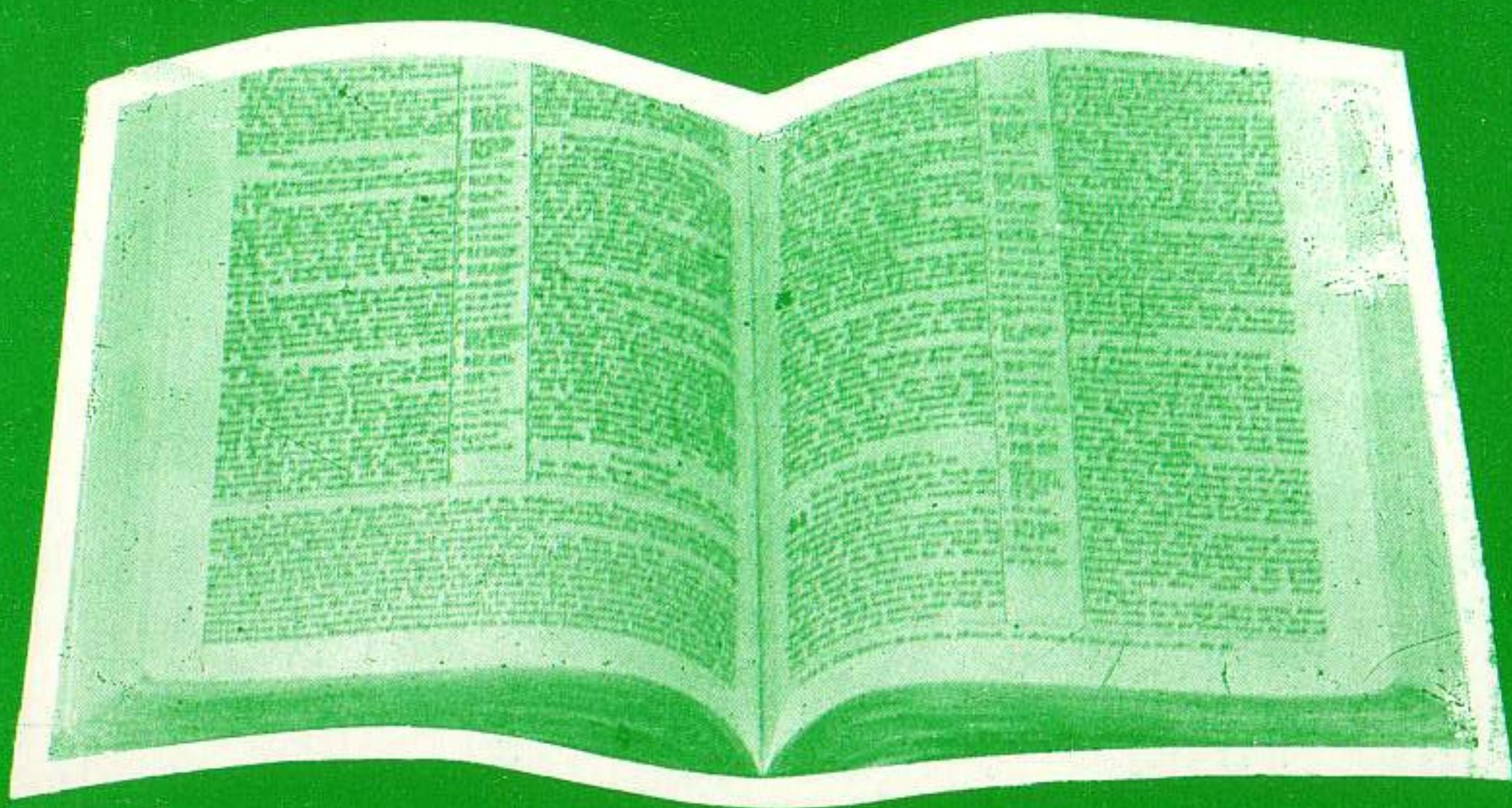


THE PARABLES OF JESUS

(Rewritten)



BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS

THE PARABLES OF JESUS
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African Coordinated Curriculum for Bible Study

A3-1PE

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LESSON ONE

JESUS' USE OF PARABLES

AIM: Jesus used parables to help people understand the truth he taught.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Matthew 13

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 13:3-23; 34-35

MEMORY VERSE: "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear." Matthew 13:16

Throughout history, people have used stories to teach their children. These stories have helped them understand how to live happily in the world. Usually the storyteller was an old person in the village. In the evenings, he would gather the children around him and tell them a story like this:

"Hare was very angry with Crow. He wanted to kill him, but could not catch him because Crow could fly.

