom Come. | Matthew 6: 5-15 |
| Wednesday, July 5 | The Lord Is King! | Psalm 97 |
| Thursday, July 6 | Shout to God, the King. | Psalm 47 |
| Friday, July 7 | The Lord of the Sabbath. | Matthew 12: 1-13 |
| Saturday, July 8 | God's Gentle Servant. | Matthew 12: 14-21 |
| Sunday, July 9 | The Kingdom of God has come. | Matthew 12: 22-32 |

JULY 9, 2023

TOPIC: THE KINGDOM HAS COME UPON YOU

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: JESUS ENVISIONS THE KINGDOM

DEVOTIONAL READING: MATTHEW 6:5-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 12:1-32

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 12:22-32

***MEMORY VERSE;** "If it is by the spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." Mathew 12:28.*

LESSONS AIMS:

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

1. Summarize Jesus encounter with the Pharisees.
2. Explain why the logic used by the Pharisees was defective.
3. Identify an instance of false logic used against Christians today.



INTRODUCTION:

The Gospel of Matthew is directed primarily to the Jewish people. At least 130 direct references or allusions to the Old Testament have been identified. The book shows that Jesus truly is the messianic King of Old Testament prophecy. It is designed to help the believing Jew understand what has happened to the kingdom the prophets' link with Him.

There are several unique features of Matthew. Of 1,068 verses in this Gospel, 644 contain words of Jesus. Matthew emphasizes both Jesus' ethical teachings, and His eschatological teaching (teaching about the Last Things). Matthew's Gospel records 20 of Jesus' miracles, 3 of which are found only in this Gospel (Matt 9:27-31, 32-33; 17:24-27).

Perhaps the most striking feature of this Gospel, however, is the fact that while it affirms Jesus as Israel's promised King, it also presents Him as a Servant. In Jesus, and in Jesus only, glory and humility, **POWER** and gentleness, are perfectly combined.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON 1: KINGDOM AND HEALING (MATHEW 12:22-24)

Jesus' healing of a man who was demon-possessed, blind and mute did not go unnoticed. The people were amazed at what they just witnessed. This wasn't like what they have always known. This was totally new to them and they marveled saying, "Could this be the Son of David?" This question attested to the fact that they were expecting a

Messiah from the Davidic dynasty as prophesized by many prophets hundreds of years earlier in the Old Testament. Their hearts were longing for the coming Messiah. Some had argued that if their religious leaders had properly led them, the people of Israel would have done better in receiving Christ, but the Pharisees had a totally different perspective to the whole situation. How shortsighted can we possibly be when God is doing something around us? Great things are happening around us, but we choose to be commentators of the events rather than participate in them.

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LESSON 2: KINGDOM AND UNITY (MATTHEW 12: 25-30).

The healing attracted condemnation from the Pharisees. They attributed His healing of the possessed man to union with the Devil. They said that it was only by “Beelzebub, prince of demons”, that he drove away evil spirits from the possessed. This was contrary to the view of the people who witnessed the healing. This is a case of calling evil - good and good – evil (Isaiah 5:20), Even in our contemporary age, people find it difficult to accept that Jesus is the Son of God, Saviour and Lord, born by a virgin without man's input. They

also doubt, even Jews today that He died and resurrected. There are so many conspiracy theories regarding this in the world.

Pharisees at various occasions criticized Jesus's divine power as son of God and Messiah. Interestingly, what brought about amazement for the people attracted condemnation from the Pharisees. The Kingdom of God must be united and obey the leading of the Spirit without wavering in their faith. We, Christians, must be doers of the word of the God, not judges. Jesus rightly stated that a kingdom (vs 25) divided against itself cannot stand.

The Church of God in present age is riddled with conflicts, disharmony and court cases to resolve issues concerning the kingdom instead of being guided by the Holy Spirit. Jesus also stated that Satan and His agents (demons) are united to be able to carry out their evil enterprise (works of darkness). Satan's success and persecution is very temporary and was defeated at the cross of cavalry (Christ's crucifixion and resurrection). It is the Spirit led Child of God that can rebuke and drive away evil spirits, heal the sick, and execute the Great commission in the name of God, the father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can confirm our sonship and give us the Spirit of boldness, sound-mind and confidence to withstand the wiles (schemes) of the devil and experience His presence daily in our walk with Him; then we can bear fruit and even more fruits to His glory.

LESSON 3: KINGDOM AND THE SPIRIT (MATTHEW 12: 31-32)

Here, our Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the sin against the Holy Spirit as blasphemy (consistent and repetitive insult or slander against the reputation of God and His work), which would not be forgiven. Indeed, the sin against the Holy Spirit is to doubt the existence of God, His power, Holiness, Love, mercy, creative and saving power, sovereignty, and total rejection of Jesus as Lord and Saviour. The rejection of Jesus as Saviour which is unbelief leads to Hell fire (damnation). Even our Lord stated that sin against Him, the Son of God can be forgiven but not sin against the Holy Spirit. For instance, people like Saul, who later became Paul, despite his great persecution of Christ and the Church was forgiven and commissioned to do great exploits for God's kingdom.

We should not continue to reject or resist the promptings and help of the Holy Spirit so that we can enjoy God's kingdom on earth and eternally at the close of age. The Holy Spirit is our helper (the paraclete) and advocate which Christ promised us before his ascension. We neglect him at our peril, no one can walk wisely and be in right standing without the leading and empowerment of the spirit of God. (Romans 8:15-16) "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out Abba Father: The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

Jesus' word remains a lesson for today's church. Opponents of Christianity will always seek to discredit Jesus and divide his followers. Once confronted with the gospel, it is impossible to remain neutral. To reject Jesus is to be against him. This may be done subtly, however, if we are not careful,

we may end up working against Jesus to divide and scatter his followers, bringing disunity to the body of Christ.

God is not divided against himself, nor is his kingdom. Do you live in a way that helps his kingdom grow, so that unbelievers see your actions and attitudes and want what you have?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. How does the title of Jesus; “Son of David” describe the various aspects of His person and work?
- 2. How can believers remain confident in the ultimate victory of God even when evil appears prevalent?
- 3. How do you ensure that you do not live contrary to God's will? How do we ensure that we remain spiritual tools to be used to withstand the devil (Ephesians 6: 10-18).
- 4. How will you respond to Christians who believe that they have committed an unforgiveable sin?

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TAKE AWAY

1. Refuse to be mere commentators of things that are happening in the church, be a participant of the reign of God in the midst of His people.
2. We must be careful how we disapprove what we don't accept as normal. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin that cannot be forgiven. It leads to eternal damnation in hell.
3. The kingdom of God is the divine display of God's power and will on earth as it is in heaven.
4. The kingdom of God is built on righteousness and justice. God will not validate a wrong means for His work.
5. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we begin to enjoy the kingdom of God even right here on earth.
6. The kingdom of God is everlasting, and is characterized by righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Once you accept it, it guarantees all-round healing as evidenced in today's lesson. (Romans 14:17)

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|-------------------|--|------------------------|
| Monday, July 10 | The Kingdom; Small Beginnings. | Mark 4: 21-32 |
| Tuesday, July 11 | The window sea obeys Jesus | Mark 4: 33-41 |
| Wed. July 12 | Listen to God's voice. | Psalms 95 |
| Thursday, July 13 | God's wisdom is unconventional. | 1 Cor. 2: 1-8 |
| Friday, July 14 | The Spirit reveals God's ways. | 1 Cor.2: 9-16 |
| Saturday, July 15 | God's harvest of Righteousness. | Isaiah 61 |
| Sunday, July 16 | Receiving and Understanding the word of God. | Matthew 13: 1-9; 18-23 |

JULY 16, 2023

TOPIC: THE SOWER AND THE SEED

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: JESUS ENVISIONS THE KINGDOM

DEVOTIONAL READING: PSALM 95

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 13: 1-23; MARK 4; LUKE 8:5-15

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 13:1-9, 18-23

***MEMORY VERSE:** The seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears and understand it; this is the one whose produces a crop yielding a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown. Mathew 13:23.*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Summarize the parable of the Sower.
2. Describe the fruit to be brought forth.
3. State which soil in Mathew 13: 19-21, he or she is most like and suggest a plan for change.

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus always taught people in the crowd in parables to illustrate the Kingdom of God with every day stories but he usually goes up to a mountain or quiet place to explain/teach the people the meaning of the parables (mysteries of the



kingdom). Jesus' explanation of the parables to the disciples was to demystify the spiritual truths about the kingdom of God to his disciples or willing hearts, so that they can understand the kingdom, walk by the spirit and bear fruits.

LESSON 1: TEACHING BY THE SHORE (MATHEW 13: 1-3A)

Jesus moved to the seaside of Galilee and sat in a boat to teach the crowd including the disciples and he spoke to them in parables. The teaching of the crowd was always in parables because of their unwillingness to learn and obey the sayings of the kingdom of God. Jesus told his disciples that his use of parables is two – fold. The first reason was so that his disciples could learn the mysteries of the kingdom and because the crowd have eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear and do not understand. So, parable was most fitting for them as they were unwilling to commit to the teachings probably due to the hardening of their hearts. Example of those who hardened their hearts and rejected Jesus's message of salvation were Pharisees, Sadducees, and many other Jews. In our present age, the kingdom of God or heaven is the church that should depict and show the characteristics and power of God, but the earthly church is a mixture of apostasy, worldliness, faithfulness, and godliness. In all His parables, Christ taught that good and evil will manifest in the visible kingdom on earth until the end of age.

The scripture declared that he said so many things to them but they were all in parable. They were not in plain language, he spoke to them in parables to explain the mysteries of the kingdom. He wanted them to know that the secret of the kingdom was not a matter of human reasoning but kingdom

mysteries. It was necessary for them to understand that the import and wisdom in Christ's various parables to His disciples was for them to hear and obey Him.

LESSON 2: SOWING OF SEED (MATHEW 13: 3B-9)

Before, the farmer plants seed in his field, he will prepare or cultivate the soil. Hence, before we receive God's word our hearts must be ready and willing to hear and obey. In this parable of the sower and seed (or parable of soil), Jesus illustrated the story with three types of unproductive soils (hearts) when the farmer or sower planted the seed (the word of God).

The sower is Jesus or we present believers; the soil is the heart of the people and the seed is the Word of God. First some seeds when planted fell on the road/pathway which soil was hardened and were eaten up by birds, secondly, the seeds that fell on the rocky soil sprang up quickly but could not grow because of the shallow soil with no nutrient or water, the Sun came up and scorched the crop that grew on the rocky soil and caused it to wither away (had no root). The third of the seeds fell among thorns, when they grew up, were choked and produced no fruit. Some seeds fell on good soil, produced crops and bore fruits in abundance of hundred, sixty, and thirty folds. When we preach the gospel, those who hear and accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour are like the seeds that fell on the good soul and can produce fruit in abundance to the glory of God. Jesus then advised those that have ear to hear so that they can produce spiritual fruits of righteousness,

win-souls and be saved from the impending judgement of God (Mathew 6: 14-15; Isaiah 6: 9-12). Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 6:13, “And yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming ... So that the Holy seed shall be its stamp” – Praise God for the remnant that heard and believed the message of salvation of Christ.

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LESSON 3: EXPLAINING THE MEANING (MATTHEW 6: 18-23)

First, the seed on the way side are those who receive the word of God but did not understand and obey it. The wicked one (Satan) snatched away the word from their hearts and made them to continue in their worldly living.

Second, the seeds that fell on the stony soil are those who receive the word with joy but it has no root in their hearts, thus with persecution and trials, they will backslide, fall away and stumble.

Third, the seed on the thorny soil are those who hear the word or gospel but the cares and deceitfulness of the world (e.g., riches, social status, political offices, pride, etc.) make them to be unproductive in God's kingdom even the church.

On the other hand, the seed that fell on the good soil are those who receive the gospel with understanding and obedience, produce abundant fruits in 100's, 60's, and 30's folds depending on their faith and willingness to totally yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In summary, the seed on the road side, rocky, and thorny soils are those who reject the gospel of good news (salvation) and are headed to Hell, and those on good soil, received the word, obeyed and got redeemed, and bore fruits.

A common application for the sower parable is to ask. "What kind of soil are you?" This question should cut to the heart of being a disciple and give us reason for self-examination, the parable is about the word of God, the preachers who spread the divine seed of God's Word and the condition of human hearts. Preachers and teachers who faithfully communicate the gospel will meet many reactions, just as the seed encountered several soils.

We will not always be able to know the heart and minds of those with whom we share the gospel. Even so, the wise and talented sower spreads the seed widely. God empowers our gospel proclamation. We offer words, but God touches those having "spiritual ears" and draws them to faith. We pray for those with "ears to hear" and faithfully proclaim the gospel to "let them hear"



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can the true story of your own salvation inspire others to follow Jesus?
2. What are the kinds of spiritual “soil” that you experience in your community? How will you adjust your proclamation of the gospel to account for the challenges of the “soil”?
3. How will you offer discipleship to enthusiastic new believers to help their spiritual “roots” grow deeply? E.g., when new believers face discouragement regarding their spiritual growth?
4. How do you remove the spiritual “birds”, “stones”, and “thorns” that prevent you from bearing spiritual fruit?
5. What new steps will you take to further sow seeds of the gospel among your unbelieving neighbors and friends?

TAKE AWAY

1. We should be wise to accept Jesus and His gospel of salvation to make heaven – seed that fell on good soil.
2. Those who reject Jesus's salvation (those seeds that fell on road side, rocky and thorny soils) will receive eternal condemnation.
3. We who are privileged to be disciples should not fail to continue to execute the Great commission; to win souls for our God.
4. Christ's gospel of salvation is open to all but the hardened hearts reject it to their peril. John 3:16.
5. What kind of heart are you? What is hardening your heart and causing the inner distraction to the extent that you are not focused on what God is doing in you?



6. Since there are different soils (hearts), let us pray and rely on the Holy Spirit to help us win souls and run the race set before us – the Christian Race.
7. The problem has never been the seed (the word of God), but the soil (our heart). Watch the condition of your heart do that you don't lose the benefit of God's word.
8. The impact of the word of God in our life is largely dependent on the state of our heart.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC: | TEXT |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Monday, July 17 | Preparing for God's harvest. | Matthew 3: 1-12 |
| Tuesday, July 18 | The Righteous Yield their Fruit. | Psalm 1 |
| Wednesday, July 19 | Examine the state of your Faith. | 2 Cor. 13: 1-10 |
| Thursday, July 20 | Search Me, O God. | Psalm 139: 11-18, 23-21 |
| Friday, July 21 | God brings every deed into Judgement. | Eccl 12 |
| Saturday, July 22 | God will deal with the weeds. | Matthew 13: 24-33 |
| Sunday, July 23 | The Righteous Will Shine. | Matthew 13: 34-43 |

JULY 23, 2023

TOPIC: WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: JESUS ENVISIONS THE KINGDOM

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-10

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 13:24-43

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 13:24-30; 36-43

MEMORY VERSE: *“Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in a bundle to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.” – Mathew 13:30.*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Summarize the parable of the weeds.
2. Compare and contrast the parable of the weed with the parable of the sower.
3. Explain one personal challenge of being a stalk of wheat living among weeds.



INTRODUCTION

In today's lesson, "Weeds among the Wheat" our Lord, Jesus is teaching us to acknowledge the fact that as long as we are in the world, evil and good will co-exist until the end of the age, even in the church on earth. In the business world for instance, unhealthy rivalry and competition give rise to forgery of trademarks and adulteration. Then with thorough research in the company whose product or service is forged/adulterated, the culprit would be found and prosecuted in the law court.

LESSON 1: WEEDS WITH THE WHEAT (MATTHEW 13: 24-30)

Jesus told them another parable – "That the Kingdom of heaven (God) is like a man who sowed good seeds in his field, but while men slept (his workers), his enemy sowed tares, and went away." (Matthew 13: 24-25). The enemy that planted the weeds was Satan. When the children of God gather to worship and carry out Kingdom work, Satan comes in their midst to distract and deceive them. We must ask God to give us His Spirit to understand, discern and help us deal with the schemes of the evil one. Even in the church today, there are church goers and agents of Satan. It is a reality and thus, we must face it and deal with it frontally through God's help.

The servants asked the Sower (Christ) whether they should pull out the weeds. Weeding will allow the good seeds to

grow with good nutrients and sunlight without sharing with the weeds. However, our Lord admonished them not to remove the weeds until the harvest time. In the course of removing the weeds, some good crops which resemble the weeds might be uprooted and reduce the good harvest. At harvest time, Jesus stated that he would ask the reapers to first gather the weeds and burn them. Thereafter the wheat would be gathered into Christ's barn – that is, Heaven. This is a reminder that God will Judge the sinner and whatever a man sows, he shall reap.

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LESSON 2: WICKED WITH THE RIGHTEOUS (MATTHEW 13: 36-43)

After the crowd had departed, Jesus's disciples asked him to explain the parable of the weed amongst the wheat to them. Jesus said that the Son of man is the sower of the wheat (good seed), the field is the whole world (open for evangelism of the gospel), the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom (Christians/disciples of Christ); the weeds (tares) sown by the enemy (Satan) are the “sons of the

wicked and unbelievers". Furthermore, the harvest is at the end of age when Christ shall come and take believers (overcomers) home to Heaven, after separating the weeds (unbelievers).

The reapers/harvesters are His angels under Christ's authority and commissioning. The Son of man sends out his angels to weed out of the kingdom anything that offends (sin) and all forms of lawlessness, and cast them to hell – where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth forever and ever. On the other hand, the righteous (overcomers) will inherit the kingdom and "shine forth as the son in the kingdom of their father" (Daniel 12:3; Matthew 13:43).

