

© Copyright, 1975, International Publication Services, FMB/IMB, of SBC

AT24T

LIVING OUR FAITH  
Teacher's Lessons

CONTENTS

Lesson 1	How Our Faith is Different
Lesson 2	New Life in Christ
Lesson 3	Studying the Bible
Lesson 4	Growing Through Prayer
Lesson 5	Growing with Other Believers
Lesson 6	Growing Through Worship
Lesson 7	Growing Through Giving
Lesson 8	Growing For Service
Lesson 9	Growing Through Struggle
Lesson 10	Concern For Others
Lesson 11	The Cost of Commitment
Lesson 12	Celebrating Christmas as Christians
Lesson 13	All Our Life for Christ

## LESSON ONE

### HOW OUR FAITH IS DIFFERENT

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1:1-4; Acts 17:22-28a; Ephesians 2:8-9

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 1:1-4; Acts 17:22-28a

MEMORY VERSE: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God--not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God has revealed his complete plan for man's salvation in Jesus Christ.

TEACHING AIM: To help my students understand the Christian faith and how it is different from other religions.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Chalk board and chalk

### PREPARING TO TEACH

In this group of lessons, we will be studying our faith. We will talk about how we can grow in our faith. We will look at how we can live according to our faith from day to day. We cannot live what we do not know. It is important for us to know what we as Christians believe. Therefore, we will begin our study by seeing how our faith differs from other religions.

God Has Revealed Himself to Man: Read Hebrews 1:1.

The writer of Hebrews gave a defense of the gospel to Jewish Christians. He pointed them to the Old Testament, their holy writings. He reminded them that God had spoken to their ancestors many times and in many ways. God spoke through words and actions to show his people who he was. He used prophets and priests to speak for him. All his revelations told the Jews that he had not yet completed his plan for man's salvation. Only in Jesus do we see the complete revelation of God's love. Only in Christianity do we see the completion of God's plan for man's salvation

Jesus Christ--God's Final Revelation: Read Hebrews 1:2-4.

God sent his Son into the world to tell man of God's plan for their salvation. The Son showed us that God is love and wants to save us. Look at what this passage says about Jesus.

1. He is the heir and owner of all things.
2. He created all things.
3. He reflects and shows us the glory of God.
4. He is exactly like God and shows us exactly what God is like.
5. He holds the universe together by his power.
6. He gave himself to save man from his sin.
7. He is now seated in the highest place of honor beside God in heaven.

In this passage, Jesus is described as eternal God, Saviour of man, risen Lord. Only in Christianity do we see the eternal God seeking and saving man. Only in Christianity does God die so man can be saved. Only in Christianity does God as man rise from the dead.

Faith For All Men: Read Acts 17:22-28.

Paul tried to convince the educated Greeks that the God they sought is the God whom he knew and loved. He explained that they could know the one they worshipped as "unknown." He is God the Creator who gives man all he needs. He does not need man, but he created within man the need for God. As man seeks to have a relationship with him, he is not far from each of us. God is waiting nearby, ready for us to call him. When we find him, we find the true meaning of life, fulfillment and joy.

Paul stressed that God is available to all men. None is unworthy. As men come to God, his plan is for them to live together peacefully. This can happen only when all men know and love God. He unifies men and helps them live as he planned.

Salvation by Grace Through Faith: Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

In all religions, salvation is received through one of two ways. The first is through human effort. Men try to gain acceptance by God through their actions, gifts and religious ceremonies. The second way is salvation by grace through faith. Of all the religions of the world, only Christianity teaches this. Only Christians believe God loved us enough to provide salvation through a Saviour, Jesus Christ. Only Christians believe man cannot earn his salvation by good works. Only Christians believe salvation is a gift of God, freely given to all who believe.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Write the title of this lesson on the board. Then ask: "What is faith?" Let students respond. Then ask: "What is Christian faith? Is it different from other faiths?" Let students respond.

Have a student read the discussion between James and John at the beginning of the student's lesson. When he has finished, ask: "Do you agree with James or John? Today we will look at this issue and perhaps we will find the answer."

Tell the students to turn to Hebrews 1:1. Read the verse. Ask students to recall ways in which God revealed himself to man in Old Testament times. (through mighty acts, flood, miracles, prophets and priests, etc.) Let a student read verses 2-4. Ask: "How has God revealed himself to us according to verse 2? (through Jesus, his Son) Find the characteristics of Christ given in verses 2 and 3. (See "Jesus Christ--God's Final Revelation" in your "Preparing to Teach" section for a list.) List these on the board. Say: "These verses show that Jesus is God, the Saviour and the eternal Lord of all. In this way, Christianity is unique."

Tell students to find Acts 17:22-28. Let one read these verses. Explain who Paul was addressing and what he was trying to explain to them. (See your "Preparing to Teach" section.) Explain that in this passage, we see that salvation is for all men because God created us all. (verses 24-26) We see that God wants everyone to find him. He is nearby waiting for our call. (verse 27) Only when we find him, can we find true joy. (verse 28) Say: "Christianity is unique because it is for all men."

Turn to Ephesians 2:8-9, the Memory Verse. Read the verses together. Read aloud the sections entitled "Salvation By Grace Through Faith" in the "Preparing to Teach" section and the students' books. Be sure students understand the truths

presented here. Emphasize the words, "not because of works." Say: "Man cannot save himself, no matter how good he is." Read the Memory Verse together slowly.

#### Conclusion

Say, "We have learned several ways Christianity is different from other religions. First, we have seen that God has revealed himself to man from the beginning in many different ways. He has always been the same. His message has been the same. Man cannot save himself through being good enough. Secondly, we have seen that Jesus was the final revelation of God. Jesus helped man see God as he is. He brought salvation from God. Thirdly, we have seen that God planned his salvation for all men, not just a select few. Finally we have seen that salvation can come only through faith in Jesus and his gift of grace to us."

Say: "Now let us return to the problem presented by James and John at the beginning of our lesson. James claimed that if Hassim was working hard in his religion and was happy in it, then he would be saved. Does what we learned today support that view?" Let students discuss fully. Ask: "What is wrong with James' view? (Christianity is the true faith. God has revealed himself through Jesus. Salvation can come only when we believe in him and accept his sacrifice for our sins.)"

Say: "Committed Christians cannot agree that one religion is as good as any other. They know their faith is unique and true. In Jesus Christ they have found a difference. They have found true salvation provided by God himself. Christians should not look down on other religions and people who believe them. They should share the truth of Jesus Christ with all they meet. John was right to witness to Hassim and pray that he would find Jesus as his Saviour. His life should show Hassim that his faith is real. Then perhaps he will turn to Jesus as the true answer to all his problems."

"Each of us needs to know what we believe and share our faith with others. In the weeks ahead we will learn more about our faith and how to grow in Christ." Close in prayer.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

God wants all people to know him. The Bible tells us many times that God is nearby, ready and waiting for us to call to him.

Read Psalms 16:8, Where is God? before me and at my right hand

Read Psalms 34:18. To whom is the Lord near? the broken  
brokenhearted

Whom does he save? those who are crushed in spirit

Read Psalms 145:18. To whom is the Lord near? those who call on him in truth

Read Hebrews 10:22. How shall we draw near to God? With a sincere heart in full assurance of faith

Read James 4:8. What will happen when you come near to God? He will come near to you.

God is ready to meet your needs. Will you come to near to him today?

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: 2 Corinthians 4:6-12

Monday: 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Tuesday: Philippians 2:6-11

Wednesday: Colossians 1:15-20

Thursday: Colossians 1:21-23

Friday: Romans 8:1-9

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson for this week.



## LESSON TWO

### NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:1-10; Romans 8:1-9; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Matthew 5:1-9

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Matthew 5:1-9

MEMORY VERSE: "I have been crucified with Christ; is it no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus changes us when we accept him as Saviour. TEACHING AIM: To help my students understand the meaning and demands of new life in Christ.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: None

### PREPARING TO TEACH

Every person is a sinner. He has broken God's laws. He has chosen his own way and followed his own desires. By himself, he does not have the power to change himself. He cannot be perfect by "trying hard." Christians understand that only through Christ can we change. By being "born again," by becoming a "new Creation," we have the power to live as God wants us to live. Our new life and power to live righteously come from God.

A New Creation: Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Paul described the miracle of salvation in verse 17. When we accept Christ we are "in" him. We get our life from him just as a fish gets its life from water. Jesus described our relationship with him by using the picture of the branch and the vine. (John 15:1-6) The branch cannot live apart from the vine. Jesus is the vine. If we are "in him," we are alive. We are born again through the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Past sins are forgiven. Old habits are left behind. Bad attitudes are changed. We become new!

In verses 18-19, Paul used the word "reconcile." To reconcile means to remove the barriers. Sin was the barrier that separated man and God. Sin made us God's enemies. But even while we were still sinners, God himself made a plan to bring us back to him. The plan was "of God." (verse 18) More than that, verse 19 says "...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself..." This means when Jesus died on the cross, God was there. God himself gave his life for our sins so we could be reconciled to him.

Verse 21 says God actually made Jesus, who was sinless, to be sin for our sakes. The punishment for our sin was given to Jesus on the cross. He took that punishment for us. His sacrifice made us righteous.

Three times in this passage Paul implied that because we are saved we have work to do. In verse 18, he said God, "...gave us the ministry of reconciliation." In verse 19, he said God was, "...entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." In verse 20 we read, "We are ambassadors for Christ..." Each statement tells us that because we are reconciled to God we should bring others to him. God uses us to show others how to be reconciled to God.

Character of the New Creation: Read Matthew 5:1-9.

Jesus taught his followers the characteristics of men and women who want to be like him. These are the characteristics which we who are "new creations in Christ" should have.

The "poor in spirit," (verse 3) are those who put their trust in God and not in riches or in themselves. They realize their need for God. They realize that without him they are indeed "poor." They trust God in times of need and in the face of opposition. Their reward is to live under the rule of God. He protects them and blesses them. They live freely as children of the King.

In verse 4, Jesus pointed out that we should feel grief when we realize how we have sinned against God. We should mourn because we are sinners. We should feel sorry and turn from our sin. We should be sad that God's will is not done on earth. When we do mourn, the Comforter, God's Holy Spirit comes and helps us. He strengthens us to reject sin. He helps us help others to stand firmly in the Lord.

We receive righteousness when we receive salvation. It is a gift of God, not anything we can earn or achieve. A Christian seeks God's righteousness in his life. (verse 5) He hungers to be more like Jesus. He thirsts to have God work in his life and change him. When he truly seeks to grow in righteousness, he is not disappointed. Jesus satisfies this hunger and helps us grow. One of God's greatest characteristics is mercy. (verse 6) Mercy is kindness at work. It is love acted out. It is not just feeling sorry for someone, but it means working to relieve the sorrow. God showed his mercy to us by providing a way for sinful man to be saved. Because we have experienced his mercy, we should want to show mercy to others. We should show kindness and forgiveness to others even as God showed it to us. Then God reveals his mercy to us. We receive his love and forgiveness.

Purity of heart can only come by the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. (verse 7) He enables us to live pure lives. He helps us to be completely committed to God. One who is "pure in heart" seeks to know and serve God above all else. He is rewarded by being able to see God where others cannot see him. He experiences peace in all situations because he knows God is at work. His glory is seen in everyday life.

God works to bring peace (reconciliation) between himself and man. Man should be at work to help God in this task. (verse 9) Peace comes through Jesus. Men can only be at peace with each other, if they are at peace with God. Peacemaking is active. It seeks to help all men know the Prince of Peace. When we are peacemakers, we are children of the Father of peace.

Crucified With Christ: Read Galatians 2:20, the Memory Verse.

Salvation offered by Christ is a wonderful thing. New life which comes through faith brings joy. But perhaps the greatest thing about the Christian life is the fact that we do not live it alone. Christ lives in us as we die to self and try to be like him. He enables us to live as he lived. He changes us and makes us righteous. Then he gives us the Holy Spirit who helps us live as we should. Others can see the change in us because we no longer live for ourselves, but Christ lives in us and through us.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Ask: "Have you ever looked at a newborn baby? What did you see?" Let class discuss this. Point out that this tiny, perfect baby is new. It is innocent and dependent. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Say: "Just as a newborn baby is new and

innocent, so is a new Christian. He is a new creation, just as a baby is." Ask: "What does it mean to be "in Christ?" (to have no life separate from him) "What are some of the old things that pass away when we become Christians?" (sin, bad habits, bad attitudes, etc.) "What are some of the things which become new?" (desire to be like Christ, the way we use our time, our relationships with others, our feelings and desires, etc.) Tell a student to read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. Use your "Preparing to Teach" material to discuss these verses. Be sure to answer the questions: Who planned for man to be reconciled to God? What happened to our sin? Emphasize that after we are reconciled to God, we are to become "ministers of reconciliation," and lead others to God. Say: "When we receive Christ, we become a new creation. We are born again." Ask the class to read the Memory Verse together. Say: "Paul said that when we become a Christian, we die. This means that our will and desires die. We begin to live as Jesus wants us to. Let us look at some verses in Matthew which tell us what characteristics we should have if we are a `new creation.'"

