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AT104S

THE NEW TESTAMENT SPEAKS TO HUMAN CONCERNS

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CHAPTER ONE

A CHRISTIAN LIFE-STYLE

AIM: This lesson will teach me more about Christian living.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Titus 2; Colossians

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Titus 2:1-8; Colossians 3:12-17

MEMORY VERSE

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17).

A person's "life-style" is the way he lives. In recent years, many people have moved from the rural section of the country, to the cities. The life-style (the way of life) in the rural section is quite different from that of the cities.

Life-style is a modern way of talking about how a person lives. When a person lives in the country on a farm, his life-style or way of life is completely different from the way he would live in a city. Life-style means how you live in the place where you are.

Pastor John finished school at the seminary. His life-style at the seminary was filled with study, lectures and tests. When he accepted the call to a church in a town, he brought his family and settled into life in the town. Life in the pastorate was very different from life at the seminary. In many ways it was much easier. Pastor John changed his life-style.

What a person believes affects his life-style. How should a Christian live? What kind of a life-style should a Christian have?

Life-style can mean how and where one lives. It can mean one's beliefs that affect where and how he lives. We live in a time of changing life-styles.

PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS

Read Titus 2:1-8. Paul, a Jewish man, was writing to Titus who was a Greek. He went with Paul on a trip to Jerusalem. Read Galatians 2:1-3.

Titus helped Paul settle problems among the Christians there. Read 2 Corinthians 8:6. In this lesson, Titus was on the island of Crete. Paul wrote to help Titus know how to do the work of the church. He also wanted to tell Titus how to deal with the Judaizers who were troublemakers. They said they knew God, but their actions denied it. The way they lived did not show others a true Christian life-style.

Titus was to teach older men to be serious, sensible, self-

controlled and wise. Older men needed a strong faith in Christ. They must have love like Christ had for others.

Older women were honoured and respected in the early church just as they are in Africa today. They were taught that they should live a holy life. They should not tell false stories or use strong drink. They were to teach the younger women who did not go to school. They studied with their mothers at home and married early.

Younger women should love their husbands and children. They should be good housewives, obeying their husbands. They should control themselves and live pure lives. Women were brought up in this way from childhood. Young men should control themselves, also. See verse 6.

TITUS MUST BE AN EXAMPLE

Titus himself should be an example in good works. His way of life should be a good example for the church. He should be serious and devoted to teaching. To be effective he must live the way he taught others to live. No one should be able to find fault with what Titus taught or preached.

PUT ON CHRIST

Read Colossians 3:12-17. Paul called the Colossians the "chosen people of God" in verse 12. God loved them so much that he gave them a new kind of life. This new kind of life should help the Colossians live more like Christ. So Paul listed several character traits that a Christian's life should have. A Christian should:

- 1) Put on the character of Christ. He should have compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. See verse 12.
- 2) Put on the example of Christ by having forgiveness. See verse 13.
- 3) Put on the law of Christ. Let his love guide your life. See verse 14.
- 4) Put on the peace of Christ. The peace that Christ knew and gave is to rule the Christian's heart.
- 5) Put on the Word of Christ. This refers to the public worship services of the church. These include preaching, teaching and singing the Word of God (the Bible).
- 6) Put on the name of Christ. Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

A SINGING, THANKFUL CHURCH

The church was a singing church from its beginning. Paul told the Colossians to sing all kinds of spiritual songs. They were to sing

to the Lord with thankful hearts.

Everything a Christian does or says should be in the name of the Lord. Everyone should give thanks to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

What did Paul mean by a Christian life-style? Does that apply to you? Of course, it does. Every Christian should have a Christian life-style. But many do not. What about you?

Do the things Paul wrote about seem to be needed today? Yes, they do. Which of these character traits do you have? Which do you lack? By God's grace, will you choose one Christian character trait that you do not have and try to live it daily in your own life?

CHAPTER TWO

OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN SOCIETY

AIM: This lesson will help me understand that I need to abide by the laws in my country.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Titus 3; 1 Peter 2:13-17

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Titus 3:1-11; 1 Peter 2:13-17

MEMORY VERSE

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2),

As Joseph and Stephen were driving down a dual carriageway they approached a one way marker. They noticed all traffic was supposed to go to the left on the cross-road. No right turns were allowed. Suddenly the people who were walking began jumping to the side of the road. A car was coming down that cross-road from the wrong direction. He entered the dual carriage-way just in front of Joseph's car. This young man had broken the laws of his country by driving too fast, by not stopping for people in the zebra walk and by driving the wrong way on a one-way street.

Many people do not obey the laws of their country. What does the New Testament say about obeying the government? Paul said that people should obey the laws of the land.

Paul wrote, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1).

RULES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Read Titus 3:1-11. Paul wrote to Titus who ministered to the people in Crete. Crete is an island southeast of Greece. The Cretans were known for not obeying their government's laws.

Paul gave Titus rules for Christian living. One was to be subject to the government. Christians then and now were to live under the laws of their land. A Christian was subject to the government as a wife was subject to her husband. (Ephesians 5:22)

In reading Titus 3:1-2 we find other rules for Christians to live by: 1) obey government leaders and officers, 2) help people in need, 3) do not speak evil of other people, 4) do not quarrel or fight, 5) be kind and considerate of others and 6) be gentle.

CHRIST CHANGED IT ALL

Paul admitted that he was once foolish. He did not obey the law in

Christ. He was a servant to evil pleasures and wicked desires. His life was full of ill will. He hated others and they hated him.

Then Christ changed it all. Jesus Christ died on the cross for man's sins. God saved Paul by grace through Paul's faith in God's Son. We are saved in the same way.

When we trust in Jesus Christ, God pours out his Holy Spirit on us. We are filled with the Spirit, and God forgives our sins.

A Christian is a person who knows that God forgave his past sins. He lives with Christ in the present life. He has the hope of a greater life to come.

NEED FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

Paul wrote to Titus that all who profess to be Christians should do good deeds. A person will show what he believes by the way he lives. Christians will do thoughtful acts for others because they love them. Read 1 John 4:7-8.

Christians should practise Christian teachings in their daily work. They should live daily so the church will go forward, and they should have a good testimony.

TOO MUCH TALK

Paul warned against useless talking. Jewish leaders spent many hours talking about what "good Jews" do on the Sabbath. They argued over what was clean and what was unclean. Today some men think they are Christians if they talk about religious matters. They really show outwardly by their lives what they are like inside. Talking does not make a person a Christian.