"One day he thought of a plan. He thought, 'I know Crow loves meat. I will catch him by tricking him.'

"He lay down and acted like he was dead. He told the other animals to tell Crow that Hare was dead. His corpse was lying by the tree. When the animals saw Crow they said, 'Hare is dead. Let us go and eat him.'

"Crow followed them to the tree. As they came near the tree, Crow said in a loud voice, 'My father told me that hares die with their tails lifted up. How could this one die with his tail pointed down?'

"Hare thought, 'Oh, I forgot one thing!' And then he lifted up his tail.

"Crow laughed and said, 'One thing can ruin everything!'

This story would teach the children to be careful and thoughtful before they do something. It would teach them to be clever.

Jesus used stories to teach people the truths he wanted them to know. These stories were called parables. A parable is a story that compares two things. It tells how they are alike or different. One time Jesus compared sin with weeds growing in a field of wheat. Weeds are not good for the wheat. Neither is sin good in our lives.

Jesus was not the first teacher to use parables. There are some parables in the Old Testament. The Jewish rabbis often used parables when they taught. It was a common way of teaching in those days.

In Matthew 13, Jesus had been teaching in a house. He left the house and went to the seashore. Many people came to see him there. He got into a boat and sat down to teach the people who stood on the shore. Many of the people were farmers. Jesus told a parable the farmers could understand.

THE PARABLE

Read Matthew 13:3-9. Jesus said the way people hear about God and respond to him is like planting on a farm. In the story, a farmer scattered seed on the ground as he walked along. Some seeds fell on the road and the birds ate them. Some fell on hard, rocky ground. They soon sprouted,

but because there was little soil and they had no roots, they quickly died. Some seeds fell among thorns. The thorns grew so fast that the seeds could not grow. But some of the seeds fell on good ground. These seeds grew and there was a good harvest.

THE MEANING

Read Matthew 13:18-23. Jesus' story meant that when we tell others how to be saved, some will not listen. Others will seem happy to accept Christ, but when troubles come, they will turn away from God. They did not really accept Christ. They had no 'roots.' Some will hear and follow for a time. Later, other things will seem more important to them. They will stop following God. In this parable, some believed. The seed produced fruit. They believe and told others how to be saved. They did not stop following God for any reason.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Read Matthew 13:10-17, 34-35. The disciples heard Jesus tell the parable of the seed. They could not understand why he spoke in parables. But Jesus had a very good reason for using parables. He wanted the people listening to him to understand his teachings. He knew many people listening to him hoped he would do another miracle. (He had just healed a man with a withered hand; read Matthew 12:10). Those people did not really want to be his disciples. They did not want to change their lives. They did not understand the 'secrets of the kingdom of God.' Jesus taught in parables to help them understand.

Those who really wanted to hear and understand would learn more.

Those who decided not to understand the words of Jesus would not follow him. They would not hear the real meaning. They hated truth and later would stop trying to learn anything from Jesus. These people would stop following him and stop trying to understand. In verses 14-15, Jesus said these people were like those in Isaiah's day. He quoted the prophecy of Isaiah to remind the people what they were doing.

In verses 16-17, Jesus spoke to his disciples. In these two verses Jesus described them as 'blessed'. This meant that the followers of Jesus were fortunate. They had the privilege of seeing and knowing him as a man. They opened their minds and hearts to understand him fully. The disciples did not know all about the Lord. They learned more every day. They followed him because they believed his words.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

In verse 34-35, Matthew told how prophets had said the Messiah would use parables. Jesus' reason for using parables was so that people could understand better what he taught. Even so, many did not understand. Many rejected what they heard Jesus was not the kind of Saviour they wanted.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Palm 78:1-8

Monday: Matthew 13:24-30

Tuesday: Matthew 13:36-43

Wednesday: Matthew 13:47-52

Thursday: Matthew 13:53-58

Friday: John 13:3-15

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson.