Have students turn to Matthew 5:1-9. Read these verse, one by one. Use your "Preparing to Teach" material and the stories which illustrate these characteristics from the student's book. Be sure that students understand the characteristics we should have as Christians.

#### Conclusion

Have students say the Memory Verse together again. Read the paragraph Crucified with Christ from your "Preparing to Teach" materials. Say: "As we grow in Christ, we can help others to come to him. They will see a change in our lives. They will want the joy we have. Let us be sure that we understand that if we accept Christ as Saviour, he becomes our Lord. That means he rules our lives. We live as he wants us to. We let his Holy Spirit work in our lives to change us and make us like him."

Invite students to pray silently, asking God to help each one allow him to work in their lives to make us more like him. Lead in closing prayer.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

Mary became a Christian one night at her brother's house. Before this, she had been afraid of the dark and would never walk alone in the dark. But after receiving Christ as her Saviour, she left her brother's house without fear. She looked up into the night sky and noticed how bright the stars were. She forgot all about how dark the night was. When you became a Christian, did you look at things differently? If we are new creations, all things should be new. Our eyes should be new. We should want to see Jesus. Our ears should be new. We should want to hear about Jesus. Our desires should be new. We should want to please Jesus. Can others see a difference in you? If you became a new creation, if Christ is alive within you, you should be different. Ask God to continue to work to change you and make you like him.

Read Matthew 5:1-9, and ask God to help you have the characteristics of a Christian which Jesus mentioned here. Meditate on these. Make them a part of your life.

#### Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Ephesians 5:1-5

Monday: Nehemiah 8:1-8

Tuesday: Acts 17:10-12

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 1:5-7

Thursday: Psalms 119:33-40

Friday: Psalms 119:41-48

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON THREE

### STUDYING THE BIBLE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Nehemiah 8:1-8; Psalms 119:9-16; Acts 17:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: Psalms 119:9-16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

MEMORY VERSE: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105).

CENTRAL TRUTH: To grow as a Christian, we must study God's Word and apply its teaching to our lives.

TEACHING AIM: To help students plan to study the Bible every day.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Small pieces of blank paper, a pencil, chalk board and chalk.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

When a person accepts Jesus as his Saviour, he wants to obey him. His Christian life is a journey toward becoming like Christ. One very important tool in this journey is the Bible, God's Word. As he reads and studies it, he learns how Jesus lived. As he follows this example, he finds real joy. He knows what God wants him to do. He is happy as he obeys.

The Value of Bible Study: Read Psalms 119:9-16.

The writer of this psalm saw the value of God's law. He did not see it as a burden. It brought him joy. By knowing and keeping God's law, he would know God and experience his love. He used several words to refer to the law of God: word, commandments, statutes, ordinances, testimonies, precepts, ways. Each refers to God's written Word which he gave to help us.

Verse 9 tells us that the way to live a righteous life is to follow God's laws. By studying the Bible, can we know what God demands of us. If we pay attention to what God tells us, we can live as he wants us to live.

In verse 10, the psalmist said he was giving all his attention and energy to seeking God. He asked God to help him obey his commandments. Verse 11 shows us one way to be strong when we are tempted. If we hide his Word in our hearts, we can resist temptation by using it. Jesus did this when he was tempted. He quoted portions of Scripture to the devil, and the devil had no power over him.

In verse 12, the psalmist asked God to teach him his law. God can do this through his Holy Spirit. He can help us know and do God's will. He can help us understand the Bible and apply it to our lives.

The writer valued God's law so much that he shared it with others. (verse 13) He had seen how it has brought him blessings. He wanted others to know the joy of following God's law.

Verses 14 and 16 tell us how delighted the writer was in the law of the Lord. He valued it as much as riches. He memorized it and remembered it as he went about his work from day to day.

Verse 15 says he would meditate on God's Word. This is more than just reading it. He will think about it and try to understand its full meaning. He will look at it with his eyes and his heart.

The Power of God's Word: Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

Paul advised his young friend, Timothy, to remain faithful to what he had learned from God's Word. (verses 14-15) Timothy's mother and grandmother had been faithful teachers of God's Word. Timothy had learned of God's salvation through the Bible. This is one way we see the power of God's Word. The Bible shows us that we are sinners who cannot save ourselves. It tells us of God's wonderful plan for our salvation.

In addition, the Bible can teach us what it means to be a Christian. It teaches us how to live. (verse 16) By knowing what we should do, we also see what is sin and how to correct our errors. In this way, we grow in our faith and become more like Jesus, until we are finally "complete." (verse 17a) When we are mature Christians we are ready to do the work God has called us to do. (verse 17b) We have prepared faithfully and God can use us.

A Light for Living: Read Psalms 119:105.

At night in rural areas, people depend on a lamp or a torch if they want to know where the roads leads. In the same way, the author compared the Word of God to a lamp. It shines where there is darkness. With a lamp you cannot lose the way. It is an aid for safe travel. If we have the Word of God in us we will not miss the way to eternal life and happiness.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Read the story of Peter and Paul from the student's book.

Give each student a small piece of paper. Pass around a pencil and ask each student to write the number of minutes he spends reading the Bible each day. Ask each one to write a word which tells how much help he gets from reading the Bible. Write these words on the board so students can choose one: Much, Some, Little, None. Collect the unsigned papers. Quickly read the numbers and figure the average. Tell the students that each day has 1440 minutes and each week has more than 10,000 minutes. Ask: "How important is reading the Bible according to how much time you spent reading it this week?"

Mark under the words on the board to show how much help students get from their study. Say: "Many people read the Bible but do not get much help from it. But the Bible is important for the Christian. It tells us everything we need to know about living as God wants us to live. It shows us what Jesus is like so we can be like him. Today we will learn ways we can study the Bible. We will learn how it can help us in our daily lives."

Ask students to turn to Psalms 119:9-16. Choose a student to read. Ask: "What is the psalmist praising?" (the law of the Lord.) "Why do you think he loved it?" (He believed God's law was given to help man. By knowing and keeping God's law, he would know God and his love.) Tell the students to find what the writer had done or would do with God's Word. List these on the board. (Guard it, seek it, not wander from it, lay it up in his heart, be taught it, declare it, delight in it, meditate on it, fix his eyes on it, remember it.) Ask: "How does God's Word help us according to these verses?" [Helps us keep our lives

pure, (verses 9-10), helps us not sin against God, (verse 11), makes us happy, (verses 14 and 16.)]

Read verse 14 again. Ask: "Do we value God's Word as much as riches? Does the time we spend reading it prove how much we value it?" Let students think about this. Let them respond if they want to.

Read verse 15 again. Ask: "How is reading God's Word different from meditating on it?" (To meditate means that we read it and think about its meaning. We spend time trying to understand its meaning. We think about how we can apply the teaching to our lives.) Say: "It is important to meditate on the Bible. Then it can help us."

Read verse 16 again. Ask: "Is it important to memorize God's Word?" (Yes. That way we can use it when we are tempted to sin, as Jesus did.) Tell students to turn to 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Tell your students that Paul wrote these words to Timothy, his spiritual son. Ask: "Who had taught the Bible to Timothy?" (See 2 Timothy 1:5.) Ask: "Is it important to read the Bible with our children?" Let students discuss this. Say: "Our children learn from us what is important in life. If we teach them to love the Bible, they will value it. If we spend our time reading it, they will know it is important to us."

From your Preparing to Teach material, help students to see the five ways Scripture can help us. Write these points on the board: help us receive salvation, (verse 15), teach us how to live, (v.16a), show us our sin and correct us, (verse 16b), complete us (verse 17a), and equip us for good works, (verse 17b).

#### Conclusion

Say: "Many Christians know it is important to read the Bible every day, but many do not know how to read it so it helps them. They just take their Bible, open it and read wherever it falls open. God's Word can speak to us in this way, but it is much better to have a plan for reading it." Discuss different ways they can read their Bible. Suggest these ways: 1. Read a gospel. Write down what you learn about Jesus and ask God to help you copy him. 2. Read a psalm every day. Praise God with the writer. 3. Read a chapter from Proverbs. Write in your words the advice given. 4. Read a letter written to a church in the New Testament. Think about how the writer wanted to help this church. Pray for your church and your work in it. 5. As you read ask, what is this passage teaching me? Is there a sin I need to confess? Is there something I need to do? Does God want to bless me in some special way? 6. Study the history of the Old Testament. See how God planned for our salvation. See how the people rebelled. Ask yourself if you are like they were.

Say: "There are many ways to study the Bible. The most important thing is to have a plan and to follow it every day. God's Word can speak to you. It can help you resist sin and know of God's will. It can make you a strong Christian, one who is pleasing to God." Ask students to commit themselves to reading God's Word every day this week. Close in prayer for strength to do it faithfully.

NOTE: Ask two students to prepare to act out the story in Luke 11:5-8 for next week's lesson.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

Sometimes we do not study the Bible because we do not know how. You can read a portion and understand it by asking your self questions about it. Then you can write what it means to you.

Read John 1:1-5, verse by verse. Make yourself think about the verses. Ask God to help you understand what they mean. As you try to understand these verses, ask yourself, "Who is the Word?" (Jesus) "What is meant by `...the Word was with God and the Word was God'?" (Jesus and God are one.) "What did Jesus and God do together?" (They created the world.) "What did Jesus give to men?" (life and light) "How powerful is the light?" (more powerful than darkness or evil)

After you have read and understood the verses, write what they mean to you. You might write, "These verses show me that God and Jesus are one. That means God died for me! He created me and saved me. If I stay close to him, evil cannot harm me. He shows me the way to go."

If you study your Bible like this every day, you will get a lot of help from it. It will become a lamp to your path and a light to your feet. It will light your way and help you be all you want to be.

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Psalms 136:1-9

Monday: Colossians 1:9-14

Tuesday: James 4:2-10

Wednesday: Matthew 7:7-14

Thursday: Luke 5:15-16; 6:12-13

Friday: Luke 22:39-46

Saturday: Read Your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON FOUR

### GROWING THROUGH PRAYER

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 11:1-13; John 15:1-7

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: Luke 11:1-10

MEMORY VERSE: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

CENTRAL TRUTH: A growing Christian prays so he can know God and his will.

TEACHING AIM: To help students understand how important prayer is to a growing Christian and how to pray more effectively.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Chalk and chalk board; students to do dramatization.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

With prayer, Christian growth is impossible. Prayer is fellowship with God. Without fellowship we cannot know him. Without knowing him, we cannot know his will or please him. Prayer is one of the main ways that our spiritual life is strengthened.

Prayer is more than asking God for what we want. It includes adoration, thanks, confession and petition. It recognizes God's greatness and our dependence on him.

Lord, Teach Us To Pray: Read Luke 11:1.

In the Bible's history of Jesus' short life, we see that he prayed often. He prayed before his baptism and when he selected his twelve disciples. He prayed for help during his ministry and miracles. He prayed at mealtime. He prayed for his disciples and for us. He prayed from the cross. Prayer was very important to Jesus.

His disciples realized this. They saw how differently he prayed from the way they were used to praying. They wanted to pray like he did. They wanted to experience the joy he felt when they prayed. They wanted his power in prayer. They asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. They wanted him to explain why prayer is important and how it can be effective. They wanted him to help them become praying men like he was. The Model Prayer: Read Luke 11:2-5.

Perhaps the disciples were surprised that Jesus' prayer was very short. But undoubtedly, as they studied it, they saw how full it was.

In verse 2 there are several important things to note. First, Jesus called God "Father." This was the name given to the one who gives loving care, forgiveness and provision. It showed God's trustworthiness, faithfulness and strength. It meant all the characteristics of a good father and more. Later, (verse 13) Jesus showed that God gives us only what is best and helpful. Second, Jesus acknowledged the greatness of God: "Hallowed be they name." In Jesus' time, a name described a person and his personality. So here, Jesus was praising every part of God's personality, power and holiness. Third, Jesus put himself under God's control: "Thy kingdom come." He asked God to help him bring his perfect kingdom to earth. This meant Jesus would not do anything to hurt another. He

would do all he could to bring all people to God. He would work with God to bring all men under his rule.

In verses 3 and 4, Jesus mentioned man's personal needs. He first asked for bread which meant all his material and physical needs. Jesus knew man must have his physical needs met in order to live. Notice that Jesus said "give us our daily bread." When praying for our own bread, we should also remember our brothers' need for bread.

Then Jesus showed that we need to ask God to forgive our sins ever day. (verse 4) It is interesting to see that he links our forgiveness by God with our spirit of forgiveness toward others. This does not mean we are forgiven as a reward for forgiving others. But if we refuse to forgive others, it shows we have not repented of our sin. We have not accepted our own need for forgiveness. Forgiving and forgiveness go together.