Christians should be kind, understanding, helpful and honest. If Christians do not act on what they believe, they waste time talking about it.

AVOID THOSE WHO CAUSE DIVISIONS

Paul wrote Titus to warn the man who caused divisions in the church. See Titus 3:10-11. He should warn the man at least two times. Then Christians should have nothing more to do with him. Such a man was sinning, and he knew it. True faith does not divide men; it unites them.

LIVE AS LAW-OBEYING CITIZENS

Read 1 Peter 2:15-17. Peter said that a devout Christian will obey his country's laws. He reminded Christians that God let their country have government. They should obey its laws. Government has the responsibility of keeping order. A Christian must cooperate in his government's affairs. He must also obey God, rather than men.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

How did Paul intend for us to live in today's world? Was the young man who drove so poorly obeying the laws of the land? Was he being a good Christian? We need to know that our actions tell people about our beliefs.

How will other people know that we are Christians? They must see the difference in our lives and the lives of those who are lost in sin and controlled by Satan. Can people see the difference Christ makes in your life?

As a Christian how can you fulfil your duty to the government of your country? Think about this carefully. Are you really obeying the laws of the land? Do you cheat a bit here and there? Do you vote when you have the opportunity? Are you willing to do public service for your country? God gave us our government. We need to learn to live joyfully under that government.

CHAPTER THREE

HOPE CAN OVERCOME DESPAIR

AIM: I can study to learn how important hope is in my day to day life.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 6:12-26; Romans 8:18-39

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 6:17-26

MEMORY VERSE

"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Despair shows loss of hope. Hope believes things will get better. Hope shows faith. Despair believes the future is dark with no hope. Hope thinks the future is bright with meaning and purpose. Despair denies that God cares. Hope says that God loves.

During Idi Amin's regime in Uganda, there were many bleak and despairing days for the people of that country. They always hoped for freedom. The Christians there knew that God loved them and would care for them. By God's grace, the people of Uganda were freed from the bondage of such a dictator.

CROWDS FOLLOWED JESUS

Read Luke 6:17-26. Jesus spent the night in prayer. Then he chose his twelve disciples. After that Jesus and his disciples went down from the mountain.

Three groups of people followed Jesus. First, the twelve disciples followed him. They were his closest friends. Next, a large crowd of friends came. Last, a large crowd of ordinary people came from all over the nation. People came from all over Judea. They came from as far north as Tyre and Sidon. The crowds came to hear Jesus teach. They also came to be healed of their diseases.

Jesus told the good news of salvation to the poor of spirit. He healed the sick and those troubled by evil spirits. Everyone tried to touch him. He healed many people.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Both Luke and Matthew recorded Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Luke showed how hope can overcome despair. The verses which begin with "Happy are you," show God's saving power. The verses which begin with "Woe" show God's call to repentance.

HAPPY ARE YOU

Jesus was speaking to people in verse 20 who possessed little money

and few material things. He was telling them to put their faith in him, Christ, rather than in wealth and things. A Christian possesses the kingdom of God as soon as he believes in Jesus. God lives in him. He is spiritually rich.

Jesus was also speaking to those who recognized their own spiritual condition. They were truly sorry because of their evil ways and wanted God to forgive them. God promised them they would, receive forgiveness when they responded to Jesus.

Verse 21 refers to a hunger, that is more spiritual than physical. Physical hunger can be satisfied by food. Spiritual hunger can only be satisfied by God himself through his Word and through the working of the Holy Spirit. Only spiritual food can satisfy spiritual hunger. Even when Christ lived on earth, people hungered for spiritual things more than they did physical things.

Those people wept over many things. They cried over their own sins and the sins of others. They cried because of the evils of the world. They cried because they cared. They would be able to laugh someday because Christ's way would win. They would be happy then. See Luke 6:21.

Jesus said Christians should be happy when men hate them for his sake. See verse 23. Christians should be happy when men say evil things about them.

If a person is treated badly, it should be because of his love for Christ. When any disciple of Christ is treated badly, it is time to be glad. Happiness comes when one suffers for the sake of Christ. Acts 5:40-41 says, "So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name." Every Christian who suffers for Christ will have a great reward in heaven. God gives the kingdom, satisfies hunger, causes laughter and rewards those who are hated. Happy are those who receive God's salvation.

Jesus said that Christians who are mistreated will be in good company. Prophets of the Old Testament were treated badly, too.

HOW TERRIBLE FOR YOU

"But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24). It is not wrong to be rich. It is only wrong when faith in riches is put ahead of faith in Christ. Some people seek only values that the world offers. Jesus said they will get no more. The rich do not realize how spiritually poor and in need they are if they have not received Christ as their Saviour.

"Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. . ." (verse 25). Those who laugh now get their happiness from shallow things. They do not worry about the hurts of their fellow human beings.

Those who are happy now do not seek happiness for eternal life.

"Woe to you, when all men speak well of you. . ." (verse 26). The people of the Old Testament said good things about false prophets. Those who live godly lives must fight evil. When they do, evil people will say bad things about them. A Christian who does not attack evil is not living a life like Christ. Christ's followers will be hated. Such people can hope for good things to be said about them in heaven.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

We must continue to hold our hope steadfastly. In heaven we will have eternal joy and happiness. You may be having some problems in your life. Could they be caused because you are fighting Satan by telling others about Jesus? Do not despair. Hold strongly to the hope that is within you. God will reward that faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOVE IN THE MIDST OF CRISES

AIM: I will learn that when the Bible says to love my enemies it means what it says.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 6:27-36; Philemon

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 6:27-36

MEMORY VERSE

"But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:27-28).

In our world today there are many people with needs. These people have hard times with many crises in their lives. (A crisis is the turning point during the midst of disease or trouble.)

These people with many crises are often filled with hate. Sometimes they are sick. Sometimes they are hungry and have no place to live. Many times, they have no one to love and care for them. These people need love and understanding. They need Christian friends. What can we do to help one of these people?

Read Luke 6:27-36. Our Lord Jesus was giving his teachings which we call the Sermon on the Mount. Read Matthew 5, 6 and 7. In this lesson, Jesus told his disciples how to treat other groups of people. What group did Jesus mention first?

ENEMIES

Jesus said his followers should love their enemies. This is one of the hardest things the Lord asks us as Christians to do!