In conclusion, Jesus warned "whoever has ears, let them hear!" The consequence of not heeding His warning to repent (rejecting Christ) in the parable of the weeds and wheat is Judgement, spending eternity in hell fire. That will not be our portion in Jesus' name, Amen.

The Parable of the weeds among the wheat explains one of the greatest mysteries of the kingdom: why God allows the wicked to prosper alongside his holy people. The parable teaches us that God is aware of wickedness but he chooses to leave such wickedness unjudged for the time being. God is neither oblivious to wickedness nor does his allowing the wicked to continue indicate his tacit approval.

We should remember that if God took immediate vengeance on a person with every sin committed, we the children of the kingdom, would be punished on a daily basis. God's timing is just that: a plan that he determines and controls in ways beyond our understanding. The "harvest" of the wicked and the righteous will come in God's time. Hopefully, we and those we love will be harvested as wheat and not weeds.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does this parable change your thinking and presuppositions regarding the nature of God's kingdom? How does this parable illustrate that God's kingdom has already arrived but that it has not yet fully come?
2. How will you support evangelists and missionaries in sowing the gospel throughout the field of the world? What specialized training do you need in order to support this work or take part in the work yourself?
3. How can you dig deeper into the nature of God, nature of man, and nature of sin – with scriptures like Isaiah 55: 6-7?
4. How can believers transition from hearing scripture to obeying scripture (James 1: 19-27)?
5. What advantages are there in communicating eternal truths through stories and analogies? What other ways can you retell the parable to a modern or contemporary audience?

TAKE AWAY

1. There will be continuous persecution of the Church and Christians till Christ's second coming. Christ and the prophets were also persecuted.
2. God delays some judgments for the benefit of His people. His judgement is always just.
3. Hell fire, the eternal abode of those who reject Christ (unbelievers) is real. Hence, we believers must be wise not to be condemned.
4. God's judgement may be delayed but it will surely come. Habakkuk 1:13.
5. That you are still connected to the group is not an indication that you not bound for eternal disconnection. You may be a weed in the midst of wheats
6. Who are you? A 'Wheat' or a 'Weed'
7. As 'wheats' never be tempted to go the way of the 'weeds'. They are already condemned for eternal destruction.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
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| Monday, July 24 | Wisdom is better than Jewel. | Proverbs 8: 1-12 |
| Tuesday, July 25 | Where Shall Wisdom be found | Job 28: 1-2;12-19 |
| Wednesday, July 26 | A Miraculous catch of Fish. | Luke 5: 1-11 |
| Thursday, July 27 | Praise the Lord from the Heavens. | Psalm 148 |
| Friday, July 28 | Store up treasures in Heaven. | Matthew 6: 19-33 |
| Saturday, July 29 | God's word is Great Treasure. | Psalm 119: 161-176 |
| Sunday, July 30 | Heaven's Hidden Treasures. | Matthew 13: 44-52 |

JULY 30, 2023

TOPIC: FINDING AND GATHERING

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: JESUS ENVISIONS THE KINGDOM

DEVOTIONAL READING: JOB 28:1-2; 12-19

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 13:44-52

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 13:44-52

MEMORY VERSE: *He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." Matthew 13:52.*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Identify the analogies Jesus used.
2. Compare and contrast those analogies.
3. Identify a proper and improper use of analogies today.



INTRODUCTION:

In this lesson Jesus employed four parables namely; the hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44); “Costly Pearl” (Matthew 13: 45-46); “Good and Bad Fish” (Matthew 13: 47-48), and “the Old and New Treasures” (Matthew 13:52), to continue his profound teaching about the kingdom of God. The Kingdom is so valuable that we should give up every other thing to gain it. Like Job rightly observed in Job 28:28:” And to man, He said, the fear of God, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding”. So, if we want wisdom (treasure), we should accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and be led by the Holy Spirit to inherit eternal life. A fool says in his heart there is no God. Job, like other great men of God discovered that men successfully mined precious stones, minerals or pearls but, their research and intellectual pursuits could not reveal the mysteries of the kingdom (wisdom/treasures). “For the price of wisdom is above rubies”, Job 28:18b.

LESSON 1: SELLING EVERYTHING (MATTHEW 13: 44-46)

Jesus told His disciples two parables in this passage. First, he said the kingdom of heaven is like a hidden treasure, which a man found, sold everything he had to acquire it. Second, the kingdom is like a trader/merchant looking for fine pearls, when he found the valuable pearls, he sold his assets to buy it.

We can glean two truths from the above parable of Jesus, namely; – the Kingdom of God is a priceless possession, which we should desire to have above every other thing. (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom can only be gotten by forgetting every other thing else such as wealth, political

position, career, family, money or interest; that is “selling all”, to receive salvation from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1). To be a member of God's kingdom requires our total commitment to Christ, not acquisition of earthly assets and achievements which are ephemeral for us to inherit eternal life in Christ.

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LESSON 2: CATCHING AND REJECTING (MATTHEW 13: 47-52)

In the sea of Galilee, there were about twenty-four species of fish. Hence, when you drag your net to catch fish, you will catch good, bad, small, scaled, and unscaled species. In the Old Testament times, the Israelites were commanded by God to eat only fish with fins and scales. So, with the net containing a variety of fishes, you, the fisher will need to separate them into good (eatable) into basket and the “bad ones” to be thrown away. Applying this lesson to our current realities, we can say that in the church, not all worshippers in the congregation are true believers/disciples of Christ, that is, those who have

genuine faith, who pursue righteousness. At the end of age, the wicked will be severed from the just, similar to our lesson in the parable of the weed and wheat last week depicting the separation of unbelievers (the wicked) from the righteous on the day of judgement. Unbelievers will be separated first by angels, commissioned and authorized by Christ and cast into hell. (Revelations 21:8). Then, the saints/elects/true believers who have overcome are gathered and welcomed to heaven to reign with Christ and His father forever and ever.

In Matthew 7: 21; Christ warned that, not all who called Him Lord shall enter the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the new and old treasures, our Lord alluded to in Mathew 13:52 meant that salvation in Christ Jesus should not make us to throw away the laws of Moses. The moral impost/imperative in Moses's laws and the prophets should reinforce our faith in Christ, who is the fulfillment of all earlier prophets and laws.

Elliot (1949) in his journal wrote about his passion for Jesus thus, "He is no fool, who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose". This speaks to the core of today's lesson for us to treasure the kingdom of God far beyond earthy wealth or passion, no matter the cost or suffering to follow Christ.

May the Lord help us as we commit to rededicating our lives anew to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

QUESTIONS

1. How can you use a mini narrative to describe God's kingdom in a way that a modern audience would find helpful? What steps will you take in the coming week to proclaim the message of God's kingdom?
2. How can you discern what you need to give up in order to more seriously pursue a flourishing life in God's kingdom? Who will you ask to be an accountability partner regarding this discerning?
3. How will you cast a wider "net" to evangelize to a variety of people? In what ways can you incorporate your hobbies and interests as a means to meet different people?
4. How can we believers show patience when teaching others who may struggle to accept the message or scripture? How will you incorporate different teaching methods the next time you present that message?

TAKEAWAY

1. We should choose the greatest treasure today, that is, to accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.
2. Membership of the Kingdom of God as believers requires total commitment and sacrifice.
3. The kingdom is priceless. No believers or whoever has heard the gospel should miss it. It is the greatest gift and is everlasting.

4. No price is too high, sacrifice; too much for us to pay in our bid to get the kingdom.
5. We must be ready to give up our all if that is all we need to get the kingdom
6. Stop majoring on the 'minor'. There are weightier matters of the kingdom. Whatsoever it would cost us to get it, we must be ready to pay the price.
7. There shall be a day of separation. Not a momentary separation but a final separation- some to eternal commendation, to others eternal condemnation

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Monday, July 31 | You Must Be Born Again. | John 3: 1-9 |
| Tuesday, August 1 | God Loves the World. | John 3: 10-21 |
| Wednesday, August 2 | Take Up Your Cross. | Matthew 16: 21-28 |
| Thursday, August 3 | God sweeps away our sins. | Isaiah 44: 21-28 |
| Friday, August 4 | God's Spirit and Words Remain | Isaiah 59: 1-8; 16-21 |
| Saturday, August 5 | Rebirth and Renewal through the Spirit . | Titus 3: 1-8 |
| Sunday, August 6 | Called to Freedom. | Galatians 5: 13-26 |

AUGUST 6, 2023

TOPIC: INHERITING THE KINGDOM

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: GOD'S ETERNAL REIGN

DEVOTIONAL READING: ISAIAH 44:21-28

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 5:13-26

LESSON SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 5:13-26

MEMORY VERSE: *You my brothers and sisters were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge in the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. - Galatians 5:13*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. List the fruit of the Spirit.
2. Contrast the fruit of the Spirit with the works of the flesh.
3. Make a plan to identify and eliminate one unhealthy fruit in his or her life.



INTRODUCTION

In our study this month, Apostle Paul's teachings speak about the Kingdom life that God expects from His Children: to live life of love, to bear fruit and build each other up, also of God's righteous reign which will include final judgment, and His provision for the future bodily resurrection of believers at Christ's return to earth.

Paul's epistle to the Galatian believers was written to resolve the controversy in the early Church between some extremist Jewish believers and their Gentile brethren. These Jewish Christians taught that Gentile converts had to submit to the Jewish laws and traditions in addition to their faith in Christ to be part of the Kingdom of heaven. Paul however refuted this, emphasizing that salvation is by faith in Christ alone (Gal. 2:15-21).

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: LIVING IN FREEDOM: (GALATIANS 5:13-18)

Ordinary dictionary definition of freedom is, “immunity from an obligation or duty; the condition of being free; the power to act or speak or think without externally imposed restraint.” Galatians 5:1, 13 show that what freedom means for the Christian differs from the ordinary meaning. The source of the believers' freedom is Christ and the purpose of it is not to be freed from obligation or duty, nor is it to live selfishly. It is not a license to sin and become

enslaved by Satan again, but to do what is right, to bring glory to God as Jesus did (Mark 10:45). Paul's counsel is also applicable to God's Children today. We may have different backgrounds, experiences and status, yet we are called to live by the Spirit in unity, reflecting God's holiness in thoughts, speech and behaviour (1 Tim. 4:12).

LESSON TWO: REJECTING SELFISHNESS: (GALATIANS 5:19-21B)

A few vices which arise from self-centered living are listed in verses 19-21, with the warning of the grave consequence for those who live so, “those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Therefore, evil desires in believers must not be ignored but dealt with through the help of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:24). Only this can lead to the transformed life that God desires to see in us (Romans 12:1-2).

Are there a number of these vices that are influencing you?

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LESSON THREE: PURSUING GODLINESS: (GALATIANS 5:22-26)

In contrast to the vices listed, is the list of virtues (Gal. 5:22-23) - a List of Life referred to as the fruit of the Spirit because it is produced by the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. These character traits are Christ-like and are the by-products of Christ's control. For this to grow in the believer, he or she must abide in Christ, living in obedience and thereby fulfilling the Law of God (Love God and neighbour). Which of these Christian traits do you want the Spirit to produce in you?

Jesus saved believers to bear fruit! (Matt. 7:15-20; John15:16) - the old nature dies as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Paul's final admonition, Gal.5:25-26 speaks to Christians to deliberately order their lives through the Spirit's help to reflect their new life in Christ.

When we divide the body of Christ for self-serving reasons, we serve the flesh. We might tend to minimize such acts by pointing to the blatant evils of the ungodly world around us, but our selfish hostility is just as evil. We paganize ourselves when we refuse to love one another. Do you want a kingdom life, the life that God always intended for his people? Then let the Holy Spirit bear his fruit.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What steps will you take to ensure that you continue walking in step with God's Spirit?
2. How does the world's inclination for hatred, jealousy and selfish ambition affective Church's display of sacrificial love?
3. How would you help a new believer to understand what it means to "crucify the flesh" Gal. 5:24?

TAKE HOME POINTS:

1. Do not divide the body of Christ for self-serving interests.
2. Christian freedom means becoming what God saved us to be.
3. Our liberty in Christ is not a license for careless and carefree living. Rather, it opens us to a cautious living of denying the flesh and serving others
4. Living a victorious Christian life free from sin is possible. We must learn to deal with the lust of the flesh by constantly walking in the Spirit.
5. The reason why we experience internal struggle to do good is because of the lust of the flesh and the Spirit, whichever you obey has control of you.
6. Let the fruit of the Spirit influence your behaviour consistently.
7. Never forget that to be with Christ in heaven is the reason why He saved you!

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mon, Aug. 7 | God guards the Paths of Justice | Proverbs 2:1-11 |
| Tue, Aug. 8 | Hunger and thirst for Righteousness | Matthew 5:3-12 |
| Wed, Aug. 9 | Righteousness in God's Kingdom | Matthew 5:13-20 |
| Thu, Aug. 10 | God Keeps the Steadfast in Peace | Isaiah 26:1-11 |
| Fri, Aug. 11 | Rejoice in God's Word | Nehemiah 7:73-8:3, 5-6, 9-12 |
| Sat Aug. 12 | Rejoice in Hope | Romans 12:9-21 |
| Sun, Aug. 13 | Righteousness, Peace and Joy | Romans 14: 10-23 |

AUGUST 13, 2023

THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: GOD'S ETERNAL REIGN

DEVOTIONAL READING: PROVERBS 2:1-11

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 14:10-23

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 14:10-23

***MEMORY VERSE:** Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. - Romans 14:19*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Identify the danger of sitting in judgment on others.
2. Explain the concept of mutual edification.
3. Examine his or her position on tolerance and intolerance in the light of the text.

INTRODUCTION

In today's Lesson, Paul again addresses specific situations that arise from human diversity in the Church as he did in last week's study, in his letter written from Corinth to the Roman Christians who were made up of Jews and Gentiles, Paul wrote to teach on some doctrinal issues. He also included an appeal for corporate harmony in the midst of their diversity (Romans 14) - this is the focus of today's study.

Believers from Jewish background had some religious dietary restrictions (Leviticus 11) and practiced observance of certain sacred days while the Gentiles had no such background. Paul taught that the reactions of the two groups to this should not be to enforce uniformity to one group's opinion, but he laid down the Christ-honouring directions for the Church. He also addresses the issue of judging one another and emphasizes what is of vital importance. The present-day Church has a lot to learn from this.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: ON INAPPROPRIATE JUDGING: (ROMANS 14:10-13)

Disputes regarding food and observance of certain religious days (Romans 14:2, 5) were raised by Paul to deal with the issues of unhealthy handling of preferences among believers in Christ. Both groups having been

accepted by Christ belonged to Him (vs 8) and regardless of their backgrounds should not criticize or judge each other. Christian Fellowship does not imply a right to run other people's lives for them, only their Master can and will do this in the right way.

If we must judge, let us direct the searchlight to ourselves and see if our motives for criticizing others are free of selfishness.

God has reserved judgment to an appropriate time and to the right Judge (verses 10b-12). Each man or woman is accountable to Him (Matthew 12: 6-37; 2 Cor.5:10). Therefore individuals or groups should avoid the temptation to criticize each other (vs 13a) but rather embrace caring for one another. There are situations though when making judgment is appropriate and this should not be overlooked for the wellbeing of the Church.

LESSON TWO: ON PERSONAL CONVICTION: (ROMANS14:14-18)

Knowing that Israel's Old Testament dietary regulation was to set a cultural boundary between them and other nations and not intended by God as a definition of right and wrong, Paul commends the believers to their consciences (vs 14). The issue was not worth dividing the Church over, but he encouraged believers to honour one another's convictions, to always act in love, to maintain peace and bring glory to God in so doing (1Cor. 8:9-13). Christian maturity is shown when we have concern for those who are yet to come to the truth in which we stand. Putting the needs of others before

ours is at the heart of the Kingdom life - Christ Himself being our perfect example. Serving God this way pleases Him and shows we are Christ's disciples indeed.

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LESSON THREE: ON VITAL IMPERATIVES: (ROMANS 14:19-23)

For believers in Christ, peace is a gift from Him (John 14:27) and efforts must be made to put it into use. Christian peace is more than absence of conflict but in the midst of conflict, it is sustained as we edify each other, aiming at making one another stronger and more resilient in faith (Romans 14:19; 15:2). Everything we do affects others because God has created us to be interdependent, those who are strong in faith must treat the weaker with love, patience and self-restraint. Who can we offer encouraging edification to this week?

Where Scripture is silent on issues, by today's study, we are to follow our consciences (yet being mindful of the immature brethren), not looking down at Christians who exercise their freedom in those areas. May God help us to get the balance right always.

Paul ascribed peace, joy and righteousness as being associated with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's presence and not our adherence to our different convictions, marks us as belonging to God's people. In identifying us as God's righteous people, the Spirit empowers us to love others and to surrender our own preferences.

Deferring to others' needs and concerns is at the very core of kingdom life, and Christ himself was the supreme example of one who did so. When the church fights, a vile reputation results. When its members love as Christ did, we become the salt and light of the world. Of such love, grace patience, and edification is the kingdom of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Believers are not to judge; how do we decide when it is appropriate to differ from this?
2. How will you show love towards believers who may have a stricter conscience than yours regarding behaviour (such as alcohol consumption) not prohibited by Scripture? How will you decide to forgo something in consideration for that believer?
3. Who will you edify through your God-given sense of peace after today's learning?