Finally, Jesus showed us that God will help us in times of temptation. This acknowledges our weakness and our dependence on God for strength to resist sin. Only he can give us the desire and strength to live as he wants.

Keeping On Asking: Read Luke 11:5-10. Much of our prayer comes out of our need. The man in this story needed bread for his guest. His neighbor gave it to him because he knew he would not rest unless he did. God is not like the man in this story. He is ready to give us what we need, but sometimes we think he is slow answering our prayers. In those times, we must continue to ask. We must not give up. If we give up after a few times, it means we are not very serious about our prayer. Jesus wanted his disciples to keep on asking, seeking and knocking. If they did, their prayers would be answered. Our prayers will also be answered if we continue praying. It may not always be in just the way, we want, but it will be for our good. (See verses 10-13.)

Abide in Me: Read the Memory Verse.

The key to successful prayer is abiding in Jesus. If we live in him and his words live in us, we will not want anything that he does not want. Our will will be his will. We will want his will to be done. And more than that, we will know his will. What we ask, he will give us because we ask for what God knows is best for us.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Ask: "What is prayer?" Write responses on the chalk board. Ask: "Why do people usually pray? What do they pray for?" Say: "Prayer is communion with God. It has many purposes. Many times we think of it as 'asking' God for something. But it is much more than this, as we shall see in today's lesson."

Tell students to find Luke 11:1-5. Tell a student to read verse one. Ask: "What does this verse tell us about prayer in Jesus' life?" (He was praying, so it was important to him.) "What did Jesus' disciples ask him?" (Lord, teach us to pray.) Say: "Then Jesus gave them the model prayer that we read in verses 2-4. He gave it as a pattern for our prayers. Let us look at its parts." Read verse 2. Discuss Jesus' use of the word "Father." Discuss the meaning of "Hallowed be thy name." Be sure to emphasize that "name" referred to the whole personality of the person. Discuss the meaning of "Thy Kingdom come." Use your background material to add to the students' comments. Then say: "In Jesus' model prayer, we see that he first acknowledged his relationship to God. God is

the Father, the giver of all things. He is the child, the humble receiver. Then Jesus praised God. Finally he asked God to make his will the same as God's."

Read verses 3-4. Say: "Now Jesus asked for three things. What are they?" (bread, forgiveness and protection.) Discuss why Jesus said, "Give us our daily bread." Discuss the need to forgive in order to be forgiven. Use your background material to add to students' ideas.

Let the two students you chose last week act out verses 5-8. Read these verses then ask: "What lesson is Jesus trying to teach in this story?" (that we need to persist in prayer) Ask: "Is God like the sleepy neighbor?" (No, he is ready to give us what we need. But he may not answer as quickly as we want him to in order to test our faith. We need to persist.)

### Conclusion

Read verses 9-10. Ask: "What was Jesus saying in these verses?" (Do not give up praying, and you will get an answer.) Ask: "Is the answer we get always the one we want and expect?"

Tell this story: "A man in prison was talking to a pastor who was visiting. The pastor asked him if he knew how to pray. He replied, 'I know how, but it doesn't seem to do much good. The last time I prayed, I asked God to help me not get caught when I stole the money. But here I am in jail!' Say: "Although this is a foolish story, some people look at prayer like this. What is wrong with this man's prayer?" To get an answer, ask students to turn to John 15:1-7. Read these verses to your students. Ask them to read verse 7 with you. Ask again: "What was wrong with the man's prayer?" (He was not asking for something that was within God's will and plan for his life.? Read to your students the section called "Abide in Me" from your background material. Say: "Prayer is much more than asking God for something. It is submitting to his will. Prayer can help us do this. Saying that we want his will can change our hearts. Agreeing with God in prayer can change our lives."

Conclude by reviewing with your class the four parts of Jesus' model prayer. Say: "Our prayers should be like Jesus'. They should include adoration, thanksgiving, confession and petition. Think about this as you pray. Make your prayer more than just a list of things you want God to give you. Praise God. Adore him. Thank him for his blessings. Be sure to confess your sin. Then ask him for your needs. He is ready to answer you and give you what you ask."

Say the Memory Verse together again. Close in prayer.

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

Read these verses to see what we learn from Jesus about prayer.  
Mark 1:35 He prayed in the morning, alone in a quiet place.  
Mark 6:46-47 He prayed for a long time, by himself.

Luke 3:21 He prayed after his baptism. God heard his prayers.  
Luke 5:15-16 He prayed to know and do God's will when tempted.  
Luke 6:12 He prayed all night long.  
Luke 22:41-42 He prayed for strength to face trials.  
John 11:41 He prayed in faith, and he prayed when doing miracles.  
John 17:20 He prayed for you and me!

Jesus taught about prayer in these verse: Matthew 5:44, 6:6-8; Mark 14:38; Luke 10:2; 18:1. Meditate on each and ask God to help you understand and practice its teaching.

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Acts 2:44-47

Monday: 1 John 1:1-4

Tuesday: 1 John 1:5-10

Wednesday: Ephesians 2:14-18

Thursday: Ephesians 2:19-22

Friday: Galatians 6:1-10

Saturday: Read your Bible Study Lesson.

## LESSON FIVE

### GROWING WITH OTHER BELIEVERS

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 2:44-47; Ephesians 2:19-22; Colossians 3:9b-17

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: Colossians 3:9b-17

MEMORY VERSE: "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God..." (Ephesians 2:19).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christians can grow through fellowship with other Christians if they work together in peace and unity.

TEACHING AIM: To help my students discover ways they can relate more positively to other Christians.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: An old cardigan or jacket, a newer cardigan or jacket, chalk and chalk board, small pieces of paper, tape,

### PREPARING TO TEACH

Jesus started the Church for the benefit of his disciples. He knew they would be able to be more faithful if they had encouragement from other Christians. They could help each other and pray for one another. They could continue the work he began through ministry, teaching and preaching. God's plan is for all believers to be a part of a church. We grow as we have loving fellowship with other believers and serve God together.

Unfortunately, often, when people of different backgrounds got together, they had conflict. Paul tried to help young churches understand God's plan for peace and unity in the church.

Clothed in God's Grace: Read Colossians 3:9b-12.

When we become Christians, our lives should change. Paul used the picture of "putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature" as if it was clothing. The new is constantly being renewed. The new man continues to change until he is "complete" in God's image.

Part of this change is in relationships. In Paul's world the Jews hated the Greeks because they were heathens. The Greeks hated all who could not speak Greek and called them "barbarians." Everyone despised the Scythians who were primitive people with strange customs. No free man would have fellowship with slaves because they were not considered human beings. Jesus came into this world of hatred. He brought all men together. As they worshipped him together, differences were forgotten. All men became God's chosen people, holy and beloved, words which once described only the Jews. All were expected to show God's grace to fellow believers regardless of their background and social position.

Paul challenged the Christians to be compassionate and show mercy to the suffering. He asked them to be kind and value their neighbor's happiness as much as their own. They should be humble because they were all equal before God, all children of the King. Paul asked for meekness (or gentleness) and patience.

These characteristics show that we put others first. They can only be developed through the help of God's Holy Spirit.

Forgive Because You were Forgiven: Read Colossians 3:13-15.

When people live and work together, problems sometimes arise. Among Christians, problems should be solved without anger. We should forgive each other freely. Why is this so? Christians recognize their need to be forgiven by God. Because of this, they should be ready to forgive others. God freely forgave us, so we should be ready to forgive others.

God's love reconciled man to himself. We need to dress ourselves in that love because it will hold us together. If we let Jesus rule each heart he will keep peace between us. He will unify us because he called us together. If we listen to him, he will show us the way to be one in him.

All in Jesus' Name: Read Colossians 3:16-17.

Paul reminded these Christians to let Jesus be the center of all activities of the Church. He would keep them on course. He would help them develop the characteristics listed in verses 12-15. He would make them thankful for their own salvation and thankful for their brothers and sisters who helped and encouraged them. Finally Paul gave them the secret for living peacefully together: Make Jesus the measure of all. We should always ask: Would he be happy with this action? Would he love to hear these words? Would he help me to do this? If they were faithful to ask those questions before acting or speaking, they would live in peace.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Tell this story: "Women from several churches met together for a special day of teaching and fellowship. They studied the Bible, discussed how to grow as a Christian, ate together and prayed together. As the day ended, each group went its way. As they walked toward home, away from the other groups, they chatted. These are some of the things that were said:

"Did you see that fat woman? I heard she has had three husbands. I don't think she should be allowed to come to Christian meetings."

"I was really nervous when I saw that people from that tribe came. They are all thieves, you know. I held my purse close to me all day."

"I couldn't believe how rude those women from that area were. They ate so much of the food, I didn't get enough!"

"That woman in red answered all the questions. I couldn't get in a word!"

Ask: "Would Jesus be happy with these statements? What is wrong with them?"

Let your class respond. Say: "When we become Christians we become a part of the Body of Christ, a part of the family of believers. We are all his children even though we are very different from one another. Today we are going to see how Jesus wants us to relate to other Christians."

Tell your students to turn to Colossians 3. Say: "In the first part of this chapter, Paul listed characteristics Christians should not have. We will begin with verse 9b to see what new characteristics we should have." Read verses 9b-11. Ask a student to put on the old, worn cardigan you brought to class. Let the class look at it. Have him take it off and put on the new one. Say: "This is the picture Paul used. He told us to take off the old and put on the new."

The change should be as great as with these cardigans. People should be able to see the difference immediately."

Read verse 11 again. Use your background material to explain why these groups hated each other. Ask your class what groups in your country might be like those listed by Paul. (For example: other nationalities or tribes, people from pagan or Muslim backgrounds, etc.) Say: "Today, just as in Paul's day, when people come to Jesus, they join the family of believers. Differences and past history must be forgotten, because Jesus unifies us all."

Read Colossians 3:12-15. Say: "Before Jesus came, the Jews alone considered themselves God's chosen people, holy and beloved. Jesus made all believers God's chosen people. He works in us to make us holy."

Write these words on small pieces of paper: compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience, forgiveness, peace; use tape to attach them to the "new" cardigan. Prepare a large piece of paper with the word, love, written on it. As you discuss the characteristics in verses 12-15, tape the word on to the cardigan. Put the word "love" in the middle of the front of the cardigan. (If you cannot do this, write each word on the board as you talk about it. Put "love" in the center of them all.) Use your background material to help students as you discuss the meaning of each of these words. Say: "When we put on our new nature in Christ, we put on these characteristics. If we are Christians, people should see them in our lives. They should be the basis of our relationships with others."

#### Conclusion

Read again the statements made by the women who walked home after the meeting. Let students identify which characteristics the speaker was missing. (compassion, forgiveness, patience, lowliness) Let them think of how they might have responded to each statement if they had been present.

Read verses 16-17. Ask: "What activities of the Church does Paul list?" (teaching, admonishing, singing, thanksgiving) "How will letting "the Word of Christ dwell in us" as we do these things help us?" (If his Word abides in us, we will have peace and unity. verse 15) Ask: "What does doing everything in Jesus' name mean?" (asking if he would be pleased with our action or speech) Ask: "Did the women in the story think about this before they spoke? Do we? Would it help our church if we did?" Let students discuss this without getting into specific problems between members. Ask: "Do you think it is your duty to correct someone who is not doing this in our church?" (See verse 16. Admonish means to correct. But it must be done in love and in a spirit of grace as suggested in verses 12-15.)

Say: "God's plan is for all his children to live together in peace. We need each other's help and encouragement. We should show the world that Jesus' love helps us love each other. He unifies us even when we are very different." Close in prayer asking God to unify your church in him.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me..." (Matthew 11:29). Later when he was explaining the cost of being his disciples he said, "...If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). After humbly washing his disciples' feet, he said, "...I have

given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

Read Philippians 2:1-2. In these verses, Paul begged the Philippian Christians to live together peacefully as one body. Read Philippians 2:3-4. What did Paul tell the people to not do? Do not be selfish or conceited, do not look out for your own interests only.

What did he tell them to do? Count others better than yourself, look to the interests of others.

Read Philippians 2:5-8. What did Jesus do to show he did not care to grasp being equal to God? He became a servant, he became a man.

How did he show his humility? Died on the cross in obedience to God.

Read Philippians 2:9-11. What was his reward for obedience and humility? He was exalted and given a name above all names, worshipped and confessed by all.

We, too, will receive a reward for our obedience to God as we practice humility like Jesus did. We will glorify God. We will live in peace with our brothers. We will know the joy of being like Jesus.

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Psalms 1

Monday: Psalms 21:1-7

Tuesday: Matthew 6:1-6

Wednesday: Matthew 6:7-15

Thursday: Revelation 4:1-11

Friday: Hebrews 10:24-25

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON SIX

### GROWING THROUGH WORSHIP

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalms 95:1-7; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 6:1-15;

Revelation 4:1-11

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Isaiah 6:1-8

MEMORY VERSE: "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christians grow through worshipping God.