Corrie ten Boom lived in the European country of Holland. During World War II, she and other members of her family were persecuted because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. During much of this time Corrie ten Boom spent many days and weeks in prison.

Years later after the war had ended, Corrie saw one of those soldiers in a Christian meeting. She thought about the first time she saw him. She and her sister were among a large group of prisoners who arrived at the German prison camp. This soldier treated them very badly. She thought she could never forgive him for the things he did.

The former German Nazi soldier did not know her when he saw her at the Christian meeting. He stood in front of her with his hand extended to shake hers. At last, Miss ten Boom took his hand. The ex-soldier begged her to forgive the bad things all German soldiers had done. She was able to forgive him because her love for Jesus

Christ made it possible.

Our world has many people who have been mistreated during wars. They need Christian friends to help.

If you do as Jesus said and love your enemy, he becomes your friend. The word Jesus used here for "love" means an active feeling of good will toward others. It means thinking that others are worthy of the best in life. It means helping others and forgiving others.

We must do good to those who hate us. We must do more than wish the best for those who hate us. We must be good and kind to them. We must work toward helping them get the good things in life.

We must pray for the happiness of those who mistreat us. (verse 28) Jesus said we should desire the best for those who desire the worst for us. We should seek God's blessings on those who hurt us. Jesus was our best example. On the cross he prayed, ". . . Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. . ." (Luke 23:34). He was asking God to forgive those who would kill him.

Jesus also taught about trying to "get even." See Luke 6:29. The Old Testament taught "eye for eye, tooth for tooth. . ." (Exodus 21:24). Jesus said to act gently instead of treating a person as he treats you.

Jesus also said, ". . . and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt" (verse 29). A coat usually was large and very, warm. At night, it was used as a covering for sleep. Jesus wants us to share what we have with those who are in need.

A Christian should give freely to all who ask him. The one who asks for help probably has more needs than the giver. We may find it hard to love someone who steals what is ours. But this is part of what it means to love your enemy.

THE GOLDEN RULE

Verse 31 is called the "Golden Rule." This is a rule or law which Jesus gave to his followers. The meaning of this law is worth as much as gold is worth. It is so costly because it tells people how to live at peace with other people. We must treat others as we want to be treated. This is the Golden Rule.

UNUSUAL LOVE

Jesus said that his followers would show love for others in unusual ways. Read verses 32-36 again. Christians follow the example of Christ, not the example of other people.

Christians should do more than people expect them to do, Jesus said. They do not love others because they love them. People who have never heard of Christ, love those who love them.

Christian love also causes a Christian to share what he has with people in need. This person gives without trying to find out if the loan will be paid back. He helps because there is a need.

In this section of Luke 6:32-36 Jesus named several unusual ways that Christians should love. He said to us: Do more than unsaved people do. Love your friends, of course. Love your enemies, too. Do not expect to be paid back when you help someone. And remember that your reward will be great in heaven. You will be God's child. That is enough reward for anyone!

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Can you invite a neighbour in for tea after hearing her gossip about you? Can you help a fellow worker in his garden after he has lied about you? Can you lend money to someone who has never repaid you anything you loaned him? What are some things you can do to help people in need? How does Jesus want you to treat others?

CHAPTER FIVE

JUDGING AND FORGIVING

AIM: This lesson will help me to stop judging others.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: John 8:1-11; Luke 6:37-42; Romans 14

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: John 8:3-7; Luke 6:37-42

MEMORY VERSE

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

Some of the leaders of a village were sitting around a camp fire one night. They were talking. One of the leaders had recently trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour.

The leader said, "I want to tell you something. Recently I was saved. I took a public stand for Jesus Christ. That means that I must not hate anyone. For a long time I have been hating a certain leader who is here with us tonight. He did some very bad things that hurt me. I did a lot of very bad things that hurt him. I am ready to forgive him."

Immediately the other man jumped to his feet. He said, "I will forgive you. I am very glad you are forgiving me!" Then the two leaders embraced one another and cried for joy. What a beautiful scene that was!

The actions of these two men help us understand this lesson. Read John 8:3-7 and took for Jesus' teaching on judging and forgiving.

MERCY, NOT JUDGEMENT

Jesus sat in the Temple and taught the people. The Jewish leaders brought to him a woman caught in adultery. The woman had broken the Jewish law. "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbour, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death" (Leviticus 20:10). They dragged the woman before the crowd.

The Jewish leaders had no right to tell everyone around Jesus about the woman's sin. Their plan was to get Jesus to say something against the Roman law or against the Jewish law. Adultery was such a serious crime that Jesus could get into trouble if he said the wrong thing about the woman.

If Jesus approved the decision for the woman to die, he would not be merciful and forgiving. He would also go against Roman law. If Jesus forgave the woman, he was against the law of Moses. He would favour serious sins. It seemed that anything Jesus said would be held against him!

What would Jesus say? He leaned down and wrote on the ground with his finger. We do not know what Jesus wrote. The Jews demanded an answer. Jesus said for them to go ahead and stone her to death. He added, ". . . Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (verse 7). He leaned over and wrote on the ground again. "But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him" (verse 9).

Only Jesus was left standing with the woman. He was the only one without sin in his life. He had the right to throw a stone, but did he do such a thing?

RECEIVING WHAT WE GIVE

We often receive the kind of treatment that we give to others. If we judge, we are judged. If we say evil things, evil things are said about us. If we forgive, others will deal with us kindly. If we give much, much will be given to us. We will reap what we plant.

"Judging" means to decide for or against anything or anyone. Judging is necessary and is a normal part of life. Jesus does not mean for us not to make a decision. He is against judging in the wrong way. We should not make judgements that only God should make. Jesus said we will be judged when we judge others. Our judgement of others is really against ourselves.

". . . For the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (Luke 6:38). Your gift will return to you full and overflowing. If you want real gain, then you must give. The most unhappy people never give to others.

FITTING PARABLES

A parable is a short story that teaches a religious truth. In Luke 6:39-42, there are three parables. Jesus spoke more to the disciples than to the crowd around him. He offered advice to those who were leading, teaching and judging others.

In verse 39 Jesus asked, ". . . Can a blind man lead a blind man?. . ." The answer, of course, is no. It is foolish for people to follow blind leaders. Here "blindness" means the loss of spiritual sight that comes from God. A person cannot lead another where he cannot see.

"A disciple is not above his teacher. . ." (verse 40). When a disciple is taught he will be like his teacher. Jesus' pupil will hear about love and truth. He will see love and truth in action. He will be like Christ.