TAKE HOME POINTS:

1. All Christians are equal before God regardless of background.
2. Believers in Christ must love and build one another up.

3. We must be patient with one another and avoid criticizing one another.
4. God's kingdom is about doing right in God's eyes.
5. Be an instrument of peace and joy everywhere.
6. We must all have eternity in view because we will all stand before God's judgment seat to receive judgment for all that we have done in the flesh.
7. What right do we have to judge our fellow brethren, when there awaits us our own judgment.
8. We must be careful of our actions (no matter how innocent and good intended they may be) not to put any stumbling block in the way of our brethren.
9. Do not allow your personal desires, life pursuits, goals and passion to destroy the work of God committed into your hands.
10. Never allow what you accept and practice to become the reason for someone falling away from the faith. If you do, your approval would become the basis for your eternal condemnation.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Mon, Aug.14 | Fear Not: God Is with You | Isaiah 41: 1-14 |
| Tue, Aug. 15 | No More Condemnation | Romans 8:1-15 |
| Wed, Aug.16 | Wait for Redemption with Patience | Romans 8:16-25 |
| Thu, Aug. 17 | The Spirit Helps in Our Weakness | Romans 8:26-39 |
| Fri, Aug. 18 | Rescue the Weak and needy | Psalm 82 |
| Sat, Aug. 19 | Stewards of God's Mysteries | 1 Corinthians 4: 1-6 |
| Sun Aug. 20 | God's Power Exhibited in Weakness | 1 Cor.4:7-21 |

AUGUST 20, 2023

JUDGMENT IN THE KINGDOM

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: GOD'S ETERNAL REIGN

DEVOTIONAL READING: ISAIAH 41:1-14

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-21

LESSON SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-6, 17-21

***MEMORY VERSE:** Judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. - 1 Corinthians 4:5*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Identify why Paul sent Timothy to Corinth.
2. Compare and contrast the issue of judgment in this week's lesson with last week's lesson and 1 Corinthians 5.
3. Recruit an accountability partner for the mutual purpose of avoiding being "puffed up."

INTRODUCTION

The Church in Corinth was planted by Apostle Paul during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18) and he remained there for 18 months. After he left, the Church soon became problematic. In Paul's two letters to that Church, he wrote to redirect the believers to the proper attitude expected of God's people on many issues.

In today's study, the emphasis is to remind the believers that they are to live with the correct attitude as servants of God: not to sit in judgment over one another, to learn from godly leaders' example, and finally, he makes a personal appeal for orderly Kingdom behaviour, addressing them as a father would, the children he loves. Our study challenges us to faithfully live by God's standard alone by the help of the Holy Spirit and to submit to those who have authority over us in the Lord.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: FAITHFUL SERVANTS: (1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-6)

Division in the Corinthian Church resulted when members took sides with individual leaders to exalt above the others (1 Cor 1:10-17). Paul responded to this in 1 Cor 4:1-2 - "regard us as servants of Christ... as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed.... as those who are required to prove themselves faithful." God calls us even

today to see His call to us as one that demands our faithful stewardship (Luke 12:42, 48b). Believers have been entrusted with the task of reaching the lost for Christ through the gospel message - the mystery that has been revealed - Colossians 1:25-27. How faithful are we to God in this?

Division and other vices in the Corinthian church stemmed from pride, a manifestation seen in them sitting in judgment over their leaders and over one another (1 Cor 4:3-4, 6). In dealing with this, Paul made it clear that he would not be influenced by their judgment but had committed to living to please the Lord alone, needing no one else's approval. This should be a 'default' mindset for all believers (Eph 6:7-8; Col 3:23-24). We are to encourage and build each other up, leaving judging to the One who has been given the responsibility for that - Jesus Christ, the perfect Judge (1 Cor 4:5). This brings to mind one of our Pastors' (in IBC) favourite song: "When He shall come with trumpet sound, oh may I then in Him be found, Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne." - this alone should be our goal and what we live daily to contribute to.

LESSON TWO: FAITHFUL CORRECTION: (1 CORINTHIANS 4:17-21)

Paul had enough information about the Corinthian Church to be very concerned: they were worldly, jealous and

quarrelsome (1 Cor 1;10-13; 3:1-3). It is said that evil thrives only when good people watch and do nothing about what the perpetrators are doing, but not so with Paul! He handled the Corinthian Church's problems in redemptive way vs 17-19:

1. He sent a letter to the Church which was aimed at effective correction.
2. He urgently sent Timothy, a faithful disciple and an example in Christlikeness to them.
3. Timothy was to teach and remind them about what their way of life should be in Christ.
4. Paul himself planned a follow-up visit to the Corinthian Church.

The Corinthian believers talked the Christian talk but their lives did not reflect God's power verses 19b-20. Christians should not be satisfied with having the right Christian vocabulary, but our lives must show that God's power is really at work in us (Matt 5:14-16)

Finally, Paul counselled the brethren to embrace the loving and faithful correction he had set in motion to avoid a stricter Church discipline vs 21. A strong but appropriate judgmental language. Our call into God's kingdom is a high calling; to be like Jesus - it is difficult but rewarding. May God grant us the grace to respond to His loving expectation. Amen.

God is our ultimate judge. But God calls us into a kingdom in which his subjects, answering only to him, nevertheless humbly and lovingly nurture one another toward greater Christlikeness. This happens even as we acknowledge our own weaknesses and submit to those who help us to grow. It is a calling that is as difficult as it is rewarding.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What new steps will you take to be a faithful steward of the gospel message?
2. Discuss some areas in which Christians easily pass judgement on their fellow believers, and the negative consequences of such judgments.
3. What did Paul mean when he said that the kingdom of God is not a matter of words but of power?

TAKE HOME POINTS:

1. God is our ultimate Judge.
2. God calls us into a Kingdom of righteousness.
3. Humility and love should characterize citizens of God's Kingdom.
4. Believers should submit to those who are over them in the Lord for nurture and growth.

1. There is the nature of true Apostleship, we must live to meet that standard if God is going to count us worthy of the assignment.
2. Our posture must be that of a servant, not a 'lord' and people must regard us as such who are entrusted with the mysteries that God has revealed.
3. Steward wait on others to take their orders. So, we must live our life as servants sent to minister to others without expecting anything.
4. We must be faithful in the assignment committed to our care. Everything God has given to us is on trust, we must prove ourselves trustworthy of that trust.
5. God is a revealer of the things hidden in darkness and an exposor of the motives of human heart.
6. Paul was bold to introduce Timothy as a beloved faithful son in the Lord, what is God's verdict concerning you on the account of your dealings with people? Are you faithful?

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mon, Aug. 21 | Earth Is Full of God's Glory | Isaiah 6: 1-8 |
| Tue, Aug. 22In | Him We Have Our Being | Acts 17:22-31 |
| Wed, Aug. 23 | Many Will Go to God's House | Micah 4: 1-7 |
| Thu, Aug. 24 | Jesus Is Able To Save Forever | Hebrews 7:11-25 |
| Fri, Aug. 25 | Awake and Sing for Joy | Isaiah 26:12-21 |
| Sat Aug. 26 | The Most Important Message | 1Corinthians 15:1-14 |
| Sun, Aug. 27 | The First fruits of the Dead | 1Corinthians 15:15-28 |

AUGUST 27, 2023

TOPIC: GOD'S KINGDOM WILL BE ALL IN ALL

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: GOD'S ETERNAL REIGN

DEVOTIONAL READING: ISAIAH 6:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-28; EPHESIANS 1:15-23

LESSON SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28;

MEMORY VERSE: *When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. - 1 Corinthians 15:28*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Summarize the role of Adam, Jesus and God the Father.
1. Explain why death is an enemy.
2. State if he or she looks forward to resurrection and why.

INTRODUCTION

At creation, God made all things beautiful and when He assessed what He had made, He concluded that everything was very good (Gen 1:31). Man however derailed God's intention through the disobedience of the first man - Adam. Thereafter, all that are recorded in the Bible from Genesis 3 to Revelation 22 are God's response to return creation to what He intended. Today's text deals with Paul's teaching on the resurrection of believers at the second coming of Christ Jesus. It was originally directed to the Corinthian believers but is also applicable to us in contemporary times. God's response to the consequence of Adam's sin is the resurrection of believers in Christ at His second coming. After this, Christ will hand back the Kingdom to God when He would have completed His mediatory role and defeated evil, and God's Kingdom will be All in All.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: GUARANTEED VICTORY: (1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-22)

Resurrection is a doctrine of fundamental importance to the Christian faith because the Good News that is preached which inspires faith unto salvation is: Christ died to save sinners, He was buried and He resurrected on the third day according to the Scripture. 1 Corinthians 15:12 shows that resurrection was being denied by some group in the Church at Corinth; Paul lists what the consequences of this denial would be in verses 13-19. He immediately affirms however in 1 Corinthians 15:20 that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the proof of this was given in verses 3-8.

LESSON TWO: PLAN FOR VICTORY: (1 CORINTHIANS 15:23–26)

God's plan/order for victory in resurrection is mentioned here: Christ first (and this has happened), then those who belong to Christ - more details are given in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2:1-12. Adam sinned and all sinned but not all who inherited Adam's sin will partake in this resurrection. Do you have a relationship with Christ? Christ will return to defeat evil in all its forms and until then believers should continue to work to overcome evil in the world. The "when" of Christ's return should not preoccupy us (Matthew 24:36-42) but must ensure we stay focused, living the Christian life as we anticipate this great Day.

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LESSON THREE: TOTAL VICTORY: (1 CORINTHIANS 15:27-28)

God's complete plan is for everything to be subject to Christ - His anointed One. After this, Christ will willingly subject Himself to the Father. Believers in Christ should also always submit to Christ - we do this as we obey Him in everything. The fact that death is followed by life in Heaven is true and a real comfort for the child of God as he goes on here on

earth. This new life is an unending fellowship with God in Heaven and with other believers across the ages. 1 Peter 3:13-14 reminds us of God's faithfulness concerning His promises and about what our preparation should be as we look forward to our eternal Home.

Today's passage reminds us that there is even more to look forward to after resurrection. We shall be brought together in living fellowship, and made new for a never-ending life in the new heaven and earth that God has prepared for us.

We should not forget that the world we live in now and the bodies that are currently ours are temporary, to be replaced by the permanent. That truth should sanctify our every action. This is what inspires hope even in the worst of trials. This is what God has promised us, now and eternally.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the resurrection of Christ encourage you regarding death?
2. How do you ensure that you stay focused on the “what” rather than the “when” of resurrection?
3. What new step will you take to join Christ's work of overcoming evil in the world?
4. How does Jesus' submission to God the Father remind you that submission to God is an act of worship?

TAKE HOME POINTS:

1. The world we live in and our bodies are temporary.
2. It is unfortunate that we spend so much time to take care of this earthly tent (physical body) and pay less than serious attention to our spirit than serious attention to our spirit
3. God has a wonderful Home for believers in Heaven.
4. We should live the sanctified life in our every action in the light of the promised resurrection.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

JESUS EATS WITH A PHARISEE

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: LOVE COMPLETES, LAW FALLS SHORT

DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 SAMUEL 15:19-23

BACKGROUND / LESSON SCRIPTURE: LUKE 11:37-44

MEMORY VERSE: *Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness." Luke 11:39*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. List the various behaviours Jesus observed in the Pharisees and suggest how they can be corrected in our days,
2. Discuss Jesus' expectation from the Pharisees according to the lesson.
3. Resolve to improve on both inward and outward actions so as to show God's love to others.

INTRODUCTION:

In the days of Jesus Christ there were groups who were antagonistic of His ministry, and always ready to find faults with his teachings and actions. There were sects like the Pharisees, the Scribes and the Teachers of Law who always wanted to trap Jesus into saying or doing something that would make them criticize and condemn him. The Pharisees were the most influential and numerous of the sects. They were a group of Jews who strictly obeyed God's laws and all their own rules (traditions of the fathers). Like the scribes they were known as legal experts. The Pharisees paid attention to observance of outward ordinances and actions that would make them appear righteous, but they were not really concerned with actually being righteous in their hearts. For this reason, Jesus referred to them as hypocrites (Matthew 23:14).

Today's lesson focuses on a Pharisee who invited Jesus Christ to a meal in his house. The Pharisee was surprised and concerned that Jesus did not observe the tradition of ceremonial washing before eating. Jesus however pointed out to the Pharisee that what true faith demands is sincere commitment to justice and love rather than mere observance of ceremonial laws.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: A PHARISEE'S INVITATION TO JESUS (LUKE 11: 37-41)

One important feature of Jesus Christ's ministry was His principle of non-discrimination. He ate with those who

were considered the religious leaders of the community; and with those whom the religious leaders considered to be sinners in the community (Luke 5: 29; Luke 7:36; Luke 14: 1; John 12: 1-11). His approach to His work was to work with all those who would accept Him and His teachings.

Jesus Christ had just finished His teaching on *The Light of the Body* when one of the Pharisees invited Him to a meal in his home. The Pharisee was surprised that Jesus, a Jewish Teacher, did not wash his hands before eating. This washing was done not for health reasons, but as a symbol of washing away any contamination from touching anything unclean. The Pharisees made a public show of their washing, and also commanded everyone else to follow a practice originally intended for the priests. Jesus, knowing what the Pharisee was thinking, responded, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the One who made outside make the inside also “? (vv39-40). Jesus' response showed that the Pharisees were more concerned about keeping ceremonial laws than pleasing God. What was required of them was cleansing of their hearts rather than washing of their hands. Jesus teaches us here that God made man in a way that the outward behavior of the individual should naturally manifest the inward character. Anything different from this is hypocrisy.

The Pharisees loved to think of themselves as clean, but they were mean to the poor. In v41 Jesus expected the Pharisees to give to the poor among them. As followers of

Jesus Christ, our generosity reveals much about the purity of our hearts.

Notes

**LESSON TWO: JESUS CONDEMNS THE PHARISEES
(LUKE 11:42-44)**

In the house of the Pharisee, Jesus directly addressed the hypocritical practices of the sect. He reprimanded them on three different issues:

- They neglected the weightier issues of love for God and justice to their fellow men, even though they were faithful in giving tithes on garden herbs and things not required by the law.
- They loved the best seats (Luke 14:7; 20:46; Mt 23:6): They loved to be seen for their religious performances.
- They loved being accepted and recognized as religious leaders and given special attention for such.

According to the Old Testament, a person who touched a grave was unclean (Numbers 19:16). Jesus accused the Pharisees of making others unclean by their spiritual

decadence. Like unmarked graves hidden in a field, the Pharisees corrupted everyone who came into contact with them.

As true disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we should be conscious of the fact that God looks beyond superficial religious activities. We are to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God (Micah 6:8).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify some superficial practices that are common with Christians in our contemporary time and how to correct them.
2. When culture and tradition clash with spiritual instructions, how should a believer respond?
3. Discuss ways some Christians in our days act like the Pharisees.
4. Discuss the relationship between giving our tithe and showing love and justice to others.

APPLICATION

1. Believers should avoid discrimination based on social class and status in their interaction with members of the society.
2. Believers should use every opportunity, including social events, to teach the word of God.
3. As leaders in the community, Christians should be careful not to mislead others through their teachings and their actions.
4. Christians should ask themselves whether they are Pharisees or true disciples of Jesus Christ.

TAKE HOME

1. Religiosity without godly living is hypocritical.
2. God expects our outward behaviour to be aligned with our inward character.
3. Only those with clean hearts will see God.
4. We must be careful not to pay attention to mere 'ceremonial washing of hands' when in reality our major problem may be that of 'a polluted mind'.
5. We must never become like those who are passionate about upholding the laws of tradition but desecrate and disregard the laws of God.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mon Sept 4 | Bless the Lord who heals | Psalms 103: 1-12 |
| Tue Sept 5 | Bless the Lord of Compassion | Psalms 103: 13-22 |
| Wed Sept 6 | Remember the Sabbath | Exodus 20: 8-11 |
| Thu Sept 7 | Rest for God's People | Hebrews 4: 1-10 |
| Fri Sept 8 | Enter God's Rest | Hebrews 5: 11-16 |
| Sat Sept 9 | God's People Must Care for others | Deut 22: 1-4 |
| Sun Sept 10 | Do Good to Others | Luke 14: 1-6 |

SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

TOPIC: DOING GOOD THINGS AT ALL TIMES

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: LOVE COMPLETES, LAW FALLS SHORT

DEVOTIONAL READING: HEBREWS 4:1-10

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: LUKE 14:1-6

LESSON SCRIPTURE: LUKE 14:1-6

MEMORY VERSE: *Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the Law, 'is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?' But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, He healed him and sent him on his way. Luke 14:3-4*

INTRODUCTION

Our lesson last week focused on purity as understood by the Pharisees and purity as explained by Jesus Christ. The Pharisees were concerned with the ceremonial washing of hands before eating when their problem was a polluted mind, which no amount of outward washing can clean.

Today's lesson focuses on observance of the Sabbath and whether the law permits any kind of deeds on the Sabbath, including healing. One of the Ten Commandments that God gave the Israelites was to keep the Sabbath day holy (Exodus 20: 8-11). The Pharisees adhered to this commandment strictly, and also added several cumbersome traditions, but neglected the real principle of the Sabbath. It is this religious adherence of Pharisees to the commandment on the Sabbath to the exclusion of good deeds that Jesus confronts in today's text.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: JESUS HEALS A MAN WITH DROSPY (LUKE 14: 1-4)

As on many other occasions, Jesus never refused an invitation or an opportunity to teach. On this occasion Jesus accepted an invitation by one of the Chief Pharisees to eat in his house on the Sabbath. It seems that on this occasion there were many other Pharisees and scribes in the gathering as the Scripture records that they closely watched Him. Actually, it was the habit of the Pharisees to want to trap Jesus and find faults with Him or His teachings. On this particular occasion, it could be that they were actually looking for an opportunity to accuse Jesus of violating their Sabbath.