LESSON TWO

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

AIM: The kingdom of God is God's rule in the lives of men.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES:
Matthew 9,13; Mark 4

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 9:14-17; 13:31-33, 51-52;
Mark 4:26-29

MEMORY VERSE: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."
Luke 12:32.

Let us compare a mango and a papaya. How are they alike and how are they different? Both are fruits. We take the peeling from both of them in order to eat them. Both are sweet. Both are orange in colour. Both grow on a tree. But they are also different. A mango has one large seed. Papaya have many small seeds. A papaya seed produces a tree that will produce fruit in a short time. A mango seed will also produce a tree but it will be several years before it produces mangoes.

Last week we learned the word 'parable' means to compare two things. It tells how they are alike or how they are different. In this lesson we will study parables about the kingdom of God. Jesus knew the kingdom of God would be hard to understand. He compared it to things people knew about.

A MISUNDERSTANDING

Read Matthew 9:14-15. John the Baptist was a serious man. He lived by himself in the desert. Jesus lived and

ate with people. John's disciples were trying to understand this difference. One day the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus, "Why do you and your disciples not fast when we do?"

Jesus told them a parable. He said, "During a wedding, the bridegroom's friends do not mourn and go without food while he is with them." Jesus compared himself to a bridegroom. He said his disciples did not need to fast now. They could fast after he was taken from them.

CHANGES WILL COME

Read Matthew 9:16-17. Jesus said no person would patch or mend an old coat with new cloth. In Jesus' day, cloth had to be washed several times before it was used because it would shrink. If new cloth was used for a patch, when the garment was washed, it would shrink. The old cloth would tear again around the patch. It would make a bigger hole.

In Jesus' time, pure water was hard to find so most people made wine to drink. When wine was made, they put it in goat skins with the neck and feet tied. Every year the wine was put into new skins. Old skins were hard and would not expand with the wine. They would break and the wine would be wasted. Jesus said no person would pour new wine into old wineskins.

Jesus wanted John's disciples and other Jews to know this truth. He did not come to do away with the Old Testament teachings. And he did not want them to add to his teachings by

patching on the rules of the Pharisees. Jesus told them that many Jewish customs would not fit into the good news of God's grace. The good news would burst out of the Jewish customs, just as the wine burst out of the old wineskins.

UNEXPECTED GROWTH

Read Matthew 13:31-33, 51-52. Jesus used a mustard seed to show how God's kingdom grows. The people had seen farmers plant a mustard seed. It was a small seed. But when the seed came up, the plant grew into a small tree. It was so large that birds built their nests in them.

In this parable, Jesus showed how the kingdom of God grows in a person's heart. At first, his faith and understanding is small. He does not understand all that the Bible teaches. One day he helps someone else to receive Christ as Saviour. The kingdom is growing in his heart. It began like a tiny mustard seed. It is growing into a tree.

The parable in verse 33 is also about growth. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like yeast. A woman put yeast with flour. The dough grew larger and larger because of the yeast. This parable means that God's kingdom grows as Christians grow and change. They tell others about Christ.

Read verses 51-52. Jesus asked his disciples if they understood his teaching. This time they did understand. Jesus said they should use truths from the law and from his teachings as they taught about him.

GROWING QUIETLY

Read Mark 4:26-29, Jesus said the kingdom is like seed planted by a

man. The man goes to sleep. The seeds come up and grow while he sleeps. He does not know just how it happens, but one day the grain is ready for harvest.

When we tell people about Christ, it is like planting seed. We cannot save anyone. Only God can do that. We tell someone how to be saved. One day we see him accept Christ. He begins to study the Bible and change his old habits. We do not know how it happened. But we know the kingdom of God is growing in his heart.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

We have learned that the kingdom of God is the rule of God in the lives of people. We enter the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Only Jesus can make us new and bring us into a good relationship with God. When Christ saves us the Holy Spirit comes into us. The Spirit changes our lives. He helps us live under the rule of God.