Jesus' questions (verses 41-42) should make us see our own sins. We look at the little faults of others but do not see our big faults! Jesus wants us to look at ourselves first. Then we will not have time to judge others.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

You must be careful about judging others. You must have a forgiving spirit. Ask yourself. "Am I always willing to forgive others? Do I ask others to forgive me when I offend them?" Do not forget to thank God for forgiving you!

And most of all, remember that God is the only one who has the right to judge anybody.

CHAPTER SIX

HEARING AND DOING

AIM: I will understand that God wants me to bear fruit.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 6:43-49; 8:4-21; James 1:22-27

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 6:43-49; Luke 8:19-21

MEMORY VERSE

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

The world keeps watching the church, but the world does not understand the church. The church sometimes teaches one thing and does another. We in the church have to do more than just talk about love. The world must see our love in action. We in the church have to do more than fight sin with talk. The world must see sin overcome in our own lives. "Christian talk" does not influence most people. Many of them, however, are influenced by "Christian action." The world is looking for someone who lives his Christian beliefs.

People meet on Sunday in some churches to talk about God. They talk about how good God is. They talk about sin and how bad it is. They talk about the world and how terrible it is. They pray, go home, and do the same things in the same way. Their lives are not changed. Should Christians live this kind of life? Read Luke 6:43-49 to find out how to know a Christian who is like Jesus.

GOOD FRUIT

Luke 6:43-45 is a parable about trees. Everybody knows that a good tree does not bear bad fruit. A good tree means a Christian life which is deeply rooted in the things of God. The Christian's life is like a tree. It offers the world spiritual beauty and good food.

The Christian grows through study of God's Word daily, worship with other Christians, physical work and prayer. The Christian life bears the fruit of right living.

A bad tree means a selfish life outside of Christ. It is useless. Life outside of the Lord Jesus Christ means absolutely nothing. The fruit is bad because the actions, thoughts and words are bad.

Jesus said in Luke 6:44, ". . . each tree is known by its own fruit . . ." A person will be judged by what he produces. If a man is evil, he will think evil thoughts. He will do evil deeds. He will speak evil words.

A good man will think good thoughts. He will do good deeds for those in need. He will help other Christians and non-Christians.

Jesus wants every Christian to produce good fruit. In Luke 6:45 Jesus said, "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good. . . ." The heart means the innermost part of one's being. The good treasure of his heart means good thoughts, deeds and words. The person whose heart is wrong brings bad things from his treasure.

". . . For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (verse 45). Jesus said that a person's words show whether his heart is good or bad.

THE BEST FOUNDATION

Verses 46-49 form the last part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. He used a beautiful parable to show his meaning.

Jesus said in verse 46, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" Jesus means a person is foolish to call him teacher and not follow his teachings. Jesus wants his followers to live for him daily.

Verse 47 has three important words. They tell what Jesus needs from everyone who wishes to call him Lord. The first word is come. We must come to Jesus for salvation. We must come for his love, forgiveness and power.

The second word is hear. We must listen carefully to what Jesus says to us. The third word is do. We must do the will of God just as Jesus did God's will. The result of our coming and hearing is our action (what we do). Actions do speak louder than words.

Jesus compared one who comes, hears and does to a man who built a house. One man dug deep and laid his foundation upon rock. the waters rose and the storm winds hit that house, but they could not shake it. It was built on rock.

Another man heard Jesus' words and did not obey them. He is like a man who built a house on the sand without foundation. The waters rose and storms winds hit the house. The house fell. The noise of the fall was terrible.

The wise man builds his life on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The foolish man builds his life on the evil of the world. The man who hears and fails to act does not build his life on a good foundation.

JESUS' REAL FAMILY

Luke 8:19-21: God's work was very important to Jesus. When he was twelve years old, he told his mother that he must be about his Father's business.

While Jesus was busy with his work, his mother and brothers came to see him. They could not get into the house where he taught because

of the large crowd.

Someone told Jesus that his mother and brothers were standing outside. They wanted to see him. Jesus' family thought that he would stop everything and visit with them. But Jesus was about his Father's business.

Jesus was busy teaching. This teaching was part of the reason he came to earth. Jesus knew the crowd of people wondered why he did not go to his mother.

So he spoke to the crowd, ". . . My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (verse 21). Jesus was not making fun of his natural, earthly family. He loved his mother. John 19:26-27 tells us this.

Jesus taught a larger idea of Christian family. We all belong to a natural, physical family. Jesus' true family are those who hear and do the will of God.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

What service can you do for your neighbours and friends in Jesus' name? Is "giving a cup of water" in Jesus' name a service? Are you a hearer only? Do you hear God's teachings and do as he says to do?

CHAPTER SEVEN

LOVE OVERCOMES BARRIERS

AIM: This lesson will teach me that I need to love all people everywhere.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:25-37; 1 John 4:7-21

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 10:25-37

MEMORY VERSE

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).

A young man was a carpenter. He was not a Christian. He did not worship the true god.

One day someone invited him to go to a Christian church. He went, but he could not find the songs in the hymn book. He could not find the Bible verses. The man who sat next to him helped him turn to the correct pages. The young man liked the preaching. He liked the singing. He liked the kind way the people treated him. He went back to the Christian church again and again.

This young man thought he must return the kindness. He asked a Christian friend what gifts he should give his new friends. He was surprised to hear that no gifts were needed.

Love and kindness are a large part of the Christian religion. He said, "How different this is from my religion. There is no love in my religion!" The young carpenter became a Christian because the Christians were loving and kind to him.

Read Luke 10:25-37 to find out how you, too, can be loving and kind.

THE LAW OF LOVE

A Jewish leader or teacher came to Jesus to test him. The teacher knew Moses' law.

"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he asked Jesus. The teacher thought that he could be saved by doing something good.

Jesus said, ". . . What is written in the law? How do you read?" (verse 26). Find the teacher's answer in verse 27. And Jesus said to him, ". . . You have answered right; do this, and you will live" (verse 28). Jesus' words show that love is the key to religion. Love began with God's love for us. We should love God with all our heart as stated in verse 27. We must also love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

The teacher of the law asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?" (verse 29). Jesus answered with a parable, or story, that you may remember. We call it, "The Good Samaritan." This story tells how God wants us to love and care for one another.

A man was travelling down the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. We only know that the man travelled alone.