At the gathering was a certain man who had dropsy, an abnormal accumulation of fluid in body tissues and cavities. One might want to ask what the man was doing in the gathering. Could he have been planted there by the Pharisees to trap Jesus? Jesus knowing their mind and their evil motives asked them whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. This straightforward question was a tricky one for the Pharisees. If they answered Jesus' question by saying it was not lawful to heal on the Sabbath, they would have been perceived to be unmerciful toward the sick person. If they answered yes, they would have no opportunity to accuse Jesus of healing on the Sabbath. So, they kept quiet. Jesus exercised His authority by healing the man and asking him to go.

Unfortunately, we still have many Pharisees among Christians in the Church today who would rather a fellow Christian suffer because of traditions and legalities. Throughout Jesus's ministry on earth, he never allowed traditions to interfere with compassions for the needy, even on the Sabbath.

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LESSON TWO: JESUS' PERTINENT QUESTION (LUKE 14: 5-6)

Jesus knew that he had upset the Pharisees and the teachers of law by healing the man with the dropsy on the Sabbath, an action which amounted to violation of the Sabbath. Jesus justified His action by asking them a pertinent question in v5, ***If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?*** Again, the Pharisees did not respond, apparently because of their duplicity. They knew that Jesus was familiar with their practice of pulling out their ox or any other animals from the ditch on the Sabbath, which they classified as emergency. So, if it was an acceptable practice to remove an animal from the ditch on the Sabbath day, why then would it be considered wrong to heal a sick person on the Sabbath? In Jesus's view human beings deserve to receive healing on the Sabbath because their lives are more valuable than that of animals.

By healing on the Sabbath day Jesus demonstrated that deeds of mercy and love are acceptable on the Sabbath day because the Sabbath was instituted for the ultimate goods of man, and not the other way round. Every day of the week is for doing good and showing love; no law or tradition should hinder a Christian from doing good on any day.

Although not in today's text, the Pharisees persecuted Jesus and actually sought to kill Him because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also because He equated Himself with God by claiming to be Son of God. Christians have every reason to thank God for sending Jesus to set us free not only from the shackles of sin, but also from hindrances of unnecessary traditions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What should be the attitude of a leader towards members who are constantly in conflict with him or always setting traps for him?
2. Why were the Pharisees and the teachers of law not able to answer Jesus' questions in verse 3?
3. Why were the Pharisees more concerned about saving their animals than showing compassion to humans on the Sabbath?
4. Discuss what might have been in the mind of the Pharisees and why they were not able to give an answer to Jesus' question?

APPLICATION

- As a true believer, never refuse an opportunity to teach the true word of God or witness to unbelievers.
- Never allow any law or tradition to hinder you from doing good at all times.
- Christians should be ready to confront those opposed to sound doctrine regardless of their position in the Church.

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. It is lawful to do good deeds at all times and in all places regardless of the situation.
2. The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.
3. Always remember that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath.
4. Never allow traditions to interfere with the necessary need for compassions towards the needy.
5. Always remember that there are people watching you 'closely', so watch your actions.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|---------------|--|---------------------|
| Mon, Sept 11 | God Demands Justice and Promises Healing | Isaiah 58: 6-14 |
| Tue, Sept 12 | Do You Want to Be Well? | John 5: 1-9 |
| Wed, Sept 13 | God's Work Faces Resistance | John 5: 10-16 |
| Thur, Sept 14 | God is at Work | John 5: 17-21 |
| Fri, Sept 15 | Obedience shows Wisdom & Discernment | Deut 4: 1-14 |
| Sat, Sept 16 | God, teach us Your Statutes | Psalm 119: 113- 128 |
| Sun, Sept 17 | Jesus speaks to glorify the Father | John 7: 14-24 |

SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

JESUS GIVES GOD GLORY

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: LOVE COMPLETES, LAW FALLS SHORT

DEVOTIONAL READING: PSALM 119:113-128

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: JOHN 7:15-24

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JOHN 7:15-24

***Memory Verse:** Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; therefore, there is nothing false about him. John 7:18*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Explain what the Feast of Tabernacle meant to the Jews.
2. Discuss the people's accusation against Jesus and His response to them.
3. Say what they would do when they are challenged for speaking the truth.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ, during His earthly ministry, never missed an opportunity to confront the religious leaders of His time and their traditional beliefs and practices. He accepted dinner invitations from the Pharisees as we noted in the past two lessons and used the occasions to correct their erroneous beliefs, and to teach sound doctrines.

Today's lesson focuses on Jesus' teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles in the temple courts. The Feast of Tabernacles was a Jewish festival held in the fall to celebrate the gathering of harvests as well as the Jewish exodus from Egypt. It was celebrated in remembrance of the Israelites' forty-year pilgrimage in the desert where they dwelled in tents. The celebration was held in the seventh month of the Jews called Tishrei. The observance of the Feast of Tabernacle is recorded in Exodus 23:16, 34:22; Leviticus 23:34-43, and Deuteronomy 16: 13-15 amongst others.

Jesus' brothers (although they were yet to believe that He was the Messiah) urged Him to go to the festival. They told Him: "If You are who You claim to be, and Your works are so great and worthy, display them openly in Judea, and You will be duly noted" (John 7: 2-5). Jesus however did not go to Jerusalem in the company of His brothers, as their reasons for asking Him to go to the Feast was not in alignment with God's purpose for Him. He however went privately with His disciples.

The religious leaders in Jerusalem knew that Jesus would be at the feast; and they sought Him, probably to refute His teachings, or to kill him. He had healed a man on the Sabbath during a previous visit, and announced to the rulers that He is Son of God (John 5: 18). For these reasons they planned to kill him. Jesus, whilst in Jerusalem, in the middle of the feast, publicly went to the temple to teach. He affirmed that His teachings did not originate with Himself, but from His Father who sent Him. He also justified His healing on the Sabbath day.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: JESUS ASCRIBES GLORY TO GOD (JOHN 7: 15-18)

The Jews wondered how Jesus who had never been educated became so learned. Jesus had never sat at the feet of any rabbi in Israel in order to be instructed in the religion of Judaism. He did not have any rabbinical education. The religious leaders were therefore baffled and could not determine where Jesus acquired His great knowledge of things that were known only by those who had completed such schools. Jesus affirmed that, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me". He added that one must be of a willing heart to hear the will of God, and exercise his free moral choice to do the will of God. He emphasized that those who spoke from their own authority sought their own glory. However, Jesus did not seek His own glory; He sought the glory of the Father. This is a great example in humility.

Jesus taught with authority and his teachings often amazed the teachers of the law. “For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:29). One of the secrets of His outstanding teaching was deliberate praise and glorification of God rather than of Himself. He didn't teach His ways but the will of God. He also taught in v17 that if one wants to have discernment and deeper knowledge of God, one must develop a lifestyle of obedience.

The important thing to note in this lesson is that any preacher or teacher who ascribes authority and glory to himself rather than to God is not a true messenger of God. As a Christian, does your word glorify God?

LESSON TWO: JESUS JUSTIFIES HIS HEALING ON THE SABBATH (JOHN 7: 19-24)

Jesus in v 19 accused the Jews of not keeping the law given to them by Moses. For a people who sought to attain holiness by keeping to the meticulous rules that they had added to God's laws, Jesus' accusation that they didn't keep Moses law pained them deeply. The religious leaders had determined to kill Jesus for healing a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years on the Sabbath day (John 5: 5-18). As murder was certainly against the law, Jesus had exposed their hypocrisy, and they responded by saying that He had a demon. They knew that Jesus was speaking the truth; and since they couldn't refute or deal with the truth, they attempted to undermine His credibility as a witness by accusing Him of having a demon.

Jesus confronted them again on the issue of healing on the Sabbath. According to the Law of Moses, circumcision was to be performed eight days after a baby's birth (Genesis 17: 9-14, Leviticus 12: 3). This rite was carried out on all Jewish males to demonstrate their identity as God's covenant people. If the eighth day after birth was a Sabbath, the circumcision would still be performed even though it was considered work. While the religious leaders allowed certain exceptions to Sabbath laws, they allowed none for Jesus who was only showing mercy to those who needed healing. In v24, Jesus admonished the people not to judge according to appearance. What was important to the legalistic practice of Judaism was the outward performance of the law. Anyone who did not perform according to what was expected was judged. Jesus' works of mercy and salvation however refer to the heart, and such works always take precedence over the Sabbath because Sabbath refers to rest from labour- all forms of labour (John 8:15; Deut. 1: 16, Pro 24:23; Jam 2:1). The religious leaders knew this, but failed to apply such thinking to Jesus because of their hypocrisy and envy of Him.

Jesus' admonition in verse 24 not to judge by mere appearance, but with the right judgement is applicable to all Christians. A Christian should understand the law, interpret, and apply it correctly before criticizing and blaming people for their actions. To do otherwise may result in being guilty of misjudging people just like the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

Notes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss what could have made the people to say, “How did this man get such learning without having been taught?”
2. Explain what Jesus meant by saying that His teachings came from God.
3. According to the passage, what exactly was Jesus' offence that made the people conclude that He was demon possessed?
4. What lessons does verse 24 teach believers?

APPLICATION:

1. Believers should use every available opportunity to preach the word of God.
2. To know whether or not a religious speaker is telling the truth, consider if their words agree with and do not contradict the Bible; and that their words point to God and His will, not to themselves.

3. Jesus' followers should not be legalistic in their relationship with people.
4. Cultivate the habit of humility by recognizing the grace of God in your life and by giving glory to Him.

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. One who ascribes authority and glory to himself rather than to God may not be a true messenger of God.
2. To do God's will, one must have a willing heart to hear the will of God.
3. Do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgement.
4. As a follower of Jesus, you will be challenged for speaking the truth, don't be bothered.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|---|------------------|
| Mon, Sept 18 | Forgive as God in Christ has forgiven you | Eph. 4: 17-32 |
| Tue, Sept 19 | God forgives | Psalm 130 |
| Wed, Sept 20 | Adultery in the Heart | Matthew 5: 27-32 |
| Thu, Sept 21 | You get the Judgment you give | Matthew 7: 1-5 |
| Fri, Sept 22 | Rejoice in God's Forgiveness | Psalm 32 |
| Sat, Sept 23 | Let the Wicked forsake their Way | Isaiah 55: 6-13 |
| Sun, Sept 24 | Neither Do I condemn You | John 8: 1-11 |

SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

TOPIC: JESUS EXTENDS FORGIVENESS

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: LOVE COMPLETES, LAW FALLS SHORT

DEVOTIONAL READING: MATTHEW 7:1-5

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: JOHN 8: 1-11, 39-59

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JOHN 8:1-11, 56-59

Memory Verse: *"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin".* John 8: 11b

Lesson Aims

By the end of the lesson, participants should be able to:

1. Explain why the issue of adultery was taken seriously by the Jews.
2. Discuss why Jesus dismissed the woman that committed adultery without any punishment as expected by the people.
3. Make personal commitments to forgive their offenders.

INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is essentially the act of pardoning an offender. In the Bible the Greek word translated “forgiveness” literally means “to let go”, as when a person does not demand payment of a debt. It is the act of showing mercy, pardon or compassion to someone who has committed an offence by allowing them to go without any form of punishment.

Today's lesson focuses on how Jesus extended forgiveness to a woman who was caught in adultery, even though by the law of Moses she would have been stoned to death (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22). It was yet another opportunity for Jesus to confront the teachers of law who were quick to condemn others. The lesson also affirms Jesus' claim about His true identity and His existence before Abraham was born.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: JESUS FORGIVES A WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY (JOHN 8: 1-11)

Jesus was teaching in the temple courts at the Feast of Tabernacles when he was interrupted by a group of religious leaders who had brought to Him a woman caught committing adultery. The man with whom the woman committed the adultery was not brought before Jesus, though under the Old Testament law he was also guilty. Obviously, the scribes and the Pharisees were not concerned with the law; they were looking for an opportunity to trap Jesus and discredit His teachings. They

quoted the Mosaic Law, which stated that the woman should be stoned to death. According to the Roman law, under which the Jews lived at the time, capital punishment could not be exercised in cases such as adultery. However, the Old Testament law stipulated capital punishment for adultery. The scribes and the Pharisees presented Jesus with a dilemma. If He told them to stone the woman according to the Old Testament law, they would accuse Him of violating the Roman law; and if He said she was not to be stoned, they would accuse him of violating the Old Testament law.

Whichever way Jesus answered, they would find something against Him. Their real motive was to attack Jesus, not that they cared very much about the law. Jesus knew their evil intention, but did not respond immediately, instead he began to write on the ground with His fingers. When they persisted, He told them that anyone who had not sinned before should be the first to throw a stone at the woman. Jesus' response obviously destabilized them, and gradually they departed one by one leaving Jesus and the woman. When Jesus had lifted Himself up, He asked the woman, "Where are those accusers? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you, Go. From now on sin no more."

Jesus didn't condemn the woman accused of adultery, but neither did He ignore or condone her sin. He told her to leave her life of sin. After all, the Pharisees themselves were not following Moses' law because it was required that

both the man and the woman be put to death (Leviticus 22: 22-24). The woman had sinned, but she received the forgiveness of a loving God who extends grace. Jesus' forgiveness suggests that His ministry was neither that of punishment nor condemnation. Jesus stands ready to forgive any sins in our lives. With God's help we can accept Christ's forgiveness and stop living a life of sin. Christians should also follow Jesus example and also forgive offenses committed against them.

LESSON TWO: JESUS' CLAIM ABOUT HIMSELF (JOHN 8: 56-59)

Jesus had continued with His teachings and at some point had told His audience that, "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (John 8: 51). At this the Jew exclaimed that Jesus was demon-possessed, that Abraham died and so the prophets. They asked Him if He was greater than their father Abraham and who did He think He was. In verse 56, Jesus responded: "Your Father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing My day, he saw it and was glad." God had told Abraham that through him all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12 :1-7; 15: 1-21). Abraham had been able to see this through the eyes of faith. Jesus, a descendant of Abraham in the flesh, blessed all people through His death, resurrection and the offer of salvation.

The Jews said to Jesus in verse 57 that He was not yet fifty years old, how could He have seen Abraham. Jesus

answered in verse 58, “before Abraham was, I AM”. What they did not understand was that Jesus had seen Abraham because He had been in existence before Abraham was born. Not only did Jesus claim that He had been in existence before Abraham was born, He also applied God's holy name I AM thus effectively claiming that He was God (Exodus 3:14). To the Jews, this was a blasphemy, and they responded by picking up stones to throw at Him in accordance with the Law given in Leviticus 24:16. But as it was not yet the time of His death, He left this encounter with the religious leaders and went out of the temple.

The fact of the matter is that Jesus was not just a good teacher or one of the prophets, He is one with God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. At the time He spoke those words to the religious leaders, He was the manifestation of God as the Son on earth.

The Jewish religious leaders did not believe Jesus. Do you believe Him?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the probable reason(s) why the woman's accusers did not bring the man she committed adultery with to Jesus.
2. Differentiate between judging someone and correcting an error.
3. What did Jesus mean by this statement: 'Before Abraham was born, I AM'?
4. Explain what Jesus meant when He said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad."

APPLICATION

1. Acknowledge and repent from your sin to receive Jesus' blessings.
2. As we receive forgiveness from God, we too should extend forgiveness to others.
3. We should not take God's pardon as liberty to continue in our life of sin.
4. When others are caught in sin, are you quick to pass judgement? To do so is to act as though you have never sinned. It is God's role to judge.
5. We should examine the various ways by which we deny that Jesus is God and prayerfully ask God to show us the truth.

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. Jesus extends grace not condemnation to sinners.
2. Jesus is the true Judge.
3. Jesus is God.
4. In our text we discovered the 'adulterous woman', where is the 'adulterous man'? reflect on the possible reasons why he was not presented
5. Every time God pardons us, it is an opportunity for us to live a life of victory over sin.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Mon, Sept 25 | Keep God's Law in Your Hearts | Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 |
| Tue, Sept 26 | Practice Your Piety in Secret | Matt 6: 1-8, 16-18 |
| Wed, Sept 27 | Abide in Christ | John 15: 1-8 |
| Thu, Sept 28 | God Will Give the Spirit | Eze 36: 25-30 |
| Fri, Sept 29 | God Will Repay Each One's Deeds | Romans 2: 1-8 |
| Sat, Sept 30 | God Shows No partiality | Romans 2: 9-16 |
| Sun, Oct 1 | God Looks at Your Heart | Romans 2: 17- 29 |

OCTOBER 1, 2023

TOPIC: A MATTER OF THE HEART

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: FAITH TRIUMPHS, LAW FAILS

DEVOTIONAL READING: EZEKIEL 36:25-30

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 2:1-29

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 2:12-24, 28-29

Memory Verse: No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God. Romans 2:29

LESSON AIMS

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

1. Identify some marks of hypocrisy.
2. State some religious practices that are against God's injunction
3. Make a commitment to live in obedience to God's Word, even when it is not convenient.