Christians worship God and read his Word, the Bible, in order to grow. They study to know more about God and Jesus Christ. They let Jesus be their example in all they do. They tell others how to be saved. They learn about the work that God wants them to do. They serve God by helping those around them. They try to please God by letting him rule their lives.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Luke 8:1; 16:16

Monday: Mark 2:18-22

Tuesday: Luke 5:33-39; 18:12

Wednesday: Mark 4:30-32

Thursday: Luke 13:18-19

Friday: Matthew 17:20

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON THREE

THE MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION

AIM: When a person joins the kingdom of God, he changes. What is important to him and what he does will be based on God's standards.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Matthew 14; Luke 14

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 13:44-46, Luke 14:15-24

MEMORY VERSE: "So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."
Luke 14:33.

Robert held onto the rock with his right arm. With his left, he held his briefcase. Below him was a 200 metre drop. Other passengers from the wrecked bus stood above him offering him a hand up.

"Give us your hand! We will pull you up!" they cried.

"I cannot, or I will fall!" replied Robert.

"Drop your briefcase and give us your hand!" they repeated.

"I cannot! It has all my money in it!" cried Robert.

"Your money will be worthless to you if you fall," they shouted.

"I cannot!" repeated Robert.

He threw his briefcase with all his might. It landed on a rock above him. A moment later, he fell to his death. His briefcase was saved. Robert gave his life to save his money.

What are you willing to give your life for? Let us think about that question as we continue to study the kingdom of God.

BURIED TREASURE

Read Matthew 13:44. In Jesus' time, there were no banks. People were afraid to keep valuable things in their homes. They often buried treasure in the ground. Sometimes a person would die before he could tell where he hid his treasure. Years later someone might find it. Some people spent all their time looking for buried treasures.

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven with a treasure a man found in a field. He wanted it very much. What did he do? He sold all he had and bought the field! Is being a Christian that important to us? Are we willing to give everything to become a Christian? Jesus said we should be.

THE PEARL

Read Matthew 13:45-46. In Jesus' day, pearls were worth as much as diamonds are today. A pearl merchant was looking for a very fine pearl. He knew all about pearls. He could recognize a fine pearl when he saw it. He found a pearl finer than any he had ever seen. He sold all he had in order to buy it.

Before one is saved, he is like the man looking for a fine pearl. He may look for many years before finding God. He may be confused about how to find God. He may think that if he joins the church he will find him. He may not understand that sinners are saved by faith. When he accepts Christ as Saviour, he finds the happiness God has for him. Jesus said when a

man knows the value of being a Christian, he will give his life to follow Jesus.

THE GREAT SUPPER

Read Luke 14:15-24. One day Jesus went to eat at the house of a ruler who was a Pharisee. Pharisees were proud men. When they sat down to eat, Jesus saw them choose the best places to sit. Jesus wanted them to think of others. He talked to them about humility. He told them a parable about a great supper. Jesus said a man invited many people to a big banquet. When the food was ready, the man sent his servant to bring in the guests. The man thought the people he asked would come to his home. But one by one, the people he invited made excuses. You can read these excuses in verses 18-20.

The first man said, "I have just bought a piece of ground. I must see it. Please excuse me this time." This man did not use good judgement. He put his property first.

Another man put his possessions and job first. He had to go and look at his new oxen. They would help him get better crops. This was more important to him than the feast.

The third man thought he had the best excuse of all. He had a new wife. He was in love. The feast seemed unimportant to him. He would have time for those things later.

The servant returned with the news. No one would come to the supper. The master was angry. He had prepared a great feast. The people who had accepted his invitation would not come when the feast was ready.

Even today, people are invited to join God's kingdom. Many of them make similar excuses. They say, "I must work all week to get enough money to survive. I don't have time for God!" or "I do not have enough time for my family. If I follow Jesus, I will have to go to church and work for him. I just don't have the time." The things they want to do are more important than the kingdom of God.

In the parable, the man sent his servant out again. He invited people who were not invited to the supper at first. The poor, sick and sinful were now welcome to come to his feast.