The road was narrow and went through big rocks. Caves were on both sides of the road. People who travelled much were advised to travel in groups. They were safer, but this man travelled by himself.

As he travelled down the road, robbers ran from the caves and beat the man. They knocked him down and hurt him badly. The robbers took his money and even his clothes. Then they left him lying beside the road, half dead.

The first man who came by was a priest. Perhaps he was on his way to Jerusalem to serve in the temple. (See verse 31.) Any Jew who touched a dead person or animal became ceremonially unclean. Read Numbers 19:11-12. When a priest served in the temple, he had to be ceremonially clean. The priest passed by the wounded man on the other side of the path.

Next, a Levite who was a temple helper came by. He, too, looked at the man and walked by on the other side of the road.

But a Samaritan, hated by Jews, came down the road. He saw that the man needed help. He felt pity for him. He showed his love by what he did for the man. He poured oil and wine on the hurt man's wounds. He tied cloths around the man's cuts and put him on his animal.

The Samaritan then took the wounded man to an inn where he could rest and get well. The next day, the Samaritan gave money to the innkeeper. He told him to take care of the wounded man. If he spent more money the Samaritan would pay for it on his next trip.

JESUS TAUGHT HIS LESSON

The teacher of the law realized that the Samaritan showed love to his fellowman. He was a neighbour to the wounded man.

When Jesus asked his question (verse 36), what did the teacher say? See verse 37.

Jesus' answer has three parts. First, as Christians, we must help another person even if he caused his own trouble.

Second, any person who has need is our neighbour.

Third, we must help a person who needs our help. We must not just feel sorry for him and walk off without helping him in his time of need.

Perhaps the priest and the temple helper felt pity for the poor man, but they did nothing. The Samaritan showed his love by his actions.

Jesus' real lesson came when he said, "Go and do likewise." (verse 37). The Samaritan became an example for all who love God. The teacher could not forget Jesus' words: "Go and do likewise." No reader of Luke's Gospel can forget them either. What Jesus said to the teacher of the law, he says to us: "Do likewise!"

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

This week, look for someone who needs your help. This person may live near you. You may not even know him. Plan to help any person who needs you.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCOVERING TRUE SECURITY

AIM: I need to realize that knowing God is the best security I can have.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 12:13-31; 1 Timothy 6:6-21

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 12:16-31

MEMORY VERSE

"As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

Today most people want things. We seem to think that having things can make us live better and live safer in this world. We even seem to think that having an abundance of things such as nice cars, big beautiful houses, lots of furniture in the house and many expensive clothes and shoes will give us true security.

But what did Jesus have to say about where we are to find true security?

A RICH FARMER

Read Luke 12:16-31. Jesus often spoke in parables. They were stories about people's lives. These stories helped people understand God's truths. The parable in this lesson was about a rich farmer.

A rich farmer had good land that bore lots of grain. His crops were always good. His servants harvested his crops. They filled his large barns, but the barns did not have enough room to hold all the crops that were harvested.

The man said to himself, "What will I do with this grain? I may need it next year. Oh, I know what I will do. I have always wanted big new barns. I will tear down my old barns and build much larger barns. I will have the largest barns in this country. And they will be filled with my big crop of grain."

This rich man was very selfish. He wanted everything for himself. He did not once think about people who were hungry. He did not think about giving away some of his grain.

He planned to have a good time for many years. He thought he was so rich because he had his barns filled with grain. He always wanted to build new barns. This idea is opposite of the Christian way of life. The man had forgotten God!

GOD WATCHED THAT MAN

Read verse 20 again. Say it in your own words. What did God tell the rich man? God said to him, "Fool! Tonight you die. Then who will get it all?"

That man trusted in the wrong things. His life and plans did not include God. He did not think of eternal life. He thought that true happiness depended on what he could get on earth! Jesus called him a fool.

Jesus ended his story saying, "Yes, every man is a fool who gets rich on earth but not in heaven." (Read verse 21.)

FAITH IN GOD'S CARE

Then Jesus spoke to his disciples. He talked about the problem of having enough. He considered the problem of worry. Read verses 22-23.

Jesus was saying that life is too important to worry about food and clothing. Do not waste your time worrying about such things, Jesus said .

Man, created in God's likeness, will live again with God in heaven. He should not waste his time worrying about food and clothing in this life. A Christian must do his best and leave the rest to God.

Jesus told his disciples a truth that we need to remember. Look at the birds, he said. They do not plant seeds or gather the crops. They do not have barns to store grain. The birds get along because God feeds them. We are far more important to God than birds. God will surely take care of us.

He will provide for our day to day needs. We know that worry does not add anything to the meaning of life. Our lives are in God's care. There is no use in worrying. What good will it do? It will not make us live longer! Instead worry will shorten our lives. Worry will not help us find food or clothing.

Jesus asked his disciples if they could make themselves taller. (verse 25) He told them, "Consider the lilies. . ." (verse 27). Flowers can do nothing for themselves. Yet, King Solomon did not have clothes as beautiful as the flowers wear! He was the richest man in the world. Jesus said God would surely provide our needs.

Now read again verses 29-31. Christians should not worry about things such as food and clothing. Christians should not worry at all.

Jesus said, "For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well" (verses 30-31).

We should use our time in helping others. We can witness to the unsaved people in our community. We can help find food and clothing

for the needy in our village.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Are you more concerned about getting "things" than you are about being faithful to God? What can you do now to help put God first in your life?

Let us not be bothered to the point of worrying every day about our needs. Instead let us spend our time doing good. The Bible tells us that if we put the kingdom of God first in our lives, everything we need will be added to us.

When we worry, we forget to praise God. When we are busy praising God, we forget to worry. How do you spend your time?

CHAPTER NINE

GIVING YOUR BEST

AIM: I will learn in this lesson how to use my money well.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 12:35-48; James 5:1-6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12-13

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 12:35-48; James 5:1-6

MEMORY VERSE

". . . Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required. . ." (Luke 12:48).

Life is made of time. Each person in our world today has the same amount of time. We all have twenty-four hours in our day. If we use our hours and days wisely our lives will be much more effective.

Jesus told his disciples that he would return and take them to himself. That meant that he would claim them as his own. But the disciples had to be ready for his return to this earth, whenever it may be. Then Jesus told two parables about the need to be ready. These stories help us to know that time belongs to God. We must be ready when Jesus Christ returns to earth!

Read today's Scripture and look for ways that Christians can do their best for Jesus.