TEACHING AIM: The help my students understand the elements of worship so they can grow through worshipping God.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Chalk and chalk board

#### PREPARING TO TEACH

Many people "go to church" each Sunday. They go for fellowship and to study God's Word. They attend "worship." But do they really worship God each week as they "go to church?" Worship is something that happens as we come before God. As we seek to know and honor him, we grow as Christians. True worship prepares us to serve God.

Isaiah went into the temple to worship God. We learn about his experience in the verses we will study today. He gave us a model for true worship.

Meeting God is Worship: Read Isaiah 6:1-2.

As Isaiah entered the temple, he was undoubtedly feeling sad. King Uzziah had just died. Uzziah had been a strong king of Judah. He led Judah to extend her borders. He influenced an increase in her wealth. He himself worshipped God and so led his people to do the same. Although Uzziah did not please God in all he did, he was better than most kings. Certainly Isaiah had no great hope in his son, Jotham, who became King after Uzziah's death.

As he entered the temple, he was no doubt wondering about Judah's future. He wondered about Judah's earthly kings and what they would do. God broke into Isaiah's thoughts in a powerful way. Isaiah was filled with a sense of God's presence. He saw the Lord seated-high and lifted up. He was so great that he filled the whole temple. Isaiah could not describe the Lord, other than to express his immense size and power. Do we see God in that way as we enter for worship?

Isaiah saw creatures called seraphim who attended God on his throne. Their wings covered different parts of their bodies. Those that covered their faces symbolized reverence for God. Those that covered their feet symbolized purity before righteous God. Those that flew symbolized their readiness to serve God in any way he requested. The seraphim show us how we should come before God. We should be reverent, pure and ready to listen and obey.

Seeing Self in Worship: Read Isaiah 6:3-5.

The seraphim sang before God, "Holy, Holy, Holy." As Isaiah saw the vision, experienced the power and glory of God, he was aware of his own unworthiness. He was a man of "unclean lips." A man speaks what is in his heart. Isaiah realized that what came out of his mouth showed a sinful heart. He knew that the hearts of his countrymen were the same. He saw how great that sin appeared as he stood before the Holy One.

As we come before God, do we sense his presence? Do we realize his greatness and power? Do we feel a sense of our sin and feel a need to confess? This is necessary for the true worship to take place. We must repent of our sin and be ready to let God work in our lives. We must be ready for him to cleanse us. So we can stand before him. We must realize that only he can make us clean.

Confession and Cleansing: Read Isaiah 6:6-7.

Isaiah's cry before God was a confession of sin. He wanted God's cleansing. It is wonderful to see how quickly this took place. One of the seraphim brought a hot coal to Isaiah's lips. Since Isaiah was in the temple it is likely that this was from the altar of sacrifice. But no sacrifice was offered for Isaiah's sin. God forgave him directly. This is a picture of the future salvation which comes through Jesus.

Both Isaiah's guilt and sin was taken away immediately. This is very important for us today. God forgives the evil acts we commit. But he also cleans us inside to take away the feeling of guilt and shame. Without guilt, we become whole. We are healed on the outside and on the inside. Only God can do this work. He can change us and help us be righteous like he is.

Ready for Service: Read Isaiah 6:8.

Now that Isaiah stood pure before God, he could hear God's voice. Cleansing is needed before we can hear and respond to God's words. Then our hearts and ears are ready to receive what he has to say to us. God may speak to us through the Scriptures. He may speak to us through songs or prayers. He may speak to us through another person. We must be alert to all ways in which God may speak to us. We must be ready to listen and respond.

Isaiah overheard a heavenly conversation when God asked who would be a suitable messenger from God to Judah. Isaiah had seen God's glory and his own sinfulness. He had experienced God's wonderful cleansing. This made him ready to respond boldly, "Here am I! Send me." He had seen God and his nation's need. He was ready to help God meet that need.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Read Psalms 95:1-7. Tell your class to listen for the four aspects of God mentioned. (Saviour, verse 1, King verse 3, Creator, verses 4-6, Shepherd, verse 7) Ask: "What does the psalmist suggest we do before God?" (Sing, make a joyful noise, thank him, worship and bow down before him.)

Ask: "What is worship?" Let students discuss. Ask: "Does it always take place when we come to church? Does it have to take place at church or can it happen anywhere?" Let students discuss freely.

Say: "Today we will look at a true worship experience which the prophet Isaiah had near the beginning of his ministry. Through these verses, we will learn what worship should be. We will see what worship should do to us."

Turn to Isaiah 6:1-8. Read these verses to your class as if you are Isaiah, telling what happened to you. Use your background material to explain who King Uzziah was. Explain why Isaiah mentioned this in his story.

Read verses 1 and 2 again. Ask: "What did Isaiah see?" (the Lord, and seraphim) Explain the meaning of the wings covering the different parts of the bodies of the seraphim. (reverence, purity and readiness) Write these on the chalk board. Say: "These three attitudes need to be present as we come before God in worship."

Read verses 3-5 again. Ask: "Why did Isaiah cry out 'Woe is me!'" (He realized his sinfulness in the presence of Holy God.) Ask: "What did Isaiah mean by saying he was a 'man of unclean lips' along with the others of his country?" Using Luke 6:45, lead your class to see that our lips are often the cause of our sin. Our actions show what is in our hearts. Say: "When Isaiah saw God, he realized that he was sinful and unclean before him. He realized he was unworthy of any favor from God."

Read verses 6-7 again. Read from your background material the section, "Confession and Cleansing." Discuss our need to have our guilt for sin removed. Say: "When our sin is confessed, it is forgiven by God. It is forgotten. Our remembering it can only hurt us and make us sad. We are forgiven! We can rejoice about that!"

Read verse 8 again. Say: "After Isaiah was cleansed he was ready to listen to God. The same is true for us. When we worship and see God's greatness, we will confess our sins. Once forgiven, we are ready to listen to him." Ask: "How does God speak to us?" Let the class discuss. Use your background material for the list.

Ask: "What did Isaiah hear?" (a conversation between God and his angels) "How did Isaiah respond?" (a quick and bold, "Send me.")

#### Conclusion

Say: "We have seen Isaiah as he worshiped God alone in the Temple. Worship does not have to take place in church, but worshipping with our brothers and sisters is important. It builds our love for one another and for God. It helps us be stronger and more faithful. Many times other people can help us understand better what God is saying to us. Uniting in worship is a way we grow as the Body of Christ." Read Hebrews 10:24-25.

Review the list of the symbols of the seraphim's wings which you put on the board. Conclude: "Coming to church and sitting in a worship service, does not mean we have worshipped. True worship makes us aware of God's greatness. We feel reverence toward him. This makes us aware of our sinfulness and leads us to confession of sin. This makes us pure and ready for service. We can hear God's voice and commands. We will be ready to say, 'Here am I. Send me.' Let us be ready to worship God every day. Then we will grow in our Christian faith. We will know God and his will for our lives." Close in prayer.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

Jesus had a lot to say about false worship. He knew that worship was more than just attendance and ceremony. Look in Matthew 6:1-8 to see some of the things Jesus said about worship. Ask yourself these questions about your own worship.

Verse 1 Do we worship to be seen by men or because God is worthy?

Verse 2 Do we give offerings so men will see us or because we love God and want to help in his work on earth?

Verses 3-4 Do we seek a reward for our giving?

Verses 5-6 Do we pray to be praised by men? Do we make a show of prayer?

Verse 7 Do we pray meaningfully, speaking to God? Or do we use the same words over and over again?

Verse 8 Do we trust God to answer our prayers and give us what is best?

Ask God to help your worship be more acceptable to him. Then it will help you grow and be able to serve God better.

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Psalms 23

Monday: 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Wednesday: James 2:14-17

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 8:1-6

Friday: Romans 12:1-8

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON SEVEN

### GROWING THROUGH GIVING

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; James 2:14-17

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 12:1-8

MEMORY VERSE: "Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christians dedicate their lives and resources to Christ.

TEACHING AIM: To help my students understand Christian stewardship and to decide to give more of themselves and their resources to God.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Chalk board and chalk

#### PREPARING TO TEACH

We learn from Jesus that giving is the center of our faith. He showed us this principle by giving his life for sinful man.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Paul called us servants and stewards of God's mysteries. Stewards were men chosen to oversee the wealth and land of another. Although they were in charge of everything, they answered to the owner. If they were faithful, they were rewarded. We are God's stewards. All things belong to God, but he has told us to take care of the earth and all that is in it. Our job as Christians is to be ready to do whatever God says to protect and save his world.

When we think of stewardship, we usually think of money. Christian stewardship means much more than money. It means all of our lives.

The Christian's Duty Toward God: Read Romans 12:1-2.

In response to God's mercy, we Christians should be ready to give our bodies to God. We cannot separate our minds and souls from our bodies. When we come to God, we give him our whole self. Everything we do, think and say should be for his glory. We must be holy, like the lamb given as a sacrifice in Old Testament times. This is an act of worship which is natural when we think of the sacrifice made for us by God in Christ.

It is natural to notice what those around us are doing. It is easy to let other people be our pattern for living. But Paul said Christians must not let others show them how to live. They do not live by their pattern. Christians must let the Holy Spirit change them. They must let him help them be all they should be, which is good, acceptable and complete in God's plan.

The first step in Christian stewardship is giving our lives and bodies to God. Without that, no other gift will have any meaning. This step is necessary if we are to be good stewards of all God's mysteries, especially the mystery of salvation. How can others be drawn to him if we do not honor him in our bodies?

The Christian's Duty to Himself: Read Romans 12:3-5.

Paul reminded every Christian to have a proper view of himself. He must remember that all he has is a gift from God. He must accept God's gifts and use

them for his glory. This means two things. First, a Christian must not be proud. All he has comes from God. The Christian should not praise himself for what God has done for him. All the praise goes to God. Secondly, the Christian should recognize the value of what God has given to him. He must realize that he is very important to God.

Paul compares the Church to the body. Our bodies have many parts. Some are large, some are small. All are important. All work together so our bodies can do what God wants them to. If one part fails, the whole body suffers. It is the same in the Church. Every believer has been given a gift, and God has given us the gifts we need to work well together. But each one must do his part. Each one must work for the good of the whole body. Only when we are doing what God created us to do can we be truly happy. The Christian steward works for his own happiness when he obeys God.

The Christian's Duty to the Church: Read Romans 12:6-8.

God gave each of us gifts when we accepted Jesus into our lives. Some received the gift of prophecy. We call this the gift of preaching today. They should preach what the Spirit tells them to preach. Some received the gift of serving or helping others, some the gift of teaching. Others were given the gift of encouragement. Each should do his work with his best effort. God has given some the gift of giving. They should give liberally. Those given the gift of leadership should work with great enthusiasm. These called upon to show mercy should do it happily.

The Christian's duty to the church is to do what God has gifted him to do. The church should be able to count on preachers to preach and teachers to teach. They should know that the helpers will be ready to help and the encouragers to encourage. If each Christian uses the gifts God has given him, the Church will do the work God plans for it to do on earth. The needs of the members of the body will be met. No one will be over-worked. Each will do his part to be the kind of steward God wants him to be.

The Gift of Giving: Read 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Paul told the Romans that some were given the gift of giving. Does that mean that unless we have that gift, we have no obligation to give? It does not mean this if we want to be good stewards of all God has given us. Each one should return to God 10% of all God has given him. Some people are not happy unless they can give more than this. These have the gift of giving. Giving makes them happy. Should the rest of us give only because we have to? No. Let us look at our Memory Verse. God loves cheerful givers! When we consider all God has given to us, we should be happy to give part of that back to him. This is one way we can work with God. This is one way we can be good stewards of God's wealth.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Read James 2:14-17. Then ask: "Do you agree with these verses? How would others be able to see your faith?"

Say: "There is a saying, 'You spend the most money on what is most important to you.' Do you think that is true? What do you spend the most on?" Say: "Today we are going to look at Christian stewardship. I think you will be surprised to see what God has to say about our job as stewards."

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. Discuss the meaning of the word, steward. Ask: "In what should we be found faithful? Does this mean money? Time? Work? Let us look at Romans 12 to find the answer."

Let a student read verses 1-2 aloud. Tell the other students to listen for the first way we should be good stewards. (our bodies) Discuss how our minds and souls cannot be God's without our bodies being his. Ask: "Why should we present our bodies to God?" (as an act of worship, to prove his will) "How should we present them?" (as a sacrifice) "What does this mean?" (that we are ready and willing to do whatever he wants us to do)

Have a student read verses 3-5. Tell the others to listen for two warnings Paul gives in these verses. (Do not think too highly of yourself. Think as highly as God does; do not think too little of yourself.) Talk about the Church as the Body of Christ. Discuss the importance of each part. Ask: "What would happen if the hand thought it was the best part of the body and would not let any other part do anything?" Let students discuss this. "Would it be good for the hand to say, 'I am not worth much, so I will not do anything?'" Let students discuss this. Say: "It is not good for us to think too highly of ourselves. But it is just as bad to think too little of ourselves. In either cases we are not doing what God wants us to do. We are not being the part of the body that he wants us to be."