In this parable, Jesus was saying that God prepared a plan for salvation. He sent his prophets to invite his chosen people, the Jews. They said they would come. When God sent his Son to bring them to the feast, his chosen would not come. Other things were more important to them. They did not accept God's plan. They expected a different kind of salvation. So God told his son to bring in any person he could find. Now God calls all people to his kingdom. He wants everyone to come in. Eternal life is the reward to those who come.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Salvation is like a hidden treasure. A person may just happen to find it or perhaps finds it by searching for it. When a person finds a treasure, he has great joy. He is willing to give up everything to have it. It becomes the most important thing in his life.

Some people hear God's call, but make excuses for not following him. These people will not enter the kingdom of heaven. For all eternity,

they will be separated from God and his love. They are not willing to give up anything in order to be a part of God's kingdom.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Matthew 16:21-23

Monday: Matthew 16:24-28

Tuesday: Luke 14:1-6

Wednesday: Luke 14:15-14

Thursday: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Friday: 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON FOUR

GOD'S SEEKING LOVE

AIM: God loves all people. Christians should also love and do their best to lead lost people to Christ.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Luke 15

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Luke 15:11-24

MEMORY VERSE: "The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."
Luke 19:10

"God's Seeking Love" is the title of our lesson today. "Seeking" describes the way God keeps on looking for us. He welcomes us when we come back to him. The love of the mother in this story helps us understand the seeking love of God.

One day a three-year old child ran away from home. His mother was frightened. She knew he would be hurt. She looked everywhere for him. She asked her neighbors if they had seen him. Finally, she found him. He had wandered into a field. His legs and feet were bleeding from thorns. He was crying. He said, "I am sorry. I will not run away again." The mother forgave her son. She could not be angry with him. She loved him and was glad he was safe.

In this lesson, we will study another parable of Jesus. Jesus told about a father's love to help the Jews understand God's love for them.

RUNNING AWAY

Read Luke 15:11-24. This parable is called the 'Prodigal Son.' The prodigal son was the younger of two sons. He wanted his share of his father's wealth. His father gave him what he asked for.

The young man was happy when he received his inheritance. He thought he had everything he needed now! His life was really going to be satisfying. He packed his belongings and left home to seek happiness. He wanted to have fun and go to new places. The father was sad when his son left home. He was worried that he would not use the money wisely. He was worried that he would hurt himself.

Read verse 13 again to find out where the young man went. What did he do with his money? How did he use his time?

TROUBLE

The son spent his money and used his time in sinful living. Sin always brings sorrow. The young man did not think about sin and sorrow until the money was gone.

After he spent his money, a famine came to the country. The farmers could not raise enough food. Maybe there was not enough rain that year. Food was scarce. When the younger son found food, he could not buy it. He had no money. He almost starved to death.

Finally the young man found a job. He got a job feeding pigs. Usually, Jews would have nothing to do with pigs. They were dirty animals. But this young man took care of them. He was so hungry, he ate the food they ate.

LOOKING AT HIMSELF

Verse 17 tells us that the young man "came to his senses." He thought of home. He remembered his father. He knew he had done wrong. He also knew that his father's servants had more to eat than he did.

Read verses 18-19 again. What did the young man decide to do? Was he sorry for the way he had acted? Do you think he had changed?

When the young man left home, he had a clean body and mind. When he decided to return, he knew he was not the same. He did not believe he was worthy to be called his father's son. He had sinned. He was sorry for his sin. But he did not think his father would accept him again as a son. He planned to ask his father to hire him as a servant.

FORGIVENESS

His father saw him before he reached home. Perhaps he was looking for his son to return. His heart was filled with joy when he saw the young man. He ran to meet him when he saw him coming, put his arms around him and kissed him.

The son began to tell his father what he had planned to say (v 21). The father interrupted him and would not let him finish. He treated the boy as his son. He gave him new clothes and other gifts. He treated him like a special guest. He was happy when his son came home. He planned a special feast to honour him. He did not receive him as a servant, but his son.