INTRODUCTION

Who do you love? For most of us the list is long: our spouse, our children, our parents, our siblings, our friends, our brethren... Just as importantly, how do these people know that we love them? No doubt we tell them. However, for a relationship to flourish, words are simply not enough. If I tell my husband that I love him but then act bitter and resentful when he needs my help, what message am I sending him? If I claim to love my children but ignore them when they ask me to do things for them, what message am I sending them? If I claim to love my brethren but don't spend any time with them, what message am I sending? In typical Paul fashion today's section of Scripture is very wordy, but it all boils down to this: we cannot claim to love God and live in rebellion to his laws, we cannot claim to be his children and yet reject His Son Jesus Christ. That was the case with the Jews and with a lot of people today; whilst they recognise and accept God, they reject Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. And for us, we cannot claim to be Christians if we are not living in obedience from our hearts the injunctions of God.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: THE NECESSITY OF THE LAW: ROMANS 2:12-16

Paul first affirmed the impartiality of God by stating the consequences of unrighteousness and the fact that everyone will face judgment, Jew or Gentile, circumcised or

uncircumcised. He then spoke to the hypocrisy of the Jews, who like the story told by Jesus in Luke 18:13-14, think that they have the law and would be saved as a result even when they have not kept the law. The Gentiles on the other hand may think that they are saved because they do not have the law, but they have not also kept the dictates of their own conscience (which is the work of the law written in their hearts; see Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 3:9; Heb. 9:14). Paul addressed the spiritual state of both the Jews and the Gentiles; whilst the Gentiles were striving to have pure hearts, the Jews were not. He said those who sin without the law will perish without the law and those who sin with the law will be judged by the law; that they will be condemned not because they have the law or not, but because they have sinned (Rom. 2:14-16). So, it's immaterial that you were born into a Christian family, if you do not have a personal relationship with Christ Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you stand condemned (John 3:18).

LESSON TWO: VAIN PRIDE OF THE JEWS: ROMANS 2:17-24

The Jews pride themselves as being the recipients/custodians of the law and as such, have a relationship with God who was the giver. Because of this, they see themselves as being righteous and entitled while others whom they consider inferior and sinners have no part in God. They saw themselves as the moral standards /instructors that the other nations, Gentiles should learn from but surprisingly, they do not do or observe what they claim to teach and were certainly not a light to the other nations. All the things they criticised the Gentiles for, they

also indulged in and maybe more. The clear import of what Paul was saying to them here was that no one will be justified by the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 3:19-20). He said further in Galatians 2:16, 21 that moral law cannot save and that righteousness cannot be attained through the law, otherwise, Christ would have died in vain. Paul was simply telling the Jews that they, being privileged to see God's righteousness in stark contrast to their unrighteousness, should have evoked a need in them for the Messiah and His salvation. No matter how good we may think we are, keeping all the law, being decent, kind, good, generous, and like, we still will not be justified, because its only through Jesus Christ that that can be saved.

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LESSON THREE: THE PRIDE OF PHYSICAL CIRCUMCISION CONDEMNED: ROMANS 2:28-29

Paul addressed the act of circumcision which was first introduced for the Jews in Gen.17:10-14; it was designed to

be an outward physical sign of an inward spiritual reality and promise, but maliciously believed or confused by the Jews to mean the external only. He thus redefined a Jew to mean one who has had an inward circumcision of the heart (which is spiritual and not merely external and physical).

The implication being that the Jews who though circumcised outwardly/physically, but do not keep the law/by recognising and accepting Jesus Christ, the one who has fulfilled the law as their Lord and Saviour, are by no means Jews. But the Gentiles who keep/obey the law and by extension, whose hearts are circumcised are by virtue of such circumcision, Jews and children of Abraham because they recognise and accept Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers.

Salvation is not a function of good works or by being recipients and keepers of the law or being a descendant of Abraham, which is proven by an outward circumcision but by an inward circumcision of the heart. Jesus Christ is the only sure way to salvation and all who accept Him as Lord and Saviour are saved because He is the ONLY WAY to the Father (Rom. 10:13; John 14:6). God does not have two standards because He is not partial. He will not judge the Jews with one measure and the Gentiles with another; all will be judged with the same measure. For even Moses taught the Israelites this much when he told them to

circumcise the foreskin of their heart, and be stiff-necked no longer (Deut. 10:16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think Paul's discussion of condemnation in Rom. 1:18–3:20 is overly harsh? How do we explain the 'good works' of unbelievers?
2. How did your own conscience aid you in understanding your need for the gospel? How did the moral law aid you in understanding the gospel?
3. What objections do people typically raise today when confronted with the notion that they are spiritually bankrupt and in need of Jesus Christ?
4. Was salvation by good works, or law-keeping, ever a legitimate possibility for mankind, even hypothetically (cf. Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; 3:21)?
5. As a believer, have you ever evaluated your standing before God based upon your performance as a Christian, rather than by your position in Christ?
6. Have you truly been obedient to God from the heart, or has Christianity merely become a checklist or something you do on Sunday mornings?
7. How can the church as a whole do a better job of showing the heart of Christ to the world around us?

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. It is not the hearer or custodian of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified.
2. Jesus Christ is the only sure way to salvation and all who accept Him as Lord and Saviour are saved because He is the **ONLY WAY** to the Father
3. Be careful to live a life that is consistent with the words of your mouth. When you tell people to keep the law, be sure not to break the laws of God.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mon, Oct. 2 | Living Before God | Deuteronomy 5:1-15 |
| Tue, Oct. 3 | Living with Others | Deuteronomy 5:16-22 |
| Wed, Oct. 4 | Who Will Rescue Me? | Romans 7:14-25 |
| Thurs, Oct. 5 | God Sees Human Intentions | Jeremiah 7:1-15 |
| Fri, Oct. 6 | Dead to Sin; Alive in Christ | Romans 6:1-12 |
| Sat, Oct. 7 | Present Your Bodies to God | Romans 6:13-23 |
| Sun, Oct. 8 | Dead to the Law Through Christ | Romans 7:1-13 |

OCTOBER 8, 2023

TOPIC: FINDING LIFE AND FREEDOM

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: FAITH TRIUMPHS, LAW FAILS

DEVOTIONAL READING: JEREMIAH 7:1-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 7:1-25

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 7:1-12

***MEMORY VERSE:** But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. Romans 7:6*

LESSON AIMS

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

1. Explain how Christians have been set free from the law of sin and death.
2. Discuss the effects of the law, according to the passage.
3. Make personal commitment to finding life and freedom in Christ instead of strict adherence to the law.

INTRODUCTION

A married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is free from the law of marriage. So, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive she is an adulteress, but if she marries another man after her husband dies she is free from the law and is not an adulteress.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE FREEDOM FROM THE LAW: ROMANS 7:1-6

Paul had explained in chapter 6 that Christians died with Christ and as such, died to sin. He explained further, that once we are dead to sin, we can no longer be subject to the law nor the desires of the flesh that causes us to sin. He said that it's only the living that can be subject or under the dominion of the law; once you are dead, the law no longer has a hold or effect on you. We died to the law through the body of Christ, and were raised with Him to be subject to a new authority (Jesus Christ). He used the analogy of married woman who is bound to her husband only as long as he is alive, but once he dies, she herself becomes dead to the law that binds her to him and is released from the requirement of the law (which binds her to him) and can be married to another without offending the law. Paul was clearly telling the Jewish believers who still sort to bind

portions of the law on believers as legal ordinances of justification/legal requirement for salvation, that they were committing spiritual adultery against Christ by seeking to be married to both the law and grace, and cannot, therefore, bear fruit for Christ.

He reminded them that before now, they sort justification/righteousness by meritorious outward observance of the law without the inward circumcision or performance of same. This, he said only manifested their spiritual arrogance and rebellion and could not attain spiritual perfection, thus, leading to death. And why was this so, because before Christ, everyone was dominated by the weakness of the flesh, and our sinful desires brought us death instead of bearing fruit for God. But with Christ, our life is no longer controlled by the flesh.

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LESSON TWO: GOD'S PERFECT LAW: ROMANS 7:7-12

Paul answered his rhetorical question (Is the law sin?) with an emphatic NO. It is instructive to start from the point that where there is no law, there is no violation of the law or sin for that matter. The law merely reveals what sin is, its

penalty and our perverse nature always wanting to assert its independence, abhors restrictions/law. The law showed us what would happen if we went one way or the other. It gave guidance, but did not force us to go either one way or the other. It thus, becomes clear that it is not a means of salvation but one that is against the promises of God from which we needed to be rescued (Rom. 4:15; Gal. 3:21). Yet, the law in itself is not the problem but the perversity inside us to do evil (Ps. 19:8; 1 Tm 1:8). The law is holy, just and good because it makes us to recognise our sinful state and our need of grace.

The passage explains that in our union with Jesus Christ, we also died to the law. When we die to sin, we also die to the law and the law can no longer prosecute us because in the eyes of the law, we are dead. For, believers have been given new life with Christ. So, we no longer live according to any external standard other than what Christ has established in our hearts. Doing good works cannot save us neither can they improve us spiritually. This fact helps us takes the focus away from ourselves to Christ (grace).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does verse one mean we are under the law?
2. Identify some laws in the Church that seems to have enslaved members from serving God.
3. Discuss the benefits of the law according to the passage.
4. Describe what Paul meant in verse 9.

APPLICATION

1. Do you tend to evaluate others' spiritual growth by external means? Instead, make an effort to know, love, and shepherd each other unto Christ-likeness. Rejoice that we live under the law of Christ which is all of grace!
2. The more we adhere to religious standards and rulebooks to discern our own spiritual condition, the worse we become. Are you on this downward spiral? Turn to Christ's limitless grace instead!

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. As Christians, we died to the law through the body of Christ, which death put an end to the law/sin and we were raised with Him to be subject to His authority.
2. We have been set free from the power of sin and the law and have become slaves to righteousness. The knowledge of this should spur us to be more committed to the course of Christ and kingdom work.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Mon, Oct. 9 | The Lord Preserves the Faithful | Psalms 31:1-5, 19-24 |
| Tue, Oct. 10 | Your Faith Has Made You Well | Mark 10:46-52 |
| Wed, Oct. 11 | My Heart Trusts in God | Psalms 28 |
| Thurs, Oct. 12 | The Gospel Sets Us Free | Acts 15:22-35 |
| Fri, Oct. 13 | Justice, Kindness, and Humility | Micah 6:1-8 |
| Sat, Oct. 14 | The Gospel for All People | Galatians 2:1-10 |
| Sun, Oct. 15 | We Are Justified in Christ | Galatians 2:11-21 |

OCTOBER 15, 2023

TOPIC: JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, NOT BY LAW

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: FAITH TRIUMPHS, LAW FAILS

DEVOTIONAL READING: GALATIANS 2:1-10

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 2:11-21

LESSON SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 2:11-21

***MEMORY VERSE:** The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20b*

LESSON AIMS

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

1. Define the term 'Justification' and 'Faith'.
2. Identify three ways Christians can avoid hypocritical living.
3. Make a commitment to lovingly correct erring brethren.

INTRODUCTION

Members of a Church went out on evangelism and won converts to Christ. One of the converts was a prostitute who came to love the Lord, went through discipleship and even became a worker in the Church. The Pastors were very proud of her because of the complete turnaround in her life. The wife of the Pastor took special interest in her and spared no praise to the Lord for the great work He has done in the life of this sister. Soon afterwards, the Pastor's son fell in love with her and wanted to marry her and to the utter surprise of the whole Church, the Pastor and his wife objected vehemently to the idea. When asked why, they said how can their son marry a former prostitute.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: PETER'S HYPOCRITICAL LIFESTYLE CONDEMNED: GALATIANS 2:11-14

One of the criticisms against the Church today, is the hypocrisy of believers. We say one thing and do another, we preach about the grace and love of Christ to all and yet behave differently to one another and even those outside the Church. Some of us feel more deserving and better than others, we even label some within the fold as unbelievers because they do not share our views or align with our position on certain issues. The irony is whilst we are living and behaving exactly like the world, we still want to point

people of the world to Christ. What a joke and a mockery of the message of the grace and love of Christ. It is time that we stopped living this lie, and show forth the love of Christ in its wholesomeness.

In this passage, Peter mingled and fellowshiped with the Gentile believers freely as fellow believers and co-equal members of the body of Christ without more until certain Jews came. He, wanting to be politically and socially correct, immediately changed and ceased to identify with them as being equal in Christ, thus creating two classes of believers. This action of his led other Jewish believers to also behave the same, including Barnabas. It is this attitude of hypocrisy that Paul condemned and rebuked Peter openly for (James 5:19-20). Recall that in Acts 10, this same Peter led Cornelius (a Gentile) and his household to the Lord, baptised them and witnessed the indwelling of the Holy Spirit upon them. Unfortunately, today we are known for creating 'us' and 'them', build walls and add requirements to what it means to be a follower of Christ and thus, diluting the power of the gospel and the message of grace. This has to stop if we will truly reach the world for Christ.

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LESSON TWO: JUSTIFICATION THROUGH LOVE IN CHRIST ALONE: GALATIANS 2:15-21

Paul explained here that though, they were born Jews and not Gentiles who never obeyed the law, but then, no body (the Jews inclusive) becomes right with God because they obeyed the law. But that this happens, only when they believe in Jesus Christ; meaning when both Jews and Gentiles believe in Jesus Christ, they become right with God. Paul said it is futility trying to earn God's favour, so instead, He embraced the message of God's grace he knew the old Paul (Saul) essentially died on the cross with Jesus. True faith is not just an intellectual belief, it is a transformation, it is surrender, and as such, we no longer live life depending on our ability. We live our lives depending on Him. Grace and Justification is not about what we can (or should) do, it is about what Christ has done and is doing in us. We can stop struggling and begin to enjoy the relationship that is offered freely to us.

Salvation is not a function of good works or keeping of the law, but it is a function of grace. It is the saving of human beings from sin and its consequences, which include death and separation from God by Christ's death and resurrection. For if it were possible to earn our way to heaven, then we wouldn't need God's grace and there wouldn't have been any need for Christ to go to the cross. For us to truly point anyone to Christ, our lives must be consistent with what we preach. We must shun the holier

than thou attitude and assuming the position of God. We must quit looking at others as inferior believers or not even believers because they fail to meet the standards we have set. Just like Barnabas, some fine believers have been led astray by such behaviour/hypocrisy and many discouraged or frustrated out of/from the faith.

Further, we have to truly die to self in its entirety, leaving Christ as the all in all who now lives in us; with no record whatsoever of the existence of our former selves. That is the expression of God's unimaginable love to us

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you compromising the gospel by living inconsistently?
2. Do you proclaim that God reaches out to everyone yet act like some people are not “worthy” of salvation?
3. Do you talk about unity but instead of building bridges you blow them up?
4. Do you say you want to reach others with the message of God's grace yet relate to others in a non-loving way?
5. What does it mean that they since they are Jews by nature, they are not sinners from “among the Gentiles?”
6. What can we take away as lessons about the Law from this passage? Faith? Works? Justification?
7. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? What kind of life do we need to live if we no longer live, but Christ lives in us?

APPLICATION

- Next Sunday at church, look around and find someone you have never met before. Walk up to them. Introduce yourself. Ask them some questions. Then repeat this until it becomes a habit every Sunday.
- What should the Galatians do with everything they learned? What should we do?

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. Salvation is not a function of good works or keeping of the law, but it is a function of grace. We come to experience this when we express our faith in Christ Jesus.
2. Believers should avoid hypocritical attitude no matter the pressure to do so. We are expected to be true to what we believe, preach and teach.
3. Christian leaders should be mindful of their actions because they are capable of leading others astray.
4. Erring believers should be corrected in love.
5. Become the 'Paul' of our days and be ready to speak truth to power and resist every act of hypocrisy that threatens to lead others astray and derail the purpose of God in the midst of His people.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mon, Oct. 16 | So Great a Salvation | Hebrews 2:1-9 |
| Tue, Oct. 17 | Christ Destroys the Power of Death | Hebrews 2:10-18 |
| Wed, Oct. 18 | Delight in the Law of the Lord | Psalms 1:1-6 |
| Thu, Oct. 19 | Blessed with Every Spiritual Blessing | Ephesians 1:3-14 |
| Fri, Oct. 20 | The Hope to Which We're Called | Ephesians 1:15-23 |
| Sat, Oct. 21 | Receiving the Spirit | Galatians 3:1-5 |
| Sun, Oct. 22 | Redeemed from the Law's Curse | Galatians 3:6-18 |

OCTOBER 22, 2023

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE GOSPEL

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: FAITH TRIUMPHS, LAW FAILS

DEVOTIONAL READING: EPHESIANS 1:3-14

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:1-18

LESSON SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:1-14

***MEMORY VERSE:** Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Galatians 3:2b*

LESSON AIMS

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

1. State why believers were redeemed by Christ Jesus according to verse 14.
2. Discuss ways that the Gospel is superior to the law.
3. Make a commitment to hold on to the true Gospel to the end without wavering.