Let a student read verses 6-8. Tell the others to listen for the gifts which God gives to believers. As the students list these, write them on the board. (prophecy, serving, teaching, exhorting or encouraging, giving, giving aid or leadership, mercy) Ask: "How should these gifts be used?" (in proportion to our faith, with liberality, with zeal, with cheerfulness)

#### Conclusion

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 again. Ask again: "In what should we be found faithful?" Let students discuss this. They should see that we should be faithful with whatever God has given us: time, money, gifts, blessings.

Read the Memory Verse together. Read the section from your background material, "The Gift of Giving." Discuss ideas with your students.

Read the story at the beginning of the students' book. Then read this story. "A young couple decided to begin tithing their income although it was small. They did not tell anyone about it in case they had to stop. But after three months, they told their pastor because they had received such a blessing from it. They no longer felt guilty for withholding from God what was his. They could pray more freely. They rejoiced in his promises because they saw his truth in their lives. They grew as they obeyed God." Ask: "Which couple do you think was happier with the money they had to spend after giving part to the Lord, this couple or the one in the first part of the lesson in your books?" Let students agree. Ask: "What will you do to be a better steward of what God has given you?" Close with a time of silent prayer. Then lead in closing prayer.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-13. Answer the questions which follow.

1. What does "sowing" mean in verse 6? giving

2. If we give freely, how will we receive? freely
3. How should we not give? (verse 7) reluctantly or under compulsion
4. What can God do for us? (verse 8) give us grace so we will always have what we need
5. What will we receive for our generosity? (verses 10-12) We will be enriched in every way, we will overflow with thanksgiving to God.
6. Does this "enrichment" necessarily mean material things and money? Our needs will be met, we will have all we need, we will be blessed but not necessarily in material things alone. Verse 10 says our harvest will be in righteousness.
7. Is giving required by God? (verse 13) Yes, it is a test of our obedience, in response to the sacrifice which Jesus made for us, but it should be done cheerfully and freely, as shown in verse 7.

God asks us to give back to him part of what he has given us. If we obey him, we are blessed. That is his promise. Will you test him today? I know you will find that he is true. He will bless you as he promised.

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Proverbs 2:1-15

Monday: Proverbs 24:3-7

Tuesday: Mark 1:16-22

Wednesday: Mark 6:7-13

Thursday: Mark 6:30-34

Friday: Ephesians 4:11-16

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON EIGHT

### TRAINING FOR SERVICE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Proverbs 2:1-15; Mark 1:16-22; 6:7-13, 30-34; Ephesians 4:11-16

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: Mark 1:16-20; Ephesians 4:11-16

MEMORY VERSE: "And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men'" (Mark 1:17).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christians are called to service and must be trained for it.

TEACHING AIM: To help members respond to God's call to service and to be willing to be trained for his service.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Paper and pencil, chalk board and chalk

### PREPARING TO TEACH

As Christians grow in their faith, they are anxious to serve God. Often they serve him by using the gifts he has given them. But many Christians never know the joy of serving God. They come to church each week, study, worship and go home again. They do not serve God through his church. They do not serve God in their community. Perhaps one reason they do not serve him is that they do not know how. Today, we will see God's plan for our learning what we need to know in order to serve him.

The Call to Service: Read Mark 1:16-17, 19.

Peter and Andrew were busy fishermen. When Jesus called them, they used their days by throwing their nets into the water. Jesus called them to use their fishing skills in a new way. He would help them become fishers of men.

James and John were mending nets when Jesus called. He does not call idle people to do his work. He uses our activity for his purposes.

John the Baptist introduced Andrew to Jesus. Andrew brought Peter to meet him. Since James and John were in business with Peter, they too had spent some time with him. But now Jesus called them to come with him. His words, "Follow me," were used by rabbis when they called their disciples. These men knew what Jesus meant. They knew that deciding to follow him would mean leaving their former life. They knew it would mean a time of training for their new work. But they had the promise of Jesus' help. He would help them become what he wanted them to be.

The Cost of Service: Read Mark 1:18 and 20.

The men responded immediately. Peter and Andrew dropped their nets and followed him. They stopped in the middle of their task to take on a greater task. James and John got out of their father's boat and left their wealth behind. They did not look back but followed Jesus. Did they know what lay ahead? No. They obeyed because Jesus invited them to obey. They chose to do something great with their lives. They became his disciples and did what he asked them to do.

These simple fishermen became fishers of men. They became leaders of the new faith. They became great men who helped many people come to Christ. But the cost was great. They were willing to obey Christ, no matter what. Some died for him. Others were imprisoned. But all gained an eternal reward for their service to the eternal God.

Jesus still uses simple people who come to him. He can use anyone who will follow him and obey him. He can help us do work which is eternal. He can make us "fishers of men." But we must be willing to pay the price. We must give up ourselves to serve God.

Training for Service: Read Ephesians 4:11-12.

God has a plan for our training as his disciples. He has given some the ability to be prophets, apostles, evangelists, preachers and teachers to help us. Their job is to build up the Body of Christ so it can minister to the world. They can understand and teach God's Word. They can help us understand what God is saying to us. They are not greater than we are. They are not our rulers. They are God's workers, whom he has gifted for our benefit. They are led by his Holy Spirit to equip believers for ministry.

When we become Christians we should join a church. There we have opportunities to hear preaching and teaching. We should take advantage of these opportunities. We should learn all we can about God's Word and will. We should listen to mature Christians and learn from them. This is God's plan for our training. The Mature Church: Read Ephesians 4:13-16.

The goal of training is maturity. The Christian Church as a whole should grow to completeness in Christ. Then it will be secure in faith. Members will not be drawn away from God by false teaching. They will be united as brothers and sisters. Each will be able to do his part of the ministry of the Church.

Maturity is a process which takes time. But it is God's plan for the church, so we do not work at it alone. His Holy Spirit is at work among us and with us. He brings us to full maturity as individuals and as the Body of Christ. We support and love one another as we minister to a lost world. This draws men to Christ. God's purpose for the church is fulfilled. We are working as Christ's Body on earth.

The Master Trainer: Read the Memory Verse.

God uses many people to bring us to maturity. Pastors and teachers have a part in our training for service. But the greatest teacher of all is Jesus himself. He said to his disciples, "I will make you become fishers of men." He prepared them. He taught them all they needed to know. He does the same today. He will help us grow. He will equip us for ministry as we study his Word and pray. He will speak. He will guide.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Tell this story to your students. "Salome used to be faithful in coming to church, but she never comes anymore. Soon after becoming a Christian and joining the church, she was asked to teach the Sunday School class for youth. She agreed because she thought she should serve God in some way. She wanted to do a good job, but she did not know how. She did not yet know the Bible. She did not know how to use the teacher's book. She was embarrassed by these

things, so she just stopped going to church. That way she did not have to try to do something she did not know how to do."

Ask: "Have you ever known anyone like Salome?" Let members respond briefly.

Say: "Jesus never asked his disciples to do something they were not trained to do. But he calls us all to work for him. Today we will look at his plan for training those who follow him."

Let a student read Mark 1:16-17. Discuss these verses using your background material and these questions: Did Simon and Andrew know Jesus before this? What did his call to them mean? If they followed him, how would their lives be different?

Read Mark 1:19. Point out that the same call was given to these men. Read Mark 1:18 and 20 to see their responses. Ask: "How long did it take for them to make up their minds?" (They decided immediately.) What did they leave in order to follow Jesus? (nets and boat and family) Did they understand this before they followed Jesus?" Let students discuss this. Ask: "What have you given up to be a follower of Jesus?" Encourage students to think about this and answer if they want to. Ask: "Do you think these men regretted their decision?" Let students discuss. Then read to your students John 6:66-69. Remind them of the disciples reaction at the time of his crucifixion. Say: "These men gave up their lives to follow Jesus. Although at times they failed him, they were faithful to him in the end. They did not count the cost. They gave all they had to follow Jesus."

Ask: "How would they learn to be `fishers of men?'" (Jesus said, "...I will make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). He would teach them.) "How do we learn today?"

Turn to Ephesians 4:11-12. Tell a student to read these verses. Read "Training for Service" from your background materials. Ask: "What opportunities does our church offer you to help you grow?" Let students discuss. "What other kinds of teaching and training would be helpful to you?" Let students discuss. Write down their suggestions. Tell them you will share their ideas with your pastor and church council later.

Read Ephesians 4:13-16. Ask: "What is the goal of the Church?" Discuss the ideas in these verses: to attain unity and knowledge, to grow to maturity, (verse 13) to be secure in our faith (verse 14) and to have each part of the Body doing its part. (verse 16) Write these on the board. Ask: "Are these possible without teaching and training?" (Possible, but it would be very difficult. This is why God planned to train us using pastors, teachers, apostles, etc.)

## Conclusion

Read the conversation between Hannah and her mother at the beginning of the students' lesson. Say: "Training for our jobs is expected. No one can expect to move ahead without training. The same is true in our Christian lives. We must learn to be followers of Jesus. It takes work and time."

Read the Memory Verse together. Say: "Jesus still teaches his followers today. He does it through his Word and as we pray." Read John 14:16-17 and 26 to your class. Say: "God works in us to teach us and help us understand his Word. He also gives us pastors, teachers and others to help us grow in him. We need to take advantage of every opportunity our church offers to help us grow. Only mature Christians can serve Christ. Only those willing to give of themselves

can be his disciples. Will you decide today to spend time in training for your work as a Christian?" Close in prayer.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

Christians need to train for the work they are given to do. Many times they can receive that training through their church. But at times, one must teach himself what he needs to know. Read these verses for help in this. John 14:26. Who is ready to help us? the Holy Spirit What will he do for us? teach us all things and remind us of what Jesus said.

1 John 2:27 How can we be sure we will be taught by him? He anointed us as his own. He lives in us. We need to live in him also.

John 15:5 How can we be sure to grow in Christ? We must remain in him. Read 2 Timothy 2:15. How should we prepare for service? by doing our best What is an important tool in our growth? the Bible correctly handled

To be the best we can be, we must work at it. Begin training to be the best today. Read your Bible, attend Bible study, pray for guidance. You will grow if you faithfully train for growth.

#### Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Matthew 6:25-34

Monday: Matthew 7:13-14

Tuesday: Matthew 5:10-11

Wednesday: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Thursday: Romans 5:1-5

Friday: Ephesians 6:10-18

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON NINE

### GROWING THROUGH STRUGGLE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:10-11; 6:25-34; 7:13-14;  
Ephesians 6:10-18

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: Matthew 5:10-11; 6:25, 31-34; Ephesians 6:10-18

MEMORY VERSE: "Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

CENTRAL TRUTH: We grow by overcoming each day's tests and temptations.

TEACHING AIM: To lead members to prepare themselves for their spiritual struggles by using God's strength and weapons.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Chalk board and chalk PREPARING TO TEACH:  
Jesus compared being a Christian to walking on a difficult, narrow road. (Matthew 7:13-14) It is not easy. There are trials, temptations and problems to meet. Jesus experienced all of these when he lived on earth. Anyone who seriously tries to follow Jesus will experience difficulties. But growth comes from struggle. As we overcome trials and temptations, our faith grows stronger. We are able to live our lives using God's strength.

Happy Through Persecution: Read Matthew 5:10-11.

Jesus told his disciples openly that if they followed him, they would be persecuted. Others would hate them because they would not want to hear what God required of them. Jesus said if we could be faithful through the persecution, we would be happy. We would gain the kingdom of heaven.

It is not easy to be faithful during persecution. It hurts us when we are rejected by family and friends. It is hard to be laughed at. But Jesus endured all of this for our sakes. We are called to the "narrow road," the "hard way." We are called to follow in Jesus' footsteps. If we are faithful, we will be rewarded. We will know joy and have eternal life.

Trusting Through Difficulties: Read Matthew 6:25, 31-34.

Since we are human beings, we must have food, clothing and shelter to survive. But Jesus reminded us that our lives are much more than these. Jesus warned against worrying about them because God knows our needs. We should trust him to provide them. He knew we can waste a lot of time and energy in worry. He recognized that worry does not change one thing. Only God can bring about change that lasts.

Jesus knew it was natural for us to think about our human needs. But he urged us to put God first before food, clothing or anything. If we are seeking to serve God, our needs will be met. This does not mean that we do not need to work. It does not mean we will never be sick. It does mean that God will give us all we need. He will take care of us. He will complete his plan for our lives. Protected Through Struggles: Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

Christians face many struggles, but they can remember three important facts in all of them: 1.) God is our powerful Lord. 2.) Satan is our enemy. 3.) God gives us weapons to defeat our enemy.