Jesus told this parable for a purpose. He wanted his followers to know that God is happy when a sinner comes home to him. He wanted them to know that when we sin, we must repent. He wanted them to understand that repentance brings salvation. God will always accept a person who is sorry for his sins.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Think about your own life. Do you have any sins that you have not asked God to forgive?

Think about the parable and what it means to us today. The younger son is like the person who says, "I do not want to be a Christian. I want to do as I please." The father is like God. He knows his way is best. Still, he lets each person choose the way he will go. God loves us just as the father loved the younger son. He waits for us to ask him to forgive our sins. When we ask God to forgive us, he is happy to do it. He makes us his children.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Psalm 23

Monday: Luke 15:1-7

Tuesday: Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday: John 10:1-18

Thursday: Luke 15:8-10

Friday: Luke 15:25-32

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON FIVE

THE WAY GOD REWARDS

AIM: God will reward all who serve him with an attitude of love.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Matthew 20

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 20:1-6

MEMORY VERSE: "So the last will be first, and the first last." Matthew 20:16

Rachel had a job in an office. She was very unhappy with her work. When she took the job, her boss said that if she worked overtime she would be paid for it. But after she began, she saw that this was not true. Often she was asked to work after others had gone home. But on payday, her salary was just the same as those who left early. When she asked her boss about it, he just said, "Perhaps you would like to work in another office?" She knew she could not find another job. She was stuck in this bad place. She did her work poorly and slowly because her boss was so unkind. He did not encourage her to her best.

Philip was happy to have an opportunity to study to become a teacher. After he finished his education, he got a job in a school not far from his home town. His headmaster was very helpful to him. He encouraged him to do his best. He rewarded him when he did. He offered him opportunities to move ahead in his profession by attending special training courses. This meant that Philip's salary increased. His

attitude toward Philip made Philip want to do his best.

In our lesson today, we will study about the way God rewards those who work well and faithfully for him. We will see how God is like Philip's headmaster.

One day a fine young man came to Jesus. He asked, "What must I do to be saved?" He had kept all the commandments, but when Jesus told him to sell all he had and give it away, the young man turned away and left Jesus. After he left, Jesus said, "It is very hard for a rich man to be saved." The disciples were very surprised to hear this. Peter was not timid. He asked, "We have left everything to follow you. What will we get for it?"

Jesus knew his disciples thought about who would be greatest. They did not understand that Jesus' kingdom was in heaven. They thought he would be a ruler on earth. They thought they would be rewarded for their faithfulness to him. Jesus' reward was not money and possessions. Jesus promised the disciples eternal life. Then he answered Peter's question by telling them the parable about a vineyard.

WORKERS WERE NEEDED

Read Matthew 20:1-2. In this story, the farmer needed to harvest his ripe grapes. The farmer went to the market place early to find workers for the day. According to the Jewish law, the day began at six o'clock. The farmer hired a group of men to work for him.

They were interested in pay. They did not go to work until the pay was agreed upon. The man agreed to pay them the usual daily wage of 1 denarius.

MORE WORKERS WERE NEEDED

Read Matthew 20:3-5. At nine o'clock (the third hour) the farmer went back for more workers. He told these men he would pay them what was right. They trusted him and went to work in his fields along with the others hired earlier.

The farmer still needed men to pick grapes. In verse 5, we see that he went at noon and again at three o'clock (the sixth and ninth hours) to find more men to work for him. Again, he agreed to pay them a fair wage. They trusted and went to work.

STILL MORE WORKERS NEEDED

Read Matthew 20:6-7. Finally at five o'clock, the farmer returned for more workers. When he saw men not working, he asked, "Why are you not working?" They said they had been ready since morning, but no one had asked them to work. He told those men to go to work in his vineyard. They did not ask about the pay.

PAY TIME

Read Matthew 20:8-10. When evening came, the farmer told the foreman to start by first paying the men hired last. He would end by paying the men hired first.

The foreman gave the men hired last a silver coin which was called a denarius. It was worth about Kshs 4/=. It was a day's pay in Jesus' time. The men who had worked only one hour received a full day's wage! They

were very pleased at how generous the man was.

Then the foreman paid those who had worked all day. They had agreed to work for a denarius. They received just that. They had thought that since those who worked for an hour received a denarius, they would receive more. But the man paid them just as they agreed. They each received one coin.