INTRODUCTION

There is a remarkable picture of the dramatic theological confrontation between Old Testament law and New Testament grace. Magnanimous forgiveness and grace, which allows the possibility of transformation. Such is the magnanimous forgiveness and grace, offered to us through Jesus, also allows the possibility of transformation for each one of us. It just like a person trekking from Lagos to Ibadan with a very heavy load on her head, because that was the only way to transport the goods then as there was no other means of transportation. Then came a motor car, stops to carry her and she enters the vehicle but still insist on carrying the load on her head.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: PAUL'S PERTINENT QUESTION: GALATIANS 3:1-5

Paul, noting that the Galatians already know what they need to know and experienced the truth they are being made to doubt, expressed surprise that the very people he taught and saw accept his teachings (Salvation by faith through grace), who also suffered so many persecutions for their faith in Christ, have now turned around to embrace a false doctrine of the bondage of circumcision and keeping the law; as if their suffering was in vain. He was very unhappy and asked who has pulled the wool over their eyes, leading to this lack of understanding and mindlessness which he

likened to witchcraft (i.e., as if someone has cast a spell on them). Their inane action can only be explained from the perspective of someone whose mind has been manipulated and controlled by the powers of evil or emotions cum, spiritual dullness. Otherwise, he couldn't understand how they could take their eyes off Jesus whom they knew was crucified for their sake and return to self-effort. Paul could not understand why they who received the Spirit by hearing with faith, now think that other requirements are necessary for what is already theirs. He thus makes clear that salvation is on the foundation of faith in what Christ has done. That it cannot be attained by human effort, which was why Jesus died on the cross. That whatever work had to be done, Jesus already did on the cross.

LESSON TWO: THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM: GALATIANS 3:6-9

Quite contrary to what the Judaizers were saying to the Galatians that they needed the law and ceremonies to be righteous (Deut. 6:25), Paul was able to set forth the fact that salvation is entirely by grace even under the Old Testament. He cited how Abraham's obedient lifestyle was justified before God by faith (Gen. 15:16). He said that spiritual sonship of Abraham is not based on being born a Jew or through observance of the law and ceremonies but simply by faith and if that was the case during the time of Abraham, then the same is true today; the very reason why God said to Abraham that "...in you all the families of the

earth shall be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3). Thus, the good news of justification by faith was first made known to Abraham and that all those who will walk after his footsteps, will receive the same promise of salvation. So, anyone who put his or her faith in God and His son Jesus Christ, receives the same blessings as Abraham did; this was and continues to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. One can dare to state that the fulfilment was not necessarily as a result of anything Abraham did, including his faith but purely, the grace of God. That grace is still available in Christ today to all who would accept Him as their Lord and Saviour.

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LESSON THREE: FUTILITY IN RELYING ON THE LAW: GALATIANS 3:10-14

The law was given to point out where we are wrong/failed but it is incapable of making us righteous. All who rely on the works of the law are said to be under a curse the law brings which is condemnation; as no one can live a sinless life/perfecting keeping the law in order to be justified by the law (Rom. 3:10,23). The purpose of the law was to direct us to our inadequacies in reference to the law and thus plead

for God's grace. The quotation from Hab. 2:4 about the just living by faith (where he connected righteousness with faith and not law), was saying that they should quit trying to keep the law as a means to salvation, but that by their faith only, which is total reliance on God can they earn salvation. Note that this does not excuse us from obedience to the will of God as some would want to argue but that we cannot be saved by perfect obedience as that would take us back to self and the law; in which case Christ would have died for nothing. The law emphasises human effort and external behaviour, but salvation is given by grace through faith in what Jesus has done.

Law-keeping cannot earn us God's favour but only a curse, since we all are bound to fall short. But the good news is that, even in the curse, God has provided a solution in the crucifixion of Christ (Deut. 21:23) who suffered the indignity/curse of hanging on a tree, thus taking our curse by being a curse for us. Simply put, there can be no salvation without the atonement of Jesus Christ that took care of sin in relation to the law; for the salvation that was promised to all nations through Abraham was fulfilled at the cross. There is no more, nothing else to be done apart from faith in Christ by which we receive the Spirit, the guarantee of eternal life. Salvation is not a function of works or keeping the law, but grace. For if it were possible to earn our way to heaven, then we wouldn't need God's grace and there wouldn't have been any need for Christ to go to the cross. The common denominator we have as Christians is faith in Christ, that is what unites us; so, let's reject the suggestions that we need to keep some rules, certain important components or be

conformed to the standard of certain individuals/persons to be saved or before we can be considered/acceptable as Christians. Today, we judge people who do not dress like us, talk like us, agree with us or our ways or even dare to challenge us on certain issues as being canal and unbelievers or yet to be properly broken. We display all sorts of impudence and arrogance, trying to lead men backwards in matters of faith, and not forwards into fuller maturity as if our lives with Christ started by keeping the law/rules or doing something, rather than simply hearing and believing that Jesus is Lord. Make no mistake, we are by no means acquiescing to a careless and reckless life without the fear of God/holy living or taking grace for granted but that righteousness can never be attained by keeping the law/observing rules no matter how near perfect we may be.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways have I experienced the Spirit?
2. Why would anyone *want* to rely on the law?
3. In what way did Jesus become a curse?
4. Did the covenant with Abraham have any conditions?
5. Should we add some laws “because of transgressions” today?
6. Do laws cause more transgressions, or fewer?

APPLICATION

1. Believers need to be secured in their faith and not allow trendy or false teachings to make them doubt the message of the Gospel.
2. We should hold firmly to our faith in Jesus and be convinced about our salvation.

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. What has happened to you? Has it become a burden to obey the truth?
2. Watch your life and consider where you are now. Have you fallen from the high standards of right living? Are you beginning to do the things that you have long considered as the ways of your old nature?
3. It is not how well we started but how well we finish. The righteousness of a man will not save him the day he sins. Examine yourself

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mon, Oct. 23 | A Promise to Abram's Offspring | Genesis 12:1-9 |
| Tue, Oct. 24 | An Imperishable Inheritance | 1 Peter 1:3-12 |
| Wed, Oct. 25 | Poor in the World, but Rich in Faith | James 2:1-7 |
| Thu, Oct. 26 | The Lord Is My Portion | Psalms 16 |
| Fri, Oct. 27 | God Is the Rock | Deuteronomy 32:1-14 |
| Sat, Oct. 28 | Heirs of God's Promise | Hebrews 11:8-19 |
| Sun, Oct. 29 | Children of God | Galatians 3:23-4:7 |

OCTOBER 29, 2023

TOPIC: FREED TO BECOME AN HEIR

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

THEME FOR THE MONTH: FAITH TRIUMPHS, LAW FAILS

DEVOTIONAL READING: GALATIANS 3:1-9

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:19- 4:7

LESSON SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:23-4:7

***MEMORY VERSE:** So in Christ Jesus, you are children of God through faith. Galatians 3:26*

LESSON AIMS

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

1. Explain the word 'heir' and how it relates to Christians.
2. Discuss life before and after accepting Christ through faith.
3. Show appreciation to God for their adoption as children of God.

INTRODUCTION

In the whole of this month, we have talked about our changed situation as Christians. In the first four weeks we talked about circumcision of the Heart by the Spirit, Finding Life and Freedom, being justified by Faith and Not Law and The Superiority of the Gospel respectively. This week, we are looking at our changed status through faith in Christ as 'Sons and Heirs' contrary to our former status as slaves. Before now, we were in bondage, enslavement, serfdom, servitude, which did not depict freedom at all. In this lesson, all that has changed and we want to consider the meaning and implication for us, both now and in the future.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: FAITH AND THE LAW COMPARED: GALATIANS 3:23-29

Paul explained that before faith was revealed (the fulfilment of the promise), we were contained, constrained, held in captivity by the law, hence, the law served as a kind of disciplinarian until Christ came and thus, justification by faith. We are therefore no longer subject to the law or any disciplinarian. For the law was a foreshadow of good things to come (a means to an end) and once the substance (Jesus) appeared, the law had to give way. Once we repose our faith in Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we become His children with full rights of inheritance from God. The rite of entry

into God's presence is no longer the law which one, could argue, was basically applicable to men but baptism (baptised into Christ) made available to all (both male and female, small or old, black or white etc). In Christ, all our former identifiers and boundary markers has fallen off or irrelevant and we no longer see ourselves as Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female but one in Christ for whom, there is equality in reference to salvation. Now, we all share fully and equally in the inheritance of God's promises as Abraham's seed and heirs.

Today, just like Paul's days, divisions still persist amongst us in the Church and as Christians. Some on cultural basis, social, economic, tribal, political, ideological and so on. The truth is that these may continue for a long while but we must not allow them to define who we are; for we are one in Christ and as such, all other things should take a back seat. We should all be able to proclaim that we are children of God from our hearts and our conduct/character confirming same both in the Church and outside of it. We should desist from labelling one another in any other way as if we are still enslaved to the law; for we all have one faith, one baptism, one hope.

LESSON TWO: ADOPTED AS GOD'S CHILDREN: Galatians 4:1-7

Paul's argument here is that the son, being the heir apparent to the throne and one entitled to the inheritance of the Father is not better than a slave in relation to that

inheritance. The reason being that the son is kept in bondage and as such, has no access or possession of the inheritance until the time set by the Father. The point being that both Jews and Gentiles were in bondage before the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus Christ. So he seemed to be saying that when they behave and act the way they do, they are being children who do not know their right and hence, not different from the slave in bondage.

Paul went on to state that at the predetermined time, God sent Jesus Christ who was born under the law (God Himself became one of us except for sin) in order to redeem us from the curse of the law. Jesus Christ observed the law to its fullness and took the curse of the law in His death. He kept the law for us as the representative man in order to free us from the obligations of the law (coming to age from childhood to adulthood, from servants to becoming children of God). And since we are now His children and heirs, we also have His Spirit in our hearts.

In conclusion, we have nothing to prove by holding onto the law because, when we come down to it, we are not accepted because we obey but instead, that we are accepted and therefore, we obey. Should we decide to continue to hold onto the law, then we cannot address God as our Father (Abba, Father), instead we will remain slaves to the law which was what we were before we knew God.

Notes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the importance of faith as a basis for receiving God's promises
2. The law can diagnose sin, but it cannot give a remedy. Discuss
3. Explain what Paul meant in verse 23 when he said, “if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise”
4. What does it mean to be adopted as children of God

APPLICATION

As many that have faith in Christ Jesus, regardless of race, status or sex automatically become children of God according to the promise, and they have direct access to the Father.

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. God has adopted us, and now we have every legal right to the kingdom of heaven as heirs.

2. The law was a tutor to bring us to Christ but now that faith has come, we are no longer under the law. We now live and walk by faith in the fulfilment of the laws of God.
3. We must grow unto maturity so that we do not live like a slave though an heir.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mon, Oct. 30 | Welcoming God's New People | Acts 15:12-21 |
| Tue, Oct. 31 | The Lord Delivers | Psalms 37:27-40 |
| Wed, Nov. 1 | My Help Comes from the Lord | Psalms 121 |
| Thu, Nov. 2 | Many Parts, One Body | 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 |
| Fri, Nov. 3 | God Is Near to Anyone | Acts 17:22-34 |
| Sat, Nov. 4 | Salvation for All People | Isaiah 56 |
| Sun, Nov. 5 | Saved Through the Grace of Jesus | Acts 15:1-11 |

NOVEMBER 5, 2023

REQUIREMENT FOR SALVATION

THEME FOR THE MONTH: CHRIST FREES, LAW ENSLAVES.

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

DEVOTIONAL READING: ACTS 17:22-34

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: ACTS 15:1-21

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ACTS 15:1-11

MEMORY VERSE: *God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Acts 15:8-9*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Explain the dispute that arose in Antioch over the issue of circumcision as a requirement for salvation.
2. Discuss what is actually needed for salvation according to the passage.
3. Express their resolution to change some laws that are capable of causing discrimination in the Church and home.

INTRODUCTION

Human nature always craves and strives for control and exclusivity. Every group sees itself as special and would want to set rules in place so that they can control who can belong to the group or not. This is not necessarily a bad thing but when the rules become burdensome or goes against your own values then it becomes an obstacle to your entrance.

This was the situation with the Jews who saw themselves as exclusive members of Christ's salvation forgetting that Christ did not choose them because of their circumcision but because of their repentant hearts which had been turned to Him. Change is difficult to accept most times and this led to the argument between the Teachers from Judea and Paul and Barnabas. The one insisting on following the old laws of Moses and the other saying No, that law was not good enough and that is why Christ came with a better way that includes ALL MEN regardless of their tribe and Gender. That way is faith in Jesus Christ. Acts 16:31, Rom 10:9

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: THE LAW OF CIRCUMCISION REJECTED. ACTS 15: 1-5

Paul and Barnabas were both Jews and had been circumcised and taught the Laws of Moses but having been convicted that Christ died for all men and desires that all might be saved, they were convinced that it was not God's plan that the Gentiles should become like Jews but rather become like Christ. For the Jews, Circumcision is part of

their culture however that is not where salvation lies. If Circumcision could save then Christ would not have needed to give His life for us.

There were however others who disagreed with this and the matter had to be referred to the Council in Jerusalem to be settled. This is a lesson for believers that disagreements can and do occur amongst brethren but the way to resolve them is to seek the face of God, seek counsel and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As believers we must take care to focus on what is needful. We must not hold on to our culture and tradition to the extent that it becomes an obstacle to the proclamation of the message of Salvation to others. We must not put unnecessary burdens on unbelievers who are seeking to know the Lord. The works of the law or flesh cannot save. Gal 3:1-4.

LESSON TWO: PETER'S EXHORTATION ACTS 15: 6-11

In the verses before us we see the conclusion of the matter. After much debate and argument, Apostle Peter stood up and reminded the Council of his very clear and explicit encounter with the Lord in which the Lord told him clearly not to reject anyone based on his beliefs or traditions (Acts 10: 14-15). He further reminded them about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his household (Acts 10: 44-45). The pre-requisite for this visitation was changed and repentant hearts. As our memory verse states, God sees and knows our hearts.

If God accepts all people through their profession of faith in Jesus Christ, who are we to reject them? If God says all who believe in the name of His son Jesus Christ are His children (John 1:12) can we judge God and say they must do more to qualify? We all have been saved by Grace and that not of ourselves but a gift of God. (Eph 2:8)

We must stand up and speak against anything that will make it difficult for people to give their lives to Christ. This might involve reminding people where God has brought them from.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it a sin to have disagreement amongst believers?
2. What is the best way to resolve our conflicts especially doctrinal conflicts?
3. What are some traditions or Doctrines that continue to cause conflict today in the Body of Christ?
4. How do you reconcile the stand of the Judean teachers with the Great Commission in Matt 28:19-20?
5. How should we relate to others knowing that God sees our hearts and does not discriminate?
6. Why is the state of our hearts so important and how can we keep it pure?

APPLICATION

1. We must seek God in order to resolve our conflicts/disagreements.
2. We should be bold and take a stand for the faith when it is challenged.

TAKE HOME POINTS.

1. Christ desires that we become like Him and not like other people.
2. The law is not able to save anyone, only faith in Christ does.
3. Determine to stand with those who are being unduly burdened with laws of men.
4. Be careful of teachings that are heretic and toxic, God did not give us a ministry of division but of reconciliation.
5. Whenever there is conflict always be open for reconciliation by seeking the counsel of other mature believers and spiritual leaders
6. We should not make the Christian race burdensome for people by 'putting on the necks of the people a yoke' that is unbearable.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mon, Nov. 6 | Let Us Love One Another | 1 John 4:7-13 |
| Tue, Nov. 7 | Perfect Love Casts Out Fear | 1 John 4:14-21 |
| Wed, Nov. 8 | Love and Serve the Lord | Deuteronomy 10:12-22 |
| Thu, Nov. 9 | Faith Working Through Love | Galatians 5:1-6 |
| Fri, Nov. 10 | The Greatest Commandment Is Love | Matthew 22:34-40 |
| Sat, Nov. 11 | Loving Deeds | Leviticus 19:11-18 |
| Sun, Nov. 12 | Fulfill the Law Through Love | Rom.13:8-10; 1 Cor. 13:8-13 |

NOVEMBER 12, 2023

TOPIC: LOVE FULFILS THE LAW

THEME FOR THE MONTH: CHRIST FREES, LAW ENSLAVES

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

DEVOTIONAL READING: MATTHEW 22:34-40

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-13, ROMANS 13: 8-10

LESSON SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-13, ROMANS 13: 8-10

MEMORY VERSE: The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery”, “You shall not murder”, “You shall not steal”, “You shall not covet”, and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself” Roman 13:9

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. List the characteristics of love, according to the passage.
2. Discuss the various ways Christians should show love to their neighbours without relenting.
3. Express their resolve to make love an indispensable part of their Christian living.

INTRODUCTION:

“I love you”, “I love you with the love of God”, “I love this family of God”. Have you ever uttered any of these expressions of love? What did you really mean by this? Love is an action word and comes with expectations. It is not just a feeling; **REAL LOVE IS A DECISION TO UNSELFISHLY “SEEK THE BEST FOR ONE ANOTHER.** Vs 8. Do you know that there are 4 types of love found in the Bible? There are 4 Greek words that describe this.

1. **EROS** which is the romantic love between a husband and wife mentioned in Song of Songs.
2. **STORGE** which refers to love between family members.
3. **PHILIA** which is emotional bond that connects people; brotherly love, friendship (David and Jonathan), care for others like our neighbour Jn 13:35.
4. **AGAPE** is what Jesus demonstrated as he took up our sins and sacrificed Himself.

These 4 categories cover all possible relationships as we live our daily lives, this means that no matter where we are, who we are with or what we are doing, we are called to show love. Is it always easy to love? No. Is love a choice? No. Is it a command? YES. For every born-again Christian John 13: 35 says **“BY THIS ALL WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE ONE FOR ANOTHER”**. If you are a child of God you must love as your Father has loved you.

LESSON 1: LOVE WILL LAST FOREVER (1 COR 13: 8-13)

Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church to encourage them and to address many issues and questions that had come from them. One of the questions was on spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12) and he took time to explain about the different gifts and their uses. Whilst he encouraged them to desire these gifts (vs 31), he concluded that letter with these words “But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all” or “the most excellent way”. This way of life is the way of LOVE. 1 Cor 13: 4-7 lists the characteristics of this love.