TWO KINDS OF SERVANTS

Read Luke 12:41-48. Jesus spoke a parable. He told a story about two servants. One servant was faithful and the other servant was unfaithful. One was wise and the other was not wise. The faithful servant had control over the other servants. The master trusted him very much.

The trusted servant had charge over the master's house. He gave the other servants their share of the food. The faithful servant was in charge of all his master's property. This servant did a good job for his master. He gave his best in his master's service. When his master came back from his journey he would reward the faithful servant. The master would pay his servant well.

In verse 45, Jesus began to talk about the unfaithful servant. This unwise servant made at least two mistakes. He said, "I will do what I want to do while my master is away."

He took unfair advantage of his master while he was away from home for such a long time. He forgot that his master would return some day.

He failed to remember that his master would expect to find that he

was faithful. While the master was gone the unfaithful servant mistreated those people in his care. He beat the other servants, both men and women. He spent his time eating and drinking too much. He did not do his work. He wasted time and money.

Sometimes Christians, like the unfaithful servant, think that their Master, God, is away. Sometimes they never think of God at all. But if they are faithful Christians, they will know that their Master is never away! Christians live and work forever in God's presence. As a Christian you have God living in your heart. He is with us every moment of the day.

The unfaithful servant made a second mistake. He said, "I have plenty of time to put things right before the master returns." But there is never "plenty of time." The master came back when the servant did not expect him. The master found the servant wasting time. The servant did not do what the master told him to do. The unfaithful servant knew what the master wanted him to do, but he did not do it.

The unfaithful servant who knew he did wrong was punished with a terrible beating, But anyone who does not realize that he has done wrong will be punished lightly.

RICHES ARE WORTHLESS

Read James 5:1-6. James wanted to keep men from placing their hope in earthly things. In Bible times, as is true today in some parts of the world, there were some ways Christian men could not make money.

The rich men could, however, invest their money in at least three kinds of things. First, they could buy grain. But grain could spoil. Secondly, they could buy rich expensive clothes. But bugs ate clothes of all descriptions. Men with very much money could buy silver and gold. These, however, could be stolen.

Jesus warned against being rich in this world's goods. Rich people must answer to God for the way they use their riches.

Riches come from God. They should be serving God's purposes in their use. Poor people, too, will answer to God for the way they use their money.

THE REWARD OF THE SELFISH

James showed how wrong it is for people to use their riches selfishly. He warned selfish people of their terrible reward. He also told the reasons for judgement against the selfish rich.

First, the rich men did not pay their labourers enough. Labourers had to be paid daily wages or their families would not have food to eat for that day. Do you know of someone who is underpaid? The cries of labourers reached the ears of God!

Second, the rich men used their riches selfishly. They paid no heed to those in great need. James reminded the selfish, rich people that they would be destroyed.

Third, the rich men killed good men. Poor men were helpless before the rich. They had no power to defend themselves.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Does Jesus expect us to be faithful, doing our very best for him? What did James say would happen to people who trust in riches? Do you pay those who work for you honest wages?

CHAPTER TEN

PEOPLE ABOVE TRADITION

AIM: This lesson will help me realize that people are more important than laws or customs.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 13:10-17; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 13:10-17; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

MEMORY VERSE

"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

John had died. His wife, Mary, grieved about his death, but she knew she would be with him in heaven one day. John and Mary had become Christians five years before when they moved to the city. Now, Mary trusted God in her grief.

When Mary took John's body home to the village, she learned that his family wanted to go through all the old tribal customs concerning a death. Mary did not want to see John's family cut themselves as custom required. She did not want to be given to John's young brother as wife. She was a Christian. She wanted to grieve in a Christian way. She wanted to continue to live her life in a Christian way.

Mary had to face the problem of what to do when custom did not agree with Christianity. She had to decide whether to follow her faith or her customs.

THE MEANING OF TRADITIONS

Tradition and customs have much to do with our lives. We do things a certain way because our parents taught us that way. People in each country have traditional ways of doing things, such as cooking or preparing food. In Bible times, the Jewish people had many traditions. Some of their traditions were based on God's laws. Some of the traditions resulted from doing something a certain way over many years.

Traditions came to be very important during New Testament days. Even so, they are important to us today, especially here in Africa.

Many of the New Testament traditions centred around the sabbath, the Jewish day of rest. They thought more about what was done on that day than of helping people in need.

JESUS HEALED A CRIPPLED WOMAN

Read Luke 13:10-17. One sabbath day Jesus was teaching in a synagogue. He saw a badly crippled woman. People thought she had an evil spirit.

Jesus called to her and told her she was free from the sickness. He laid his hands on the woman. At once, she stood up straight. She praised God and thanked him.

The leader of the synagogue became very angry. Jesus broke a Jewish law (tradition) because he healed on the sabbath. The Jews said that healing was work. They had a law against working on the sabbath, but it was alright for them to pull an ox out of the ditch on the sabbath! That action was not thought to be work.

The Jewish leader told the crowd that there were six days of the week to work. He said that Jesus should heal on those days. The Lord should not help people on the sabbath. Read the Lord's answer in verses 15-16. He reminded the Jewish leaders that they helped animals on the sabbath. Why should not they help people also?

Jesus' words and actions shamed his enemies. The people were very happy over what Jesus did and said. He put a person above a tradition.

LIVING FOR OTHERS

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Paul was writing to Christians in Corinth. He told about his ways as a preacher. He told the people in Corinth that he was a servant to all men.

Paul let only God control his life through Jesus Christ. He followed in Jesus' steps in being a servant to all men. Paul became a friend to men to win more people to Christ.

Paul was a free man. (See verse 19.) He was no longer a slave to sin. He was free in Christ. He might lead others to Christ if he became a servant to them. He was willing, therefore, to serve them.

When Paul was with Jews, he lived like the Jews. He was a Jew by race and Jew by religion. In that way, Paul could win Jews to Christ.

When Paul was with Gentiles, he lived like Gentiles, outside the Jewish law. He wanted to win the Gentiles to Christ. Paul did not disobey God's law, however. He lived under Christ's law as a Christian.

Some Jewish Christians were weak in regard to eating food sacrificed to idols. They believed it to be sin. Some Gentile Christians wanted no part of their old life. Paul respected both groups. They would mature in Christ as the years passed. They would know what one eats does not affect his spiritual life. Paul wanted to win both groups to believe in Christ.