Christians are encouraged to "be strong in the Lord." Paul recognized that the Christian could not be strong enough by himself to resist the power of the devil. The devil is stronger than we are. But God is stronger than the devil, and he fights for us and with us! We can wear his armor and stand firm against him. When the battle is over, we will still be standing! (verse 13)

So the Christian is told to put on God's armor. What is this armor?

The belt of truth: The belt supported the soldier's back as he stood and gave him a place to put his weapon. As we stand for battle, we hold on to the truth of the gospel and our salvation. It supports us in problems.

The breastplate of righteousness: The breastplate protected the heart and other parts of the body from the swords of the enemy. Jesus cleanses us from sin and protects us from temptations. As we wear his righteousness, we can stand protected against the enemy's tricks.

Feet shod with the equipment of the gospel of peace: The soldier's shoes allowed him to move quickly and surely. As we take the gospel into the world, we should be prepared for anything. We should be dressed and ready to go, just as the soldier was.

The shield of faith: The long wooden shield protected the soldier from the fiery arrows of the enemy. During Satan's attack, our faith shields us. We know the victory is won. We can advance in faith.

The helmet of salvation: The soldier put on his helmet last. We put on our salvation first. It is our salvation which gives us all the other parts of the armor: truth, righteousness, preparation and faith. Our salvation gives us all these weapons to fight our enemy.

The Sword of the Spirit: After the soldier was dressed, he picked up his sword. We use the Word of God as our sword. According to Hebrews 4:12, we can use it to cut down the enemy. From it we get our orders from God, our commander. The Holy Spirit will help us use this weapon skillfully.

After we have received all our armor and weapons, we have a final tool: prayer. We put on and use our armor with prayer. We pray before and during each battle: "on all occasions." We pray with alertness and persistence. We pray for all the warriors, not just ourselves.

The Crown of Victory: Read the Memory Verse.

If we can stand the tests and trials, we will be happy. Our joy will be in knowing that we have been obedient. We have defeated the enemy with the Lord's help. We have overcome our problems and temptations. And with that victory comes reward. We receive the "crown of life" in return for our faithfulness. This is eternal life with God the Father. What a blessing!

TEACHING THE LESSON

Say: "Blessed (or happy) is the man who endures trial." Ask: "How can we be happy in trials?" After responses say: "This is the first half of our Memory Verse today. Now let us look at the rest of it." Read the whole verse together. Ask: "Do you agree with this? Are we always happy when we go through trials?" Wait for responses. "Do we grow through these experiences?" Let students respond.

Ask: "Have you known people who, when they became Christians, expected to have no more problems?" Let students respond. Ask: "Did Jesus promise this?" Read Matthew 7:13-14 in response. "Why is struggle good for us?" Let students respond. (Point out that struggle forces us to depend on God. It helps us grow in patience, love and courage.)

Ask students to name some of the problems which they face each day. List these on the board. Study Matthew 6:25, 31-34 and Matthew 5:10-11 using your background materials. Point out that Satan tries to get us in two ways: 1.) inwardly, by temptations and trials to our spirits, and 2.) by physical problems and persecution outwardly, to our bodies.

Ask students to turn to Ephesians 6:10-18. Say: "Paul described the Christian life as a battle. For that battle, we need equipment. Because Paul was in prison himself at the time he wrote this passage, he could look at the Roman soldier who guarded him. Perhaps this is why he used the example of the armor which the soldier wears to go into battle." Read verses 10-13. Ask students to describe the enemy. (tricky, spiritual host of wickedness, rulers of darkness) Describe the battle. (spiritual battle against Satan) Describe the one providing the armor. (God, strong, victorious)

Show the class the picture of the soldier and his armor. Read verses 14-17. List on the board each part of the armor. Use your background material to explain each one.

#### Conclusion

Say: "God gives us the armor we need to fight temptation and have victory in trials. These weapons can help us when we have problems and doubts. If we remember each piece of our armor, we can overcome our temptations and problems." Name the pieces again, looking at the picture.

Read verse 18. Say: "We should put on each piece of armor with prayer. We should use each piece with prayer. We should be alert and persistent in our praying. We should pray for others in the battle, not just ourselves. Remember that we are part of the same Body of Christ. If one falls, we all suffer."

Say: "When we meet temptation and overcome, we grow. We are just like the child in the story in your books." Let a student read this to the class. When he has finished, say: "One small victory leads to another. As we gain strength, we can fight the enemy better."

Read the Memory Verse together again. Remind students of the rewards of obedience. Close in prayer, asking God to help each person to remember to put on God's armor to fight the enemy. In this way, you will grow in the Lord.

#### TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

"Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right

hand" (Isaiah 41:10). This is a promise from God who is faithful. Read these verse to see how God has protected his children throughout history.

Exodus 14:13-14: What were the Israelites to do? fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord What would God do for them? fight for them

1 Samuel 17:45: What were David's weapons? he name of the Lord 2 Corinthians 6:4-10: What weapons did Paul use? purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, love, truthful speech, power of God

Where should these weapons be? in the right and left hands Hebrews 4:12: What has God given us as a weapon? he Word of God How is it described? Living and active, sharp, discerning

Isaiah 40:31: What will happen to us if we depend on the Lord? e will mount up like eagles, we shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint.

God is our shield and defender. Depend on him in times of struggle.

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Isaiah 1:16-17

Monday: Matthew 5:21-26

Tuesday: Matthew 5:27-30

Wednesday: Matthew 5:31-37

Thursday: Matthew 5:38-44

Friday: Romans 15:1-6

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

\*\*

Lesson 9-T-Picture of soldier and armor

The teacher's book needs a full-page picture of a Roman soldier to illustrate the armor of God. This picture was drawn by Joshua Giddens. If it is not suitable, then I suggest you seek a local artist to draw one for you.

\*\*

## LESSON TEN

### CONCERN FOR OTHERS

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 1:16-17; Matthew 5:21-44; 1 John 3:11-24

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: 1 John 3:11-18, 23-24

MEMORY VERSE: "...The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Our Christian faith is shown by our loving concern for others.

TEACHING AIM: To help members identify ways they can show love and concern for others.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Chalk and chalk board

### PREPARING TO TEACH

John was the disciple "whom Jesus loved." His Gospel tells of the love Jesus had for the world. His letters to the churches of the first century teach love. John believed that no one could be a follower of Jesus and not be filled with love. After all, he is love.

The Message: Read 1 John 3:11.

In verses 1-10, John wrote about the need for righteous living. He taught that if we are followers of Christ, our deeds should be like his. In verse 10 he made an important statement. He said it is easy to tell who belongs to God and who belongs to the devil. He who does not do what is right and he who does not love his brother is a child of the devil. There are two sure signs of who we follow. Do we live righteous lives? Do we love others? Then we are children of God. If not, we are followers of the devil.

In verse 11, John stated the basis of the Christian faith. "Love one another." This has been God's message and plan from the beginning. It still is. This statement began John's discussion of Christian love.

Hatred and love: Read 1 John 3:12-15.

John drew a clear picture of what hatred is. It is murder. He used Cain as an example. Cain killed Abel because he hated him. It is not usual to kill another out of a motive of love. Killing belongs with hatred. Hatred belongs with the devil. The devil brings death. So John linked these three words and ideas: murder, hatred, death. Murder comes from hatred. Hatred brings death, not only to the one hated but the one who hates! When we hate, we do not live full and happy lives. It is as if our souls are dead.

John inserted an interesting thought in verse 13. If we love as Jesus loved, the world will hate us. We will look at that idea more in the next lesson.

In verse 14, John clearly stated that we have life because we have love. We love God and others because God first loved us and gave his life for us. If we love, it means Jesus lives in us. It is not natural for man to show love to others. It is natural for him to seek only to please himself. So if we have

love, we have God. If we have God, we have life. Without love, we have neither God nor life.

Love and Sacrifice: Read 1 John 3:16-18.

Jesus showed his love to us by dying for us. John calls on us to do the same thing. Does he mean we should actually physically die for others? If that is what is needed, yes. But laying down our lives for others often means more than dying physically. It means making sacrifices for others, putting their needs before our own. We can all lay down our lives for others. We can all look for ways to help others by giving of ourselves.

In order to do that, we need to take our eyes off ourselves and "see" others. (verse 17) If we look about us, we will see many in need. We should seek ways to help others. We should love not only in word, but in deed. (verse 18)

The Marks of a Christian: Read 1 John 3:23-24.

In the Bible, faith and love cannot be separated. Christian faith will always express itself in love. When we believe in Jesus and accept him as our Saviour, he lives within us. If he lives within us we have his character. He is Love. He cannot, therefore, live in us without his love showing. We can know that our faith is real if we have love for others. Faith which shows love is the mark of a Christian. The Spirit's Fruit: Read the Memory Verse.

John said we would know he lives in us by the spirit which he gives to us. (verse 24) The Spirit is seen in our lives through the fruit which he gives us. These characteristics should be seen in our lives if we have Christ's Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. All of these should be present because the fruit is one. It is singular. The foundation of it all is love. God's Spirit makes it possible for this fruit to grow in our lives.

Teaching the Lesson

Say: "For the past 7 lessons, we have been looking at ways we can grow in our faith. Can you remember the 7 things we studied which will help us grow as Christians?" Let students respond. They can look in their students' books if they need to. List on the board the 7 helps: Bible study, prayer, right relationships with other Christians, worship, giving, training for service, growing through struggle.

Say: "Today we begin a new group of lessons on how to live out our faith responsibly. The first lesson deals with how we treat others."

Have a student read the introduction from the student's book. Say: "Loving God is the first commandment. Because he loves us, we can love ourselves. From this love, flows love for others. This is the second command. If we truly love God, we will love others, because God is Love."

Let a student read 1 John 3:11. Say: "How many times have you heard that Christians should 'love one another?' Do those words have any meaning for you or are they just words? Today we will see what John meant by these words. We will see how to give evidence of Jesus' love in our lives."

Divide your class into two groups. Be sure there is a reader in each group. Ask each group to read 1 John 3:12-16. Ask one to explain the relationship

between love and life. Ask the other to explain the relationship between hate and death. Ask them to tell who was given as an example of love or hate and why. Give them 5-10 minutes to do this study. Ask one from each group to report. Use your background material ("Hatred and Love") to explain anything they did not understand.

Read verse 14a aloud. Ask: "What is a sign of being alive in God?" (love) "Can we have love without God?" Let them discuss this. Say: "It is not usual to love others more than ourselves. Only God can help us do that."

Read verse 16 again. Ask: "Does laying down one's life always mean death? (See your background material.) "What are some ways we can lay down our lives for others without physically dying?" Let students discuss this. (Some examples are: sacrificing for others, putting their needs first, giving up time or money to help others, being willing to be embarrassed for the sake of the gospel, etc.)

Tell a student to read verses 17-18. Ask: "What should be evidence of our love?" (deeds of kindness and love) Ask: "What can we do here in our community to show love to those in need?" Let your class discuss this giving ideas which are particular to your area. List these on the board to use later.

Ask a student to read verse 23-24. Ask: "What are two signs that we are really Christians?" (faith and love) Ask: "Why must our faith be visible through our love?" Let students discuss. (God is Love. If he lives in us, we will show his characteristics.) If time allows, have two students read James 2:14-17 and Galatians 5:6.

#### Conclusion

Read verse 24 again. Read "The Spirit's Fruit" from your background material. Say the Memory Verse together. Say: "It is not easy to show love to others. Many times we are overcome by our own problems. But the Holy Spirit who lives in us will help us see the needs of others. He will increase his love in our hearts so we will want to show his love to those in need."

Look again at the list of things you could do to show love in your community. Discuss ways you can do something on the list, perhaps this week. This could be done by individuals or as a group. Urge students to do something to show Jesus' love to others this week. Close in prayer.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Jesus commanded us to do good works. He gave us his example. We should lay down our lives in service to others. But does that mean we always give everyone what they want?

What would you do if a man came to your door, dirty and dressed poorly? He asked for some money to feed his family. As you came near to him, you smelled beer on his breath. What would you do?

What would you do if a child at church asked you for money for school fees? His father did not have a job. He was a good farmer, but had lost his farm. You have a plot of ground, but no time to cultivate it. What would you do?

What would you do if a young boy you knew came running into your house frightened and upset. He was running away from the police who suspected him of stealing. He asked you to hide him. What would you do?

Sometimes the best way to help a person is to help them help themselves. We should always be ready to give aid to someone in need, but we need to look to the future. Is it better to give a drunkard money or food? Better to pay school fees, or help the father find work so he can pay them? Better to help a boy face his problem or let him hide from it? The Holy Spirit will help us know to react to problems if we let him lead us. He will help us know how best to show Jesus' love.