As important and desirable as Spiritual Gifts are they are only useful for us here on earth but because God Himself is love, when Christ returns our love is what we will need to have in order to reign with Him. As we pursue spiritual gifts, let us set our minds on what truly matters and what will last till the end of our life and into Eternity. May God help us to live a life of love no matter the circumstances we are faced with. Amen!

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LESSON 2: LOVE FULFILLS THE LAW (ROMANS 13: 8-10)

In order to emphasize the importance of love for one another, Apostle Paul makes a profound statement in vs 10b "LOVE FULFILLS THE LAW". In essence he was telling the Romans and by extension all believers that we don't need to memorize the 10 Commandments and be ticking off which ones we have observed or not, just concentrate on loving one another. Yes! It seems illogical but the truth is if you love God and your fellow man genuinely and unselfishly, you will not be able to do anything to hurt them. All the acts listed in the commandments cause hurt and pain and so if in love you want what is best for your family man you will not do any of them. Oh, that the love of God will fill our heart and mind and spirit. 1 Thess 3:12 says "And may the Lord cause you to increase and excel and overflow in love for one another, and for all people...". The grace of God is sufficient for us to do this.

So, do you want to fulfil the law and gain eternal life with God? LOVE.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the characteristics of love listed in vs 4-7 which of them do we struggle the most with?
2. Do we believe it is possible to love as God requires us to?
3. When would you feel justified to withhold your love?
4. How can we fulfil this command?
5. What impact will loving one another as commanded above have on evangelism and drawing men to Christ?

APPLICATION

1. Love of God is not about what the other person does or does not do, we are commanded to show love.
2. As we pursue the things of God and do the work of ministry, let us remember to do all in love.
3. Love must be sincere and without hypocrisy. Rom 12:9

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. God never asks us to do what He has not given us the grace to do.
2. To be like Christ we must love as God is love.
3. God loved us while we were yet sinners so we must not wait for men to earn our love. Freely you have received, freely give. Matt 10:8b
4. It is amazing how some people come to a point where they say 'I have fallen out of love'. That cannot be love, love never fails. Check what you call love.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Mon, Nov. 13 | The Lord's Spirit Brings Freedom | 2 Cor. 3:12-18 |
| Tue, Nov. 14 | Judged by the Law of Liberty | James 2:8-13 |
| Wed, Nov. 15 | Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land | Levi. 25:8-17 |
| Thu, Nov. 16 | Jesus Announces Freedom and Release | Luke 4:14-22 |
| Fri, Nov. 17 | God Provides and Comforts | Psalms 23 |
| Sat, Nov. 18 | Rooted and Built Up in Christ | Colossians 2:6-15 |
| Sun, Nov. 19 | Hold Fast to Christ | Colossians 2:16-23 |

NOVEMBER 19, 2023

TOPIC: LIVE AS YOU WERE TAUGHT

THEME FOR THE MONTH: CHRIST FREES, LAW ENSLAVES.

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

DEVOTIONAL READING: LEVITICUS 25:8-17

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: COLOSSIANS 2:6-23

LESSON SCRIPTURE: COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

***MEMORY VERSE:** So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7a*

LESSON AIMS:

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

1. Identify some human traditions in the Church that can contend with believers' faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Identify the attributes of human traditions according to the passage.
3. Make a commitment not to be entangled by human rules that profit nothing.

INTRODUCTION

Picture a scenario where you are preparing for an exam and you have been taught the required material and you have learnt it, studied and prepared for the exam. Now another student comes and introduces new topics outside of the syllabus you were given and taught. You lose confidence and start trying to read up on the new material which is not going to add anything to your marks in the exam but because of his persuasive smooth talk you listen to the newcomer. This is what was happening to the Gentile converts in Colosse. They had been taught that faith in Christ is all they need to be saved but they were drifting from this belief and instead were beginning to follow the rules and traditions of men about foods, drinks, observance of holy days etc. Apostle Paul wrote to them to address this heresy and free them. Gal 5:1

There is a song we used to sing and it must have been written in answer to pressure to obey rules and earn Salvation. The words go like this "Its not by works of Righteousness but by His grace alone (3ce) that we are complete in Him. 2nd verse "There's nothing more that I can do for Jesus did it all (3ce) and we are complete in Him. 3rd verse "The fullness of the Godhead bodily dwelleth in our Lord (3ce) and we are complete in Him. Jesus has paid the price and calls us to receive Him and enter His rest.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: FREEDOM FROM HUMAN RULES (COL 2:16-23)

Although the Church in Colosse was not founded by Apostle Paul (Col 1:7), he was very concerned for the Christians in Colosse and their growth in the faith. Paul from prison had heard that the Colossian Christians who had been strong in their faith were now vulnerable to deception about their faith. He wrote to refute each of the theological errors that they were tempted to embrace.

Apostle Paul reminded them that the good news they had heard and believed was to accept and put their faith in Christ. (vs 6). He implored them to walk in Christ as they had been taught and in so doing, they will be rooted in Christ and established in the faith. He said this to encourage them that they had been on the right path and doing well. Apostle Paul explained to the Colossians that they will gain nothing by following these rules of men instead they will be cheated of their reward in Christ vs 18a. He encouraged them to beware of these rules explaining that there is no truth in them and that the rules are of the world not of Christ so they are not to give in to these teachings.

He further highlighted to them that the teachings were false, shallow and self-serving, those promoting them were exalting themselves and were disconnected from Christ who is the Head. They would do well not to follow them.

LESSON TWO: DO NOT SUBMIT TO WORLDLY RULES

(Col 2:20-23)

Apostle Paul declared to the Colossian Christians that they are no longer of this world; they had died with Christ and so they should not be moved by the world's demands. Vs 20. Paul was telling them that they had a choice and must reject any attempt to drag them back into the world and its systems. Vs 20b-21. He said they were the ones subjecting themselves to these regulations. He wanted them to know they are not powerless; Christ is in them and He rules over all. He reiterated the completeness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Apostle Paul re-affirmed the worthlessness of these rules saying that they are about things that are perishing even as they are being used. They are just a shadow, Christ is the reality. While acknowledging that these rules and tradition of men could do some good, he declared that ultimately, they were powerless to save against the lust of the flesh. Only the power that Christ gives is sufficient. vs 23.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was Paul so concerned for the Christians in Colosse?
2. Should we reject all human rules and traditions? If no, give examples.
3. When should we resist submitting to rules of men and how?
4. How can we ensure that we do not drift from the Gospel of Christ's finished work on the cross and succumb to the rules of men?
5. How does the power of Christ help us overcome the temptations of the world?

APPLICATION

1. Be alert to rules and traditions that could cause you to deviate from the example of Christ.
2. Avail yourself of the power in the cross when tempted.
3. Jesus has paid it all and we only trust in Him and follow Him.
4. We will be established in our faith if we walk in Christ as we have been taught.
5. Refuse to be distracted by the rules of men, they are a passing shadow.

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. Do not allow things that are of no eternal consequence to take prominence in your life. Leave shadows and pursue substance.
2. Check people that you allow around you, do not let

people who have lost connection with Christ to dissuade you from your pursuit of eternal relevance.

3. Live in this world as people who are dead to the desires and pleasures of this fleeting world.
4. Do not let your life to be moderated by rules. Live a life that is totally dead to sin and alive in Christ so that even when there are no rules to check you, your life is already aligned to right living.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mon, Nov. 20 | Remember God's Goodness | Joshua 24:1-14 |
| Tue, Nov. 21 | Choose Whom You Will Serve | Joshua 24:15-24 |
| Wed, Nov. 22 | Obey God Only | Acts 5:27-32 |
| Thu, Nov. 23 | The Perfect Law of Liberty | James 1:19-27 |
| Fri, Nov. 24 | Love and Delight in God's Commands | Psalms 119:41-56 |
| Sat, Nov. 25 | Do Not Cause Your Neighbor to Fall | 1 Corinthians 8 |
| Sun, Nov. 26 | Strength in the Lord | 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 |

NOVEMBER 26, 2023

TOPIC: DO WHAT IS HELPFUL

THEME FOR THE MONTH: CHRIST FREES, LAW ENSLAVES

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: GOD'S LAW IS LOVE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 8; 10:23-11:1

LESSON SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-11:1

***Memory Verse:** I have the right to do anything, you say- but not everything is beneficial. 1corinthians 10:23a*

Lesson Aims:

After participating in this lesson, every learner should be able to:

1. Explain some of the ways believers can use their freedom well according to the passage.
2. Discuss the consequences of abuse of freedom by believers.
3. Renew their commitment to do what is helpful always especially to those whose faith is weak.

INTRODUCTION

God is mindful of us and has called us to be mindful of one another. As believers we are members of one body, the body of Christ and 1Cor 12: 25-26 admonishes us to care for one another not thinking of ourselves alone because if one suffers, all the members suffer with it. In the world of today we keep hearing "It's my right" "I have the right to do what I like" etc. Gay Rights, Women's Rights, Children's Rights even Animal Rights. Everybody wants to assert their point of view. Where do we draw the line and how can we live in harmony if we all have our way? With the world as diverse as it is today that will only lead to chaos. Here in Nigeria, we have over 371 ethnic groups each with its own culture and beliefs yet we have to co-exist as believers of the same God.

This was the situation playing out in Corinth where there were converts of different backgrounds, origins and cultures. Beliefs about idols, food and drinks were the main issue, some who did not want to eat took offense at those who saw nothing wrong with eating. To some the idols were sacred and competing with God. To others, there was only one God and idols had no real existence so were worthless pieces of wood or other material and of no consequence. Apostle Paul wrote this letter to appeal to them that rather than insist on their right they ought to (in love) take into account the effect of their actions on their fellow brethren.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON ONE: THE BELIEVER'S FREEDOM (1 COR 10:23-30)

The matter that Apostle Paul was trying to address here was a tricky and thorny situation. Here were people who were being encouraged to share all things together and live together as one but then these people had different views on idols. Are idols actually gods? Are they subject to God? Do they have powers? These questions made some people uncomfortable eating any foods that had been sacrificed to idols while others felt it was of no consequence. Apostle Paul handled it with wisdom and maturity. On the one hand he acknowledged that indeed we have liberty to choose for ourselves but then he explained that we must see that we are all connected and we don't all have the same understanding. He chose to appeal to their good conscience and compassion by encouraging them to let go their own position for the good of the "weaker" - vs24. In short, let the goal be to ensure that a fellow believer does not fall into sin or lose faith on account of me and the unbeliever does not reject the message of salvation - vs33b. As Apostle Paul declared in 1 Cor 8:8 "Food will not commend us to God nor bring us close to Him; we are no worse off if we do not eat, nor better off if we do eat" AMP. As followers of Christ, this must be our over-arching goal also: To draw all men to Christ even if it means giving up my

rights. 1Cor 8: 1b further exhorts that the goal of those who have knowledge should to help and encourage others to grow not to judge or condemn. As Christians, we should also take caution about our lifestyle, so that the expression of our freedom will not mislead others.

Notes

LESSON TWO: ENCOURAGEMENT TO PLEASE GOD (1 COR 10: 31-11:1)

Apostle Paul was faced with the reality of the composition of the Church in Corinth, it was a combination of Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) with diverse opinions and differing levels of maturity, knowledge and faith in Christ. His goal was to encourage harmonious living among all the believers in order to ensure unity in the Church. The reality of life is that there will always be differences amongst people. In so far as God has created each one uniquely and different, both physically and spiritually and there are so many different things that shape and condition us: culture, family background, class, social environment etc, this cannot be avoided.

In light of this, Apostle Paul made a profound statement in 1Cor 10:31 that should be the measure by which we weigh our rights and our actions: **THEREFORE, WHETHER YOU EAT OR DRINK OR WHATEVER YOU DO, DO ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.** This means that it is no longer about who is right or wrong so that we do not waste time on arguments to justify ourselves, the only thing that matters is pleasing God in all we do. As a good leader who leads by example, Apostle Paul declared that he had been doing exactly what he was asking of them. Vs 33 states “Just as I please everyone in all things (as much as possible adapting myself to the interest of others), not seeking my own benefit but that of many, so that they (will be open to the message of salvation) may be saved.” AMP.

He further declared that he was only asking them to follow his example because he was following Christ who is our ultimate example. 1 Cor 11:1. Jesus Christ gave up His rights as equal to God and humbled Himself to death on the Cross that we might be saved Phil. 2:8. What can then be too much for us to give up for His sake?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some social and cultural practices that are controversial among Christians today and how can we maintain a balance?
2. Give some examples of some things that are “lawful” but not “helpful”.
3. What do you think about the way Apostle Paul handled this issue of personal liberty?

4. Why is there a tendency to want to hold on our traditions and culture?
5. How important is it for leaders to exemplify the attitudes and qualities that they expect from the followers?

APPLICATIONS

1. Though we are many we are one body in Christ and each one of us must take care of one another.
2. Christ gave up His rights for our salvation, as his Disciples nothing should be too much to give up for His glory.
3. We must lead by example if we desire others to follow us.
4. We must not allow our insistence on our rights to be the reason others stumble and reject the message of salvation.

TAKE HOME POINTS

5. That it is lawful does not mean that it may be beneficial at the time and to those concerned. Always weigh your actions
6. It is not always about you, consider others. Your actions must not derail others, people are watching you.
7. Do not take God out of any activity of your life. In the small and insignificant details of your everyday-life, do them all for the glory of God

8. There is nothing wrong following people, but follow only those who have proven and undeniable track record of consistently following the example of Christ

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Mon, Nov. 27 | A Faithful Friendship | Proverbs 17:17-22 |
| Tue, Nov. 28 | Peter's Test of Faith | Matthew 26:31-35 |
| Wed, Nov. 29 | Hear God's Voice | Hebrews 3:7-19 |
| Thu, Nov. 30 | Faith in Action | Leviticus 19:30-37 |
| Fri, Dec. 1 | God Honors Genuine Faith | Acts 10:34-48 |
| Sat, Dec. 2 | Naomi Becomes a Grandmother | Ruth 4:13-22 |
| Sun, Dec. 3 | Ruth's Compassionate Faith | Ruth 1:6-18, 22 |

DECEMBER 3, 2023

TOPIC: HANGING IDENTITY

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: FAITH THAT PLEASURES GOD.

THEME FOR THE MONTH: PROFILE OF FAITH

DEVOTIONAL READING: ACTS 10:34-48

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: RUTH 1; 4:13-22

LESSON SCRIPTURE: RUTH 1:6-18, 22

***MEMORY VERSE:** But Ruth replied, 'don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go i will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Ruth 1:16*

LESSON AIMS

By the end of the lesson class members should be able to

1. Explain why Naomi did not want her daughter-in-law to go with her to Bethlehem.
2. Discuss the effects of bereavement on family members especially if the deceased was the bread winner.
3. Imitate Ruth's model of courage and faithfulness when facing hardships in life.

INTRODUCTION:

As humans we go through turning points in our life that changes our identity. It could be accidental or natural occurrence, Elimelech was the husband of Naomi from the tribe of Judah. During the time of famine there, they relocated to the land of Moab. Unfortunately, he died with his two sons leaving Naomi and two daughters-in-law. Moabites are descendants of Lot Gen 19:37 who had become idol worshipers. When Naomi heard that God had restored the prosperity of Judah she chose to go back and Ruth her daughter-in-law, a young widow, who decided to commit herself to the new community of faith despite the differences in culture, belief and her state/tribe.

This step of sacrificial love and faith by a Moabite woman for her mother-in-law ended in God's plan of salvation for mankind through Jesse, David and Jesus Christ, what started as a tragedy ended in a new and better identity and ultimately to the fulfillment of God's eternal plan.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON 1: NAOMI MISFORTUNE RUTH 1:1-7

The period was characterized by anarchy and revolution as the judges reigned, and each man did just as they pleased. Judges 21:5. Elimelech lived in Bethlehem in Judah and took his wife Naomi and their two sons Mahlon and Kilion to live in Moab (Gen 19:37) due to famine in the land.

The two sons married Moabite wives Orpah and Ruth. The sons and Elimelech died leaving their wives and Naomi. Bethlehem is also known as the house of bread. Bereavement is a reality that confronts people from time to time. It usually comes with pain, sorrow emptiness and regrets especially when the dead person is a bread winner, no matter what life brings our way we should endeavour to align ourselves to God in order to overcome.

LESSON 2: TEST OF LOVE AND COMMITMENT RUTH

1:9-14

Test of love and commitment - True love is about commitment to one another it reflected in the life of Naomi and her two daughter-in-law (vv. 11 – 12). The two women refused to go back despite Naomi's pleading, Naomi's argument was quite clear for three reasons:

- a) She was too old for child bearing (v. 12-13a).
- b) The women would have passed the age of child bearing before then.
- c) Naomi did not envisage marriage prospects for these women because of Israel's prohibition of marrying foreign women.

Orpah embraced, kissed and bade her farewell but Ruth clung unto her (v. 14). This was a show of sacrificial love and devotion. Our commitment as believers to help one another especially in difficult times should be based on

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LESSON 3: RUTH'S DETERMINATION: RUTH 1:15-18, 22

while Naomi convinced Orpah to return back to her people, Ruth was resolute in her determination to follow her mother-in-law to Bethlehem, and she said to her “Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die and there I will be buried” (vv. 16 -17). She made a vow of death as the only thing that can bring about a separation. From that point, Ruth changed her identity and she ceased to be a Moabite but an Israelite. Interestingly her choice of Yahweh became the condition that placed her in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some negative changes the loss of a loved one can bring on family members?
2. Discuss the different ways churches can assist members who have experienced the loss of a loved one to make necessary adjustment?
3. Discuss how our loyalty to God as believers can inspire our loyalty to our fellow brethren.