Indeed, Paul really did become a servant to all men. He did this so that he could tell everyone about Jesus Christ. Paul wanted all who heard the gospel message to be saved. He did these things so the gospel might be heard by many more people. He received a great

blessing when he saw people become Christians.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Think about this lesson. Think about the tribal customs, laws and traditions that you live by. Which of all these traditions are acceptable for a Christian? Which are not? Do you need to stop following some of the customs you are presently following? Are you willing to put Christ above everything in your life?

Think about Mary at John's death. What would you do in her situation? Sometimes we must be very strong to resist certain traditions and to follow Christ. How strong are you?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ACTIVE CHRISTIAN COMPASSION

AIM: I will learn that I have a responsibility for those who live around me.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 14:12-14; 16:19-31; James 2:1-7

VERSES IN TODAYS LESSON: Luke 16:19-31

MEMORY VERSE

". . . He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise" (Luke 3:11).

A Christian man once visited a very rich farmer. After they had eaten together at the farmer's home, they walked around the farmer's plot of ground. He began to point to various things that he owned. He pointed to the large fields of grain that were his. He pointed to his cows, sheep and goats. He pointed to his forest of trees. He continued to show his wealth of material goods by showing the Christian man his fine home.

The rich farmer also pointed to his wives and his educated children. Then he said, "All this is mine! Twenty five years ago, I had nothing. Today, I am a very rich man!"

The farmer thought the Christian man would be very pleased and would praise him. But the Christian man took the farmer's hand and said very gently, pointing to heaven. "Friend, how much do you own up there?"

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Read Luke 16:19-31. Jesus told a parable about two men. One was a very rich man who dressed in expensive clothes every day. He probably wore nice robes like the high priests wore. His food cost very much money. Every day he ate only the foods he liked. He always ate all the food that he desired. He ate more than his body needed to be healthy.

He had the best of life, as far as material goods were concerned. He possessed everything that his heart desired. He did not feel any need for God.

A poor man named Lazarus lived in the same town with the rich man, The name "Lazarus" means "God is my help." Lazarus had nothing to eat. He had to beg for his food. Friends brought him and placed him at the rich man's door.

The rich people wiped their greasy hands with pieces of bread. Then the servants threw away the bread. They usually threw it out through the door. Dogs often ate the crumbs. Lazarus kept himself

alive by eating the bread crumbs that had been thrown away.

Lazarus could not stand up, nor could he even sit up. He had to lie outside the rich man's door. His body was covered with sores. He could not keep the dogs away. They came and licked his open sores. But Lazarus called out to God in his need, and God heard him.

THE REWARD OF THE TWO MEN

Finally, Lazarus died. The angels carried him away to heaven to be with Father Abraham. When the Jews thought of heaven, they thought of going to Father Abraham. Lazarus did not go to heaven because he was a poor beggar. He did not go to heaven because the rich man did not treat him well. Lazarus went to heaven because of his belief and trust in God.

When the rich man died, his funeral must have been very well attended. Probably many great and rich men attended the funeral. Probably many people of high position in the community attended the funeral. But all these people could not help him. For the Bible tells us that his soul went to hell!

He did not go to hell because he was rich. He did not go to hell because he did not give Lazarus better food to eat. The rich man's sin was that he did not believe in God. He thought only of himself and meeting his own needs. He thought he did not need God!

Eternal life for the two men was just the opposite. On earth, the rich man had the good things. He had good clothes, good food and good things surrounded his life each day. But in hell, he had only suffering. On earth, Lazarus had nothing. In heaven he had the good life with Christ.

The rich man could look from hell and see Lazarus in heaven with Abraham. He shouted to Father Abraham to have pity on him. He wanted Lazarus to put his finger in water and cool his tongue. The rich man was greatly suffering in hell!

Abraham reminded the rich man that he had all he wanted during his life on earth. Lazarus had nothing. Now life was good for Lazarus, but the rich man was suffering. Besides, no one was permitted to go from heaven to hell, nor could they go from hell to heaven. Then the rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth. He had five brothers who lived at his father's house. He wanted Lazarus to warn them about the place of suffering. He did not want his family to go to hell.

Abraham told the rich man that his brothers had Moses and prophets to warn them. The man thought they were not sufficient. His brothers would listen better to a person who came back from the grave. Abraham told him that if his brothers did not listen to the Scriptures, they would not listen to someone who came back from the dead.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

What did Jesus say about the place to put one's treasure? Do you think that the rewards that both Lazarus and the rich man got were just? Why?

People live all around you. What needs do they have? Is there some way you can help them? The rich man felt he had no responsibility for those who lived around him. He was wrong. Make sure that you are doing what you can to help needy people.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CHRISTIANS AND THEIR GOVERNMENT

AIM: This lesson will remind me that I have a responsibility to support the government of my town and my country.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 20:19-26; Acts 5:27-32; Romans 13:1-10

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 20:20-25; Romans 13:1-7

MEMORY VERSE

"Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due" (Romans 13:7).

Some religious groups do not feel that they should be soldiers. They do not allow their members to be policemen. They do not support the government in their countries.

Other religious groups feel they owe allegiance only to God. Earthly governments are not to be supported. This is not the way Christians believe.

Most people in today's world pay taxes. Many times, tax money is paid to a city, town or community. This money is used to pay the salary of town officials, to tarmac roads and to provide schools and many other services.

A man who is able to drive a vehicle, must pay money to obtain a driver's license. He must pay money to obtain a permit for his vehicle. There are many services that the local government renders to its citizens. The citizens must pay for these services.

THE QUESTION ABOUT PAYING TAXES

The Jewish religious leaders were Jesus' enemies. Read Luke 20:20-25. The leaders became angry when Jesus told the parable in Luke 20:9-18. They knew he was talking about them, and they wanted to kill him.

These religious leaders watched Jesus and tried to trick him. They paid men to trick Jesus by asking him a question about taxes.

Rome controlled most of the known world at that time. The Roman government taxed people in Israel. The tax was not large. Yet no Jew wanted to pay taxes to a heathen country such as Rome.

If Jesus told them not to pay the tax he would be arrested. If Jesus said to pay the tax the people would stop following him. How did Jesus answer their question? Read verses 23-25 again.

Did the Jews trick Jesus? No! Jesus answered his enemies in a wise

way. Most men thought a leader had the right to put his picture on the money. Then he had the right to tax the people. Thus, Jesus said the Jews used Roman money, and they should pay Roman tax.