#### Scriptures To Read This Week

Sunday: Matthew 19:16-22

Monday: Luke 9:57-62

Tuesday: Romans 8:31-39

Wednesday: Hebrews 12:1-6

Thursday: John 15:12-20

Friday: 1 Peter 3:13-17

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON ELEVEN

### THE COST OF COMMITMENT

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 9:57-62; John 15:12-20; 1 Peter 3:13-17

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: John 15:18-20; 1 Peter 3:13-17

MEMORY VERSE: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christians may suffer because of their commitment to Jesus.

TEACHING AIM: To help students realize that being a Christian demands commitment of their whole lives.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: None

### PREPARING TO TEACH

Being a follower of Christ means putting him first in our lives. We cannot love anything or anyone more than we love God. This is a big demand, but if we want to follow Jesus, we must do it as he asks.

Often, when we are faithful to the Lord and his commands others hate us. We are persecuted for our faith. Jesus knew it would be this way and offered his followers guidance.

Called Out of the World: Read John 15:18-20.

Jesus called his disciples "out of the world." This means he expected them to be different from the usual. Because they were different, others in the world hated them. Jesus knew it would be so. This was how the world treated him.

Why was this so? Jesus did not do what others expected or wanted. He showed them God's love in a way that was not acceptable to them. This made them angry. They hated Jesus for who he was. They hated him because he did not agree with the way they lived. They hated him because he was good and they were evil. Jesus reminded his disciples that if they really followed him and were like him, the world would hate them, too. The servant is not greater than his Lord. (verse 20) What does this mean to us today? Christians are still called to live differently from the rest of the world. This often angers those around us. If we do not join in their sinful activities, they mock us. Why? Because we have shown them that man does not have to be evil. God can help him be good. This makes them angry. It makes them hate us, so they persecute us because of their own guilt. Jesus said this would be our usual treatment.

What if we are not persecuted? What if no one ever notices that we are different from others? Does this mean we are not Christians? We need to think about those questions. Jesus said we would be persecuted if we were his followers.

Suffering for Righteousness Sake: Read 1 Peter 3: 13-17.

Peter claimed that even if we are persecuted for the sake of the gospel, we will not be "hurt." No one can harm our spirit because it is eternal. Christians know that only the eternal is important and real. Since no one can hurt the eternal part of us, no one can really hurt us.

Peter told the people what Jesus had taught him: If you suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed. Peter had seen the truth of this in Jesus' life and in his own life. He urged them to trust Jesus and cling to him in times of persecution. They did not need to be afraid for no one could really hurt them. They belonged to Jesus for eternity.

Often during persecution, we are tempted to be quiet and not say what we think. Peter suggested that we be ready to tell people about our faith and hope in Jesus. We should be ready to give a witness without fear. But Peter warned us to witness with gentleness. We should not be proud or rude when we witness. Our words should draw men to Jesus, not frighten them away. We should give our witness with kindness and love.

He reminded the Christians to live pure lives so no one would have a reason to criticize them. People of the world watch Christians. Perhaps they hope to find them doing something wrong. Then they can say, "I knew he was a fake. I knew he would fall." Then the name "Christian" is shamed. People think Jesus has no power. We must be true to him. We must be careful to live as he told us to. That way, people will see that he spoke the truth. He has the power to change people.

God does not want anyone to suffer, but Peter knew that sometimes people suffer from doing what is right. Jesus certainly did. If we can remain faithful to God through persecution, we will grow. Faithfulness is a sign that our faith is real. It shows the kind of commitment we should have. Christians must be willing to give up everything for the sake of the gospel.

Following the Steps of Jesus. Read the Memory Verse.

Christians must be willing to suffer for their faith. Does this surprise you? Did you think the Christians life was a life of ease? Look at Jesus. Was his life easy? If we are Christians, we are called to be "like Christ." This is what the name means. If we are like him, then we must be willing to be like him in his suffering as well as his victory.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Read the Memory Verse with your students. Say: "Our lesson number nine taught us that we can grow through trials and temptations. We learned that we can be happy when we are tested because, if we are faithful, we will be blessed. We learned that God protects and helps us through these times. Not only is the Christian called upon to be faithful in times of trial, but also during suffering. Jesus taught his disciples that they would be persecuted for their faith. What is persecution?" Let your students discuss. (It is being hated, hurt, mocked or even killed for the sake of your faith and the way you live.) Ask your students to give some examples of people who have been persecuted for their faith. (If they cannot think of any from their lives, you may mention Jesus, Peter, Paul, John, James and other Bible characters.)

Ask: "Do you think persecution is a natural part of the Christian life?" Tell students to turn to John 15:18-20 to see what Jesus said about this. Ask: "How

did the world treat Jesus?" Let students discuss. Ask: "How should Jesus' followers react to the world?" (They should reject its evil and sin. They should be different and separate.) Ask: "How do you think the world will like a person who really acts like Jesus did?" Let students discuss. Remind students that the world hated Jesus and killed him because of his goodness. Say: "Anyone who really seeks to live a committed Christian life can expect to be persecuted by those around him. How should the Christian react to persecution?" (as Jesus did, by showing love)

Say: "Peter wrote to Christians at a time when they were being persecuted for their faith. Peter himself would go through great persecution and even be killed for the cause of the gospel." Ask students to turn to 1 Peter 3:13-17.

Using your background material, discuss these verses. Be sure to emphasize: (verse 13) No real harm can come to the Christian because his soul cannot be hurt. (verse 14) We have no reason to fear because we are not alone in our problems. Jesus is with us and went through the same thing. (verse 15) Be ready to explain your faith to anyone who asks about it. Be gentle, loving and humble as you explain it. (verse 16) Be sure that your behavior is good. Then no one can say that your faith is not real or that Jesus has no power to help people. (verse 17) Suffering for Christ is worth the cost. The reward is eternal life.

#### Conclusion

Say the Memory Verse together. Read the section "Following the Steps of Jesus" from your background material. Ask the questions from the paragraph allowing your students to respond to each one. Ask: "Must we be like him in his suffering to be saved?" (No. Not all will suffer, but we must be willing to suffer.) Ask: "How might we suffer for Jesus?" Let students discuss this. Some suggestions might be: 1.) To lose some respect in our tribe because we cannot, as Christians, do some of the things which are common to our tribe. 2.) To lose face in our village because we do not serve beer at the weddings of our children. 3.) To be laughed at for refusing to take part in an activity which does not glorify Christ. 4.) To have our spouse angry at us for our faithfulness at church.) 5. To miss out on something because we refuse to deal on the black market or pay a bribe. Let your students mention any others which they may know of, but do not let this become a time of gossip or self-praise. Say: "When we become Christians, we must count the cost. It is not an easy life. We may suffer for our faith. We may even die for it, as Peter did. But although Jesus told us to count the cost, he assured us that it was worth the cost. If we are faithful, we will be blessed beyond our ability to imagine. Eternal life and blessing will be our reward. Let us determine today to be faithful to God under all situations." Say the Memory Verse together again. Close in prayer.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

We have looked at the cost of being a Christian. We know we have to give up our lives to be disciples of Jesus. Giving up our lives does not always mean dying. We may be asked to give up something other than our physical bodies which is very important to us. Several who thought they wanted to follow Jesus found that the cost was too great.

Read Matthew 19:16-22. Did this young man love God? Yes, he had obeyed all his laws. What did he love more than God? his wealth. Read Luke 9:57-58. What did this man fail to realize? That following Jesus might mean poverty. Read verses 59-60. What did Jesus want this man to be willing to give up for him? his

tribal customs and perhaps his inheritance Read verses 61-62. What did this man need to give up? is family and home.

Being a disciple costs everything we have. We must be willing to die to our desires and put God first. Are you willing to pay the price of discipleship? Read Philippians 2:12-13 to see who will help you.

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Matthew 1:18-25

Monday: Matthew 2:1-12

Tuesday: Luke 2:1-7

Wednesday: Luke 2:8-14

Thursday: Luke 2:15-20

Friday: John 1:1-18

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON TWELVE

### CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS AS CHRISTMAS

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: John 1:1-18

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: John 1:1-5, 9-18

MEMORY VERSE: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth..." (John 1:14a).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus' birth meant that God became flesh and lived among men.

TEACHING AIM: To lead students to decide to celebrate Christmas in a way that will help their spiritual development, their family and their church.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: Picture of the nativity, lists of questions for group work, 2 pencils

### PREPARING TO TEACH

Matthew and Luke give us most of the details about Jesus' birth. They begin with the announcement of the angel to Mary and end with the coming of the wise men and the flight into Egypt. John begins much earlier than that. It is through this Gospel that we understand just who Jesus was.

The Word Made Flesh: Read John 1:1-5.

Genesis begins with the words, "In the beginning...." The Gospel of John begins in the same way. He called Jesus "the Word." In Greek philosophy, this term meant "divine in every way." John pointed out that in the beginning, Jesus, the Word, was present. He is eternal, like God. Although his earthly life began at Bethlehem, he had always existed. He went on to say that not only was Jesus with God, but he was God. John clearly shows us that Jesus was Immanuel, "God with us."

Verses 2-3 point to him as Creator. Nothing was made without his creative power working in it.

Verses 4-5 show that Jesus is and always has been the giver of light and life. He was always the Saviour, even though he had not yet appeared to man. His light and truth are so powerful that the darkness of evil has never overcome it. Jesus is the conqueror of sin and death. The Word in the World: Read John 1:9-13.

Jesus brought light into a dark world. With his birth came the full revelation of God's plan for man's salvation. Man had a choice of entering into his light or remaining in the darkness of sin.

When Jesus came into the world he had created, they did not recognize him. They did not accept that he was God. They rejected his salvation. (verse 10) He was born into a Jewish family who lived in a village in Israel. The Jews were God's chosen people, his "royal priesthood." It was through them that he would reveal his salvation to the world. All of their history led to his birth. Would you not think they would recognize their Messiah? They did not. (verse 11) Some refused him because they did not understand him. Others did not like his message. Others loved the

darkness of their sin. Whatever the reason, most of the Jews rejected Jesus' light and salvation.

But all who did receive him became sons of God. (verse 12) It no longer mattered if they were descendants of Abraham ("of blood"). It did not matter into what family they were born or what their parents believed ("of the will of the flesh"). Their own efforts were not enough ("of the will of man"). Only God save them through Christ. (verse 13)

Glory, Grace and Truth: Read John 1:14-18.

John had seen Jesus. He experienced his power and saving grace. Verse 14 is a confession of John's faith. Jesus was God, and he lived among us for a while. God's glory "dwelt among us." There is a reference to the time when the Jews built a tabernacle to signify the presence of God. (See Exodus 25:8-9.) In Jesus, God resided on earth. For John, this was evident. One so glorious as Jesus could only be the unique Son of God.

John the Baptist agreed with the apostle John. He recognized Jesus and pointed all men to him as the Messiah. (verse 15)

From Jesus we receive God's final offer of grace. The law, given through Moses, was loved by the Jews. But it brought judgement, not grace. Through Jesus, we are free from the condemnation of the law. We become beloved sons, forgiven and free.

Although no man has seen God, Jesus made him visible to us. And through Jesus we see that he is loving and forgiving. He died so man might have life. He brought light and truth into a dark world. This is the meaning of Christmas. It is more than a sweet baby in a manger. It is a Saviour who showed us the glory, grace and truth of God.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Show your class the picture of the nativity which is in the student's book or use one which you have. Ask: "What do you like most about celebrating Christmas?" Let students share how they celebrate Christmas in their home. Question them about why they celebrate as they do. Help them separate the Christian aspects of their celebration from the parts that are not Christian.

Say: "Today we want to look at the meaning of Christmas for the Christian. We will look at some ways Christians can celebrate Christmas which show the world that they are Christian."

Have students turn to John 1:1-18. Say: "The details of Jesus' birth are given in Matthew and Luke. They begin with the angel telling Mary that she will have a Son and end with the flight into Egypt. John begins much earlier than that." Let a student read verses 1-5. Discuss these verses using these questions: "What word is used to describe Jesus in verse 1? What three truths about Jesus are revealed in verse 1? What did Jesus do with God? How is Jesus described in verse 4? How powerful is the light?" Use your background material to guide the students in this study. Be sure to emphasize that "the Word was God."

Divide your class into two groups. Be sure each group has a reader. Assign one group verses 9-13 with these questions: Who was the true light? Who rejected Jesus? What did those who believe him receive? How were these not born? How were they born? Assign the second group verses 14-18 with these questions:

What did the Word do? Who is the Word? Who bore witness to Jesus? What have we received from the Word? How was what Moses gave different than what Jesus gave? Who did Jesus reveal to us? Give these groups 10 minutes to read and write their answers. Then invite them to share their answers. Use your background material to help them answer questions which are difficult for them.