4. What lesson can Christian mothers and daughters-in-law learn from the story of Naomi and Ruth as seen in the passage?
5. What was Ruth's source of determination to cling to her mother-in-law despite her background and culture?

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. Do not 'Japa' if God is not involved in it.
2. Leaving a place because of temporary setback may eventually set you back in the journey of life.
3. When God is involved in a matter there is no price too difficult to pay- to stay with God is the best place to stay.
4. Anytime we veer off from God's plan for our lives, we are likely going to return 'empty'.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mon, Dec. 4 | Faith and Courage | Joshua 1:1-9 |
| Tue, Dec. 5 | The Son of Man Came to Serve | Matthew 20:25-34 |
| Wed, Dec. 6 | Ask in Faith | Matthew 21:18-22 |
| Thu, Dec. 7 | The Faithful Will Wait on the Lord | Psalms 27 |
| Fri, Dec. 8 | Rekindle God's Gift and Stand Fire | 2 Timothy 1:3-14 |
| Sat, Dec. 9 | Israel's Wavering Faith | 1 Samuel 17:1, 3-4, 8, 20-30 |
| Sun, Dec. 10 | Faith That God Will Act | 1 Sam.17:31-37, 45, 48-50 |

DECEMBER 10, 2023

TOPIC: THE FAITH OF DAVID

THEME FOR THE QUARTERS: FAITH THAT PLEASURES GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: PROFILE OF FAITH

DEVOTIONAL READING: PSALM 27

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 SAM 17:1-58

LESSON SCRIPTURE: 1 SAM 17:31-37, 48-50

MEMORY VERSE: *The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of the philistine (1 Sam 17:37a).*

LESSON AIM:

By the end of the lesson class members should be able to:

1. Discuss David's courageous trust in God against Goliath who trusted in his power.
2. Compare and contrast the act of expressing ones' faith in God and the display of arrogance
3. Demonstrate their faith in God by facing life's challenges with confidences like David.

INTRODUCTION

In ancient times, war was sometimes decided by representatives who would engage in a combat whereby the champion from each side will fight one another. The result of the fight determined the winner of the war. The defeated will automatically become the slave of the other party. Israel and philistine found themselves in this duel, and Israel was terrorized by Goliath. He was nearly ten feet tall, fully armed and well trained in battle from his youth.

Today's lesson focuses on the faith of David and the victory God gave his people through him. His victory thrilled the Nation of Israel and eventually he became the king's son-in-law according to the promise he had earlier made (v. 25) and the nation's popular hero.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON 1: DAVID VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT 2 SAM 17:31-37

For 40 days Goliath called out to taunt King Saul and Israel asking for a fight, and Israel was intimidated 1 Sam 17:8-17. David volunteered to fight and King Saul tried to discourage him. He said "You are not able to go out against this philistine and fight him; you are only a young man and he has been a warrior from his youth" The difference did not reduce David's confidence to fight. Unknown to King Saul, David had been equipped and empowered by God, the one in whom he puts his trust (v. 37a). The desire to fight Goliath was not based on patriotism or family loyalty but faith in

God and love for God's people. This should serve as a lesson for believers to defend their faith without necessarily engaging in physical battles.

LESSON 2: DAVID'S TESTIMONY AND FAITH 1 SAM 17:34-37, 45.

The logic of Saul's advice to David is that Goliath had age, long experience in wars and size to his advantage (v.33). Interestingly, instead of David to be discouraged and probably withdraw he became more courageous and ready to fight. In verses 34-35. David recounted his victories through faith in God in defeating the lion and bear. He concluded "This uncircumcised philistine will be like one of them because he has defiled the armies of the living God". The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the bear will rescue me from the hand of this philistine. Therefore, King Saul prayed for him and said "Go, and the Lord be with you" V. 37b.

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LESSON 2: DAVID DEFEATS GOLIATH 1 SAM 17:48-50

David prepared to engage Goliath. He took his staff, five smooth stones from the stream, a sling in his hands and

approached the philistine (v. 40). Goliath looked at David and said 'Am I a dog that you come with sticks? And he cursed David by his gods (v. 42-43).

David reached towards the battle line trusting in the power of God. He reached into his bag brought out a stone, he slung it and struck Goliath on the forehead, who immediately fell. He took hold of the philistine sword, killed him and cut off his head. He triumphed by faith and the divine power of God over Goliath who was armed with a spear and javelin.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can Christians build their faith and courage in order to gain victory in times of difficulty like David in the passage?
2. Discuss the benefits of sharing testimony of God's faithfulness among brethren
3. David's faith in God gave him the confidence and courage to defeat Goliath in battle, discuss the lessons it teaches believers in fighting and winning battles.

APPLICATION

The lesson is a reminder that we should have faith in the divine power of God and the need for testimonies of God's faithfulness for the present and future.

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. David's source of courage is the Living God he served, and the living faith he exercised.
2. We should never rely on the armour of flesh which will fail us but on the power of God to overcome challenges.
3. Saul put his armour on David, but he said "I have never tried it before". So he removed them and relied on God and his 5 stones. Who/what do you rely on?
4. The battles of life are not fought and won by mere physical strength, imposing stature and carnal weapons of war but by faith in God

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Mon, Dec. 11 | Risk-taking Faith | Genesis 38:6-11, 13-18, 24-26 |
| Tue, Dec. 12 | Rahab's Faith | Joshua 2:1-6, 8-16 |
| Wed, Dec. 13 | Patient Faith | James 5:1-11 |
| Thu, Dec. 14 | God's Grace Overflowed | 1 Timothy 1:12-17 |
| Fri, Dec. 15 | Bathsheba's Challenged Faith | 2 Sam. 11:1-5, 26-12:1, 4-7a,15-16, 24 |
| Sat, Dec. 16 | The Stronghold for the Oppressed | Psalms 9:1-14 |
| Sun, Dec. 17 | A Family Tree of Faith | Matthew 1:1-17 |

DECEMBER 17, 2023

TOPIC: THE FAMILY OF FAITH

THEME FOR THE QUARTERS: FAITH THAT PLEASURES GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: PROFILE OF FAITH

DEVOTIONAL READING: PSALM 9:1-14

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: MATT 1:1-17; GEN 38, JOSHUA 2; 6:22-25; 2 SAM 12:24, RUTH 4:13-22

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATT 1:1-17

MEMORY VERSE: *This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the Son of David, the son of Abraham Matt. 1:1*

LESSON AIMS:

By the end of the lesson, class members should be able to:

1. Enumerate how the Biblical genealogy of Jesus helps us to understand God's plan of salvation to mankind.
2. Discuss the significance of the inclusion of the four women in the genealogy of Jesus in the book of Matthew.
3. Trace their family backgrounds based on the information available to them.

INTRODUCTION

Knowing one's genealogy is vital for establishing identification, authentication and also the opportunity to claim one's inheritance as a Jew and also being accepted into Jewish priesthood. Matthew wrote his gospel to the Jewish audience. He started with the genealogy of Jesus Christ which is the best introduction of the person of Christ to the intended readers who placed high value on being a descendant of Abraham and coming from the lineage of David.

The aim was to present Christ to the Jews as a person of great importance who should be taken seriously.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON 1: JESUS GENEALOGY EXPLAINED MATTHEW 1:1-16

There were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to exile to Babylon and 14 generations from Exile to Jesus Christ. The genealogy highlights Boaz, Rahab, Ruth and Jesse. It is to prove that Jesus Christ is an offspring of Abraham and David. The genealogy helps us to understand God's plans of salvation through imperfect individuals, as well as the importance of knowing our own background.

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LESSON 2: JESUS RICH HERITAGE MATTHEW 1:1-17.

Jesus' genealogy shows that He is the Messiah, the Jewish King through whom God's purpose of salvation for mankind would be accomplished. His origin is traced to David, and Abraham. Abraham received the promise of God to bless the whole world. His birth confirms the fulfillment of God's promise through prophet Isaiah in Isa 7:10-16. His mother Mary was found to be with child (v 18). In other words, the child which Mary conceived was only made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit because there was no sexual relationship between Joseph and Mary before then. Consequently, Jesus with his rich Jewish heritage gave all human kind the opportunity to become members of heaven John 1:12.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the benefit of knowing ones genealogy as believers in Christ.
2. Discuss how Christians can enjoy the benefits of Jesus' glorious riches.

APPLICATION

We have a godly heritage through Jesus Christ Ps 16

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. We should trace our family genealogy to understand our identity. Then make sure the identity is subsumed in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus Christ should be presented to the world with his rich inheritance not just in birth, but in life, in power and also in eternity. The living word of God.
3. Take time to study the life of all the people in the genealogy of Jesus and marvel at the way everyone is important in the scheme of God's things- Men of faith, kings, builders etc.
4. Every 14 generation was a major landmark and a symbolism in our Christian journey- reflect on it. From Abraham, one reckoned for his faith to the exile and then to the Messiah.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mon, Dec. 18 | Contentment in Every Situation | Philippians 4:10-19 |
| Tue, Dec. 19 | God Is My Refuge | Psalm 91:1-16 |
| Wed, Dec. 20 | The Lord Has Done Great Things! | Joel 2:18-27 |
| Thu, Dec. 21 | The Announcement to a Priest | Luke 1:5-17 |
| Fri, Dec. 22 | Doubt and Rejoicing | Luke 1:18-25 |
| Sat, Dec. 23 | Believe! | John 20:19, 24-29 |
| Sun, Dec. 24 | Women Express Faith | Luke 1:36-45, 56 |

DECEMBER 24, 2023

TOPIC: THE FAITH OF ELIZABETH AND MARY

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: FAITH THAT PLEASURES GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: PROFILE OF FAITH

DEVOTIONAL READING: PHIL 4:10-19

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:1-25, 39-45, 56-60

LESSON SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:36-46, 56

***MEMORY VERSE:** When Elizabeth heard Mary's greetings, the baby leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and in a loud voice she exclaimed, 'Blessed are you among women – Luke 1:41-42a.*

LESSON AIMS:

By the end of the lesson, class members should be able to:

1. Identify areas of Elizabeth and Mary's peculiar circumstances that indicate their faith in God.
2. Identify the reasons Mary visited Elizabeth.
3. Express belief in God's ability to fulfill His promises in their lives in His time.

INTRODUCTION

Having surrendered to the will of God, Mary decided to affirm the promise of God by visiting her cousin Elizabeth who was already six months pregnant as announced by the Angel. The meeting of the two women was of special significance because they had much to share in common about the faithfulness of God.

The focus of today's lesson is the faith of Elizabeth and Mary. It confirms the reality of God's power and his enduring promises irrespective of timing and natural limitations. Just as Mary found a kindred spirit in her relationship with Elizabeth, so also, we can find spiritual encouragement, comfort and support from those who share the same faith with us in God.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON 1 MARY ACCEPTS DIVINE ASSIGNMENT LUKE 1:38.

Virgin Mary lived in Nazareth a town in Galilee, betrothed to Joseph a descendant of David. Suddenly an Angel appeared to her that she would bear a son to be named Jesus, Son of the Most High. This is beyond human comprehension since she knew not a man.

She was also told that even her cousin Elizabeth who was said to be unable to conceive shall have a child in old age, for no word from God ever fails (vv. 36 – 37). Mary accepted the annunciation with faith and determination and answered “I am the Lord's servant” “may your word to be

fulfilled" (v. 38) Mary's faith should be a model. Whenever God calls, it is to greater height and honour. Mary was a woman of faith because she did not mind the risk or shame she was likely to face Deut 22:20-27. She surrendered willingly to God's call and became the instrument through which the Savior of the world came.

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LESSON 2: AFFIRMATION OF THE PROMISE LUKE 1:39-45, 56

Mary recognized the divine purpose of the call and visited her cousin Elizabeth in Jerusalem. Two reasons are attributable to her traveling.

- a) To confirm the message of the Angel about Elizabeth pregnancy.
- b) To share her own testimony of becoming the mother of the Savior of the world. With excitement she entered into Zachariah's house and greeted Elizabeth.

According to V. 41 when Elizabeth heard Mary's greetings, the baby leaped in her womb, and immediately Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy saying "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear" v 42. This confirmed the angel's message. The Holy Spirit revealed the divinity of the unborn child as the Son of God, and King of Israel to Elizabeth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss Mary's response to the angel's message and its implication for believers in Christ.
2. Let the class members discuss on an instance when they yielded to God's call regardless of other people's negative opinions.
3. Discuss the significance of the baby in Elizabeth's womb that leapt at the sound of Mary's voice V. 41
4. Discuss the three unique things about the person of Christ from the angel's message and Elizabeth words to Mary.

APPLICATION

What has God said, or has been saying to me that I have not considered diligently? Let us individually witness the uniqueness of Christ to someone this Christmas season.

TAKE HOME POINT

1. God has an eternal plan for mankind and specific plan for each of his children.
2. Do not despise the old landmarks.
3. Jesus the same today and tomorrow.
4. People's opinion counts as nothing until we hear the final verdict of God concerning our life.
5. Our response to the dealings of God in our life should always be 'Be it unto me according to your words'. There should be no place for argument when God is involved.

DEVOTIONAL

| DATE | TOPIC | TEXT |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mon, Dec. 25 | Christ the Savior Is Born | Matthew 1:18-25 |
| Tue, Dec. 26 | Mary's Exultant Faith | Luke 1:46-55 |
| Wed, Dec. 27 | Reject Imitations of Faith | Deuteronomy 18:9-14 |
| Thu, Dec. 28 | Make Disciples in Faith | Matthew 28:16-20 |
| Fri, Dec. 29 | God's Salvation for All the Earth | Isaiah 49:1-6 |
| Sat, Dec. 30 | Arise, Shine; Your Light Has Come | Isaiah 60:1-6 |
| Sun, Dec. 31 | Worship the King of the Jews | Matthew 2:1-12 |

DECEMBER 31, 2023

TOPIC: THE FAITH OF THE WISE MEN

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD

THEME FOR THE MONTH: PROFILE OF FAITH

DEVOTIONAL READING: ISAIAH 49:1-6

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 2:1-12

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 2:1-12

***MEMORY VERSE:** And asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star, when it rose and have come to worship him" Matthew 2:22*

LESSON AIMS:

By the end of the lesson, class members should be able to:

1. Explain why the wise men are described as men of both wisdom and faith.
2. Discuss the meaning of the gifts the magi gave to Jesus.
3. List practical ways they will celebrate and spread the good news of the birth of Jesus this Christmas season.

INTRODUCTION

We are a class-conscious society, so the rich patronize affluent hospitals, restaurants and hotels. Jesus was born in humility in a manger because there was no room in the inn. People migrated into Bethlehem because of the Census in Palestine. Mary gave birth to her baby in a manger (A feeding trough for animals).

By human standard the wise men would not have qualified to be amongst those who will receive the news of the birth of Jesus. They came from the east to worship him because they saw his star in the east. Everything about the birth, life to death of Jesus hinges on humility. Unlike the worldly fancy with human royal, the visit of the wise men was one of worship, reverence and homage.

LESSON EXPLAINED

LESSON 1: HEROD'S SECRET INQUIRY MATTHEW 2:1-7

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah during the reign of King Herod. The birth was wide spread that even the magi (the wise men) from the East came to Jerusalem to worship Him. Herod on hearing, felt threatened and with his officials. He inquired from the Chief Priest where in Bethlehem of Judah the messiah is to be born. He requested the wise men to let him know so that he too can worship the Messiah. Some people are known to be deceptive in their relationship with others. Even though they mean evil yet they pretend to be in friendship merely to execute their misdeeds like King Herod in the lesson.

God who knows their intention and will always vindicate His people and bring judgement upon the wicked.

Notes

LESSON 2: THE MAGI'S MISSION ACCOMPLISHED **MATTHEW 2:8-12**

Having pretentiously inquired from the magi the birth place of Jesus, King Herod sent them to Bethlehem. He said “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him report to me so that I too may go and worship him” (v. 8b)

The star stopped at the location of the Inn and the wise men saw Jesus, bowed down, worshiped him, and brought out their gifts namely:

1. Gold: which speaks of his worth as King of kings
2. Frankincense: which means Jesus is priestly
3. Myrrh: which represents His prophetic declaration and prediction of his sacrifice and death.

After the gifts they returned to their country by another route because they had been warned in a dream. By means of revelation the evil plot of the ruthless King Herod was frustrated. This confirms that revelation has been one for God's means of deliverance and preservation from evil.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.

1. What was the significance of the star that led the magi to the birth place of Jesus? Discuss other means God would have used to reveal Jesus' birth in those days without the use of the social media?
2. Discuss what would have motivated the magi to embark on a search for Jesus and the lesson it teaches Christians.
3. Should Christians study the Stars to find out about life today?

APPLICATION

What revelation is God showing me about my life?

TAKE HOME

1. God is omniscient and can use any natural object to display his works and glory.
2. God delivers the righteous in all his trials like He delivered baby Jesus from King Herod.
3. We must be discerning so as to know how to respond to instructions when they come.
4. Having come before Jesus in this service, like the wise men, what gifts are you bringing to the Lord today?
5. Today is the last day of the year 2023, what are your decisions? Look for Jesus to worship Him? Give Him your life as a gift? Turn the other way in repentance instead of returning to your 'old path'.



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