Jesus said more words. He told his enemies that they should give God what belonged to him!

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE STATE

Read Romans 13:1-7. In several of his letters, Paul said that a Christian should obey the state or government. See Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:17. Paul urged Christians to pray for kings and all others who are in authority over us. Read 1 Timothy 2:2.

Paul's strongest statement about the Christian's responsibility to the government is in Romans 13. Here he said that Christians should obey the government because God gave it power. Paul said that God put all governments in power. Read Romans 13:1. Paul urged all people to obey the government.

Those who refused to obey the laws of the land refused to obey God! Those are very strong words, but very true. Such people would be punished both by the government and by God.

People who do right are not afraid of a police officer. He is their friend and protector. It is only those who do wrong who fear an officer of the law. Again Paul said that a police officer is sent by God to help people. But the wrong doer certainly should be punished.

A person should obey the laws for two reasons. First, he should obey to keep from being punished. Second, he should obey just because he knows he should do so. A Christian's good behaviour should not come from a fear of being punished. He should feel a strong desire to do what is right.

Paul told the Christians to pay taxes for the same two reasons. People do not want to be punished. They know it is right to pay taxes. Paul told the Roman Christians to "pay all of them their dues". Remember, Jesus told his followers to give to Caesar the things that were his. Christians should pay tribute to their governments gladly.

Citizens owe more than money to the government. Christians should honour and respect elected and appointed government officials. Christians should be good citizens in every way. By doing so, they honour God.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Think about your country and its government. Think about the elected men and women who serve in the government. Think about the men and women whom the government employs to carry out the day to day business of the government. Do you owe them anything?

Some governments seem to be corrupt and filled with people who serve themselves rather than the people. Does a Christian have any responsibility toward those governments? If so, what responsibility do they have? They must pray for those governments.

They must vote for the ones who will do the best job, and they must stand for right. Corruption can end if Christians will stand against it.

Do you pay taxes? Are you willing to vote? Will you speak up for the right way to do things? Will you work to keep your village, town or city clean? Do you pray for your government and all its leaders? Think about it.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WHO IS THE GREATEST

AIM: This lesson will help me to remember that a Christian is a servant of others.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 22:24-27; Mark 9:33-37

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 22:24-27; Mark 9:33-37

MEMORY VERSE

". . . If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

Peter, a boy of eighteen years of age, was from a wealthy family. He went to a Christian missionary hospital because he wanted to enter nurse's training.

Peter wore nice clothes. He was a proud boy. One day he refused to clean some shoes given to him. to clean. He said he was a gentleman and a student. He would not do the work of a servant.

The matron of the hospital called for Peter to come to her office. While he watched, she took the shoes and cleaned them. Then she read to him the story of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet. Peter listened carefully. His face showed a look of embarrassment. The last words of the story were: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).

The boy's eyes filled with tears. He said, "May Jesus forgive me for being proud. Jesus did the work' of a servant." After that Peter gladly did all lowly jobs given to him.

WHO IS THE GREATEST?

Read Luke 22:24-27. Jesus and his disciples were observing the Passover Feast. Then Jesus started the Lord's Supper.

In a short time, the disciples began complaining. They were complaining about who was greatest among them. Jesus told them that they acted like pagans. (verse 25) The king was the greatest in the pagan world. But in Jesus' kingdom, the servant was the greatest.

"The younger" (verse 26) was the least important member of most homes. This child had to do many lowly tasks. He had to serve the others. Jesus said the greatest must become as the youngest. If a person wanted to be great, he must serve others.

The disciples argued because they wanted high places in the coming kingdom. They still thought God's kingdom would be on earth. Perhaps when Jesus and his disciples ate together, the men ate

wherever they were permitted. But each one wanted to sit as near to Jesus as possible.

Jesus showed his men what it meant to be great. He acted as a servant by washing the disciples' feet. (John 13:1-20)

A Christian disciple should not worry about being great. He should be a servant. The greatest Christian serves other Christians. He also should try to serve other people, not just Christians. A Christian should ask what he can do for others. Great people look for ways to serve. They do not look for ways to be served and appear important in the eyes of men.

JESUS TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES

Jesus asked a question of his disciples. Then he answered his own question. Read Luke 22:27 again. The person sitting at the table is thought more important than the one who is serving.

But Jesus turned things around. He reversed them. He said he was among them as one who served. He was their servant. Jesus' disciples should be the same. No one is ready to follow Jesus until that one is ready to serve his fellow man.

BECOME LIKE A LITTLE CHILD

Read Mark 9:33-37. Another time Jesus and his disciples were going to the town of Capernaum. When they got there they entered a house. Jesus asked his men why they were complaining to each other along the way. The disciples said nothing. They were ashamed of what they were doing. They were arguing about which of them was the greatest! Then Jesus sat down and began teaching the disciples some needed truths. He said a person can be great in only one way. He must be last, and he must serve others!

Men must not be masters, they must be servants. (verse 35) Men must not live for what they can do only for themselves. They should live for what they can do for others. A great person serves others.

Then Jesus called a little child to come to him. He took the child in his arms and taught the people a valuable lesson. (Read Mark 9:37.)

Most children are rather helpless. They depend on their parents and those around them to live. A child has little influence in the local affairs. He is not able to help a man obtain a good job. He is not able to give things to others. A child needs many things in his own life. Someone must do things for him so that child will survive in life.

In the parable Jesus told, the child stood for people who needed help. Christians should help those in need. Jesus taught his disciples that they must help the poor, ordinary people. He taught them that they must help those who are downcast. He said that his

disciples must help those who have no money and no power. They were to help people who needed things done for them.

It is easy to befriend someone who is nice to us and can do nice things for us. It is also easy for us to be unkind and unfriendly to someone who is in need of our help.

We can do things for people who are "great" and who have influence. They may use their influence for us, but we can easily pass over the simple, little, ordinary person. Jesus said we should not seek those who can do things for us. We should seek those we can serve. We serve Jesus in this way. At another time, he said that we serve him when we help others. Read Matthew 25:40.

Jesus also said in Matthew 25:45, ". . . Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me."

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Think for a moment about Jesus' standard for being great. How do you measure up to it? Would your friends and family think of you as someone great by the way you serve? Are you willing to seek out someone whom you may serve?

If indeed, you are willing to seek someone whom you may serve and help, keep what you do for him a secret. Continue helping him until he can help himself. Or, continue helping him until he needs no more help.