Summarize by saying: "Jesus came to earth as a baby. Verse 1 tells us clearly that Jesus is God, so this means that when "...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,..." (verse 14), God became flesh and dwelt among us. He brought life, light, grace and truth to man. He gave man the right to become his children. He fulfilled Moses' law by offering a substitute. He offered grace. Grace is "undeserved favor." This means that although we did nothing to deserve his favor, he gave it anyway. We are saved, although we have not kept the law. Jesus became the substitute for the law. If we accept him, we have eternal life."

Ask two students to read verses 9-18 responsively to the class as they think about the truth of them. (One should read the odd numbered verses and one should read the even numbered verses.)

### Conclusion

Say: "When we realize all that Christmas means, we are forced to look at the way we celebrate it. Do we celebrate it in a way that gives sufficient honor to God? Do we spend time in worship and prayer? Do we prepare our hearts for his coming? Christmas is a wonderful time for us to think about what we give to Jesus all year long. Do we give him our lives? Do we give him our offerings? Do we give him our time?"

"Christmas is a good time to realize again that God left heaven for our sakes. He came to earth and lived as a man. He died the terrible death of the cross in order to save us. He gave everything he had to give us life. What do we give to him?"

"Let us spend a few minutes, again, thinking about how we celebrate Christmas. How might we change our practices to make Christmas more meaningful for us and our families?" Discuss with your students their family's celebration of Christmas. Help them identify any elements of it which might be considered unchristian. Discuss how they might change these. Emphasize that the way they celebrate is a witness, good or bad, to others. Help students see the importance of family worship at this time of the year. Help them to see how they can teach their children the true meaning of Christmas by reading parts of the Christmas story and singing Christian songs each day. Identify how your church celebrates Christmas. Help the students offer suggestions of other ways your church could minister at Christmas. This should include helping the poor and hungry, giving offerings for God's work, having special services which would attract non-Christians.

Say: "Christmas is such a special time of the year. Christians have a unique opportunity to share the gospel with the lost as they explain the real meaning of Jesus' birth to those around them. Let us pray that God will use each of us this Christmas to tell another of his wonderful birth. Let us be sure to share with our children the joy of his coming. Let us examine our hearts and offer Jesus ourselves in service to him. Let us make our celebration of Christmas worthy of the sacrifice God made for our salvation." Close in prayer.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

How might you help your children understand the wonder of the Christmas story? Plan to share a special time with them each day before Christmas. Plan special family worship times. Read the Christmas story from Matthew 1:18-2:23 and Luke 1:26-56 and 2: 1-40. Also read the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7 and Micah 5:2. Sing special Christmas songs with them. Let your children act out parts of the story so it becomes real to them. Let them make clay figures of the nativity. Help them pray, thanking God for each part of his plan to bring Jesus to earth.

Make this a special time for your family. Show love and do kind deeds for one another. Love and kindness are the greatest gifts you can give to each other. They are the gifts God gave to us at Christmas time.

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Ephesians 4:1-7

Monday: Philippians 2: 1-11

Tuesday: Philippians 2:12-18

Wednesday: Philippians 3:1-11

Thursday: Philippians 3:12-16

Friday: Philippians 3:17-21

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

## LESSON THIRTEEN

### ALL OUR LIFE FOR CHRIST

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:1-21

VERSES USED IN TODAY'S LESSON: Philippians 3:4-16

MEMORY VERSE: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7).

CENTRAL TRUTH: The Christian should live as Christ lived. This is possible only if Jesus lives in him.

TEACHING AIM: To help each student understand how every part of his life should show that Jesus lives in him and is leading him.

HELPS FOR THE TEACHER: None

### PREPARING TO TEACH

We began this unit of lessons by looking at the Christian faith. We saw how it is different from other religions. Then we used several lessons studying ways we can grow as Christians. For the past few lessons, we have considered how we can live out our faith in all our relationships. Today's lesson is a summary of all we have learned. This study seeks to show every believer how to go on living his faith in a way that will please God. It will show us how Jesus should control us everyday in every way.

The Pearl of Great Price: Read Philippians 3:4-9.

Before Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he thought he was a very righteous man. He was a Jew of David's tribe. He spoke Hebrew and had followed all the religious ceremonies required. Being a Pharisee, he knew and kept the law. He had zealously tried to protect Judaism from false teachings. He persecuted the Christians because he thought they were false. If a man could win salvation by ancestry, effort and goodness, then Paul would have been first among those saved.

When Paul met Jesus, his whole outlook changed. He realized how worthless these things were. He saw how they led him to be conceited and self-righteous. He counted them all as nothing when he realized the value of Christ. Paul put his past "goodness" behind him. He realized that he could not be righteous through the law and his own efforts. Only Jesus could bring righteousness which was acceptable to God.

Paul had found the "pearl of great price" Jesus spoke of in Matthew 13:45-46. He gave up all he valued to have the "pearl" of salvation in Jesus. He did not regret this. Having Christ was worth more than anything else.

Knowing Christ: Read Philippians 3:10-11.

More than anything else, Paul wanted to "know" Christ. Knowing Christ does not happen quickly. It takes great effort. Paul knew this and still wanted this above all else. He wanted to know the "Power of his resurrection." Paul wanted the power of God in his life to make him new. God would give him power to live righteously.

Paul wanted to know Jesus so well that he even wanted a share of his suffering. Paul knew from experience that total commitment to God meant suffering. He was willing to suffer for his faith. Jesus helped and comforted him in his suffering. He rejoiced in it because it brought him closer to Jesus.

Paul was willing to die physically for Jesus' sake. But in verse 10, he referred to death to self and sin. If he died to self, then God could resurrect him. He would give him new life and power for living the Christian life. Without doubt, Paul also looked forward to his bodily resurrection when he would be made perfect, like Christ. Pressing On: Read Philippians 3:12-16.

Paul realized that perfection was not possible in life. But this did not discourage him. He pressed on toward the goal which he had set for himself. While moving forward, one cannot afford to look back, with regret or with pride. Paul realized that his effort could not be half-hearted. He had to give all of his life to God. Everyday had to be centered in Jesus. Although he could never be perfect as Christ was, he never stopped trying to be. This is Christian maturity. We strive with Christ to be all we can be, for his sake. We are faithful to him. We hold on to our progress in him.

Power, Love and Self-Control: Read the Memory Verse.

Paul knew he was not alone in his effort to know and be like Jesus. God was with him giving him power to overcome sin and trials. Love became a central characteristic of Paul, because he tried to be like Jesus. Self-control ruled his life and actions. Although he had freedom in Christ, he lived responsibly under the control of God. He developed the "mind of Christ" as he sought to know him. He lived boldly as he lived out his faith in a world which needed the goodness and love of Jesus.

#### TEACHING THE LESSON

Invite students to look back to the first lesson of this unit. Remind students that we began this unit with two lessons which helped us see Christianity as a unique faith. Go through the book, reviewing the 7 ways we can grow as Christians. Review the last three lessons which dealt with living our faith each day: Then say: "All we have studied this quarter can be accomplished if we give our lives completely to Christ. Today we will see how important that is."

Say: "As we look at Philippians 3:4-16 together, I will read a statement. You tell me if you think the statement is true or false. Then we will find the answer in the verse we read."

Read this statement. "1. Before Jesus came into Paul's life, he had many reasons for being proud." Let your students tell you if they think this is true or false. After they have responded, read verses 4-6. (The statement is true.) Say: "According to Jewish standards, Paul was very righteous."

Read the second statement to your students, and let them say true or false. "2. When Paul became a Christian, he realized that much of his former life actually kept him from a right relationship with God." Read verses 7-8. (The second statement is true.) Ask: "What are some of the things which can keep us from God today? What might we be proud about without reason?" (tribe, sex, education, etc.) Let students respond.

Read statements 3-7 and let your students respond true or false.

"3. When Paul said he wanted to "know Christ" he meant to know about his birth, life, and death." Read verse 8 again together with 10. (This statement is false.) Say: "To know Christ means to become intimate with him. It requires full commitment to him as Lord of our lives."

"4. Paul was bothered by all the things he had to give up to follow Christ." Ask students which verse answers this statement. Read verse 8 again. (This statement is false.)

"5. Before meeting Jesus, Paul had won his salvation through his obedience to the law of Moses." Read verse 9. Ask: "What two kinds of righteousness does Paul mention here?" (that which comes from law and that which comes from God through faith) Ask "Which did Paul depend on?" (that which comes from God through faith. The fifth statement is false.)

"6. Paul had made many mistakes in his life, but he did not waste time looking back." Read verses 12-14. (This statement is true.)

Tell this story to show how looking back is harmful. "Runners had gathered from all over the world to run the 1000 meter race at the Summer Olympics. One runner was favored to win. In fact, he began very well and ran ahead of the others for the entire race. As they headed for the finish line, the crowd cheered. He knew he was winning, but did not know how far ahead he was. He turned his head to look at his competition. As he did this, the man behind him lunged ahead and won the race. Looking back had cost the victory. Failure to keep his eye on the goal had allowed the competition to move ahead." Say: "Looking back at our past life or our terrible sins can cause us to take our eyes off Jesus. This can make us stumble and fall. The past is over and forgotten. We need to keep our eyes ahead on Jesus. He will help us overcome today. He is enough for every tomorrow."

Read the seventh statement and let your class respond true or false.

"7. All the Christians of Paul's time agreed with him about the need to serve Christ with our whole lives." Read verses 15-16. (The statement is false.) Say: "Not everyone agreed with Paul. Some thought once you were saved, it did not matter how you acted. Paul knew differently. He knew that if Jesus lived within, lives would be different. His pattern would be our pattern."

#### Conclusion

Read the Memory Verse together. Read the section from your background material, "Power, Love and Self-control." Tell your class to bow their heads in prayer. As their heads are bowed, say: "We need to ask ourselves, 'How has my life changed since I became a Christian? Do people around me know Christ comes first in my life? How do I need to change so Jesus is in control of my life?' As we think about these questions, we need to realize that God is ready and able to help us. He waits for us to ask for his help. He can change us and help us live as we want to live. How much do we want it? Do we want it enough to ask for it and then give ourselves to him to use as he wants to?" Give your class time to think about these things. Then close in prayer.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

Most Christians realize that the way to live the abundant life is to obey Christ. Often we become discouraged because we fail or because of other problems in our lives. Christ does not want us to become discouraged. He wants us to

live a full and obedient life. In order to do so, we need to give ourselves fully to him.

Read these questions. Think about them. Pray that God will help you do what you need to do in order to follow him more completely.

1. What should be most important to a growing Christian?
2. What would happen to our world and our nation if all Christians would give themselves totally to Jesus?
3. What would happen in my community and my church if Christians would do this?
4. What would happen in my home if we all did this?
5. What would happen in my life if I did this?

Read each of these verses. Ask God to help you apply their truth to your life.

1 Corinthians 9:24      Hebrews 12:1      2 Timothy 4:7-8

Scriptures To Read This Week:

Sunday: Hebrews 12:1-11

Monday: Isaiah 6:9-10

Tuesday: Matthew 13:1-9

Wednesday: Matthew 13:18-23

Thursday: Matthew 13:24-30

Friday: Matthew 13:36-43

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson.

To: The Local Editors and Printers of Adult Material

From: The Editor

Several years ago a new format was established for the adult curriculum materials. The changes were made based on suggestions brought to an international meeting. One decision made was to include an additional manuscript page of extra work to be done by the students. This suggestion came from educated adults who have very little material to use in their own private Bible study. This page was added to give able students the opportunity to stretch a bit and have an opportunity to learn more about some aspect of the lesson from the previous week. The "Scriptures to Read This Week" were also added for this reason, to give the students a plan for Bible study which would coincide with an on-going Bible study in which they were engaged. It has been very disappointing that neither of these features has ever been used by the printers of the material, especially when the request came from the people using the materials.

I know cost is a major factor in printing, but I must say, when I see the resource materials which we use in our writing and editing, curriculum material for the U.S., I am hit with the very great disparity which exists. The Americans have more material than they need, while we are so limited we can barely give our teachers and students what they need to get a coherent lesson! These Americans have access to unlimited other resources, but our people have only what comes out of the publications houses. Again, since we are so limited, can we not add this one page to give our people a bit more?

Economically, I thought of an advantage to including it in the student's book. The book will become consumable! The student will use it, necessitating re-ordering it when that quarter comes around again. We may actually see an increase in the number of books purchased.

I have taught from the manuscripts, and have used the "Things to Think About and Do" several times to give the students a bit more, if time allowed. They really enjoyed it. I even translated two of them and gave them out for the students to work on at home. They enjoyed that very much. I think many would use this page and certainly increasingly as the years go by and literacy rises. I think the two additional sections would help our people grow in the Lord as they learn to use their Bible independently at home.

I humbly implore you to at least try this page and see how it is received. Perhaps you could ask for comments on it to see how people like it.

Lesson '12 student' needs an illustration of the Nativity for use during the teaching session.