GRUMBLING

Read Matthew 20:11-16. The men hired first acted like jealous children. They were angry that although they worked all day in the hot sun, they received the same wage as those who worked for one hour! The farmer had treated all his workers the same. He said, "I did not cheat you. You said you would work for a silver coin. That is what you have received" (verse 13).

In Jesus' story, the farmer is like God. He rewards people as he likes. He wants workers who do not worry about how much their reward will be. He wants those who are willing to work for him and trust him to be fair.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Christians should serve God because they love him. No one should expect to be paid or praised for his good deeds. He loved us freely when we were still sinners. Our love to him should be free.

We should not worry about how others are rewarded. If some seem to be blessed more than we are, we should rejoice with them. We should not be jealous of others.

We should be thankful that God will not reward us only for the good things we do for him. God, in his

mercy, will bless us much more. We will all get much more than we deserve.

Scriptures to read this week:

Sunday: Matthew 19:23-26

Monday: Matthew 19:27-30

Tuesday: Luke 12:22-31

Wednesday: Galatians 3:2-9

Thursday: Romans 9:14-18

Friday: Psalm 104:1-9

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON SIX

PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

AIM: In his wisdom, God responds to persistent prayer.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Luke 11:18

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

MEMORY VERSE: "For every one who ask receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." Luke 11:10

Has this happened to you? Your children asked permission to go someplace or do something. Perhaps you did not agree with their plans. But they asked again and again. Finally you agreed just because you were tired of their asking. This is called persistence. It means to keep on doing or asking the same thing. Today's lesson is about the need to keep on praying. Jesus taught that we should be persistent as we pray.

THE NEIGHBOR'S REQUEST

Read Luke 11:5-8. Jesus told a parable about a man who knocked on the door of a friend's house at midnight. The sleepy man heard the knocking. Then he heard his neighbor say, "Open the door. Lend me some

bread. A friend has come to visit me. I must feed him."

"Go away," the man said. "You will wake my children. I cannot help you at this hour."

The neighbor did not go away. He kept knocking and asking. Finally, the man got up and gave bread to his neighbor. He did not do it because he wanted to help his friend. He did it because he was tired of his knocking and wanted him to go away.

Does God answer our prayers because he is tired of us and wants us to stop asking? Is this what Jesus is teaching? Of course not.

GOD GIVES GOOD GIFTS

Read Luke 11:9-13. Sometimes God cannot give us what we ask for. We sometimes ask for things that are bad for us. God wants us to pray for his will to be done in our lives. He wants us to want his will. So Jesus told the disciples to keep on praying. Why? Is God like that neighbor? No. God loves us. He wants to answer our prayers. But he wants to give us things which will be good for us. He does not give us what we think we want. He gives us what we need. He gives us what will bring us closer to him. He

helps us understand his will. He helps us want his will in our lives.

Jewish fathers loved their children. They took care of them. They gave them the good things they asked for. Jesus knew his disciples understood the things a good father would do. In verse 13 Jesus said, "God is like a good father. Good fathers love their children, even though their children do not always obey them. They give them good things. But God, the heavenly Father, is perfect. He will give only what is best to his children. He will give them the Holy Spirit."

Jesus knew the Holy Spirit was the best gift of all. The Holy Spirit can help us understand God's will for our lives. He can bring us close to God. This will give us a full life.

THE UNJUST JUDGE

Read Luke 18:1-8. Why did Jesus tell this parable? Read verse 1. Jesus wanted to teach his disciples to keep on praying. He knew they would be persecuted because they followed him. When this happened, he wanted them to remember this parable. He did not want them to be afraid or discouraged.

What kind of man was the judge in this parable? Verse 2 tells us two things about this man. First, this judge did not fear God. He did not live by God's standards. He acted just as he wanted. He was not afraid of God. He did not admit that God had power. He did not care if his actions broke God's laws. Second, the judge did not respect the people. He thought only of himself. If his neighbour suffered wrong, he did not care. If he had a chance to cheat someone, he did. He

did not care how his bad actions hurt others. He did not fear God and he did not care about his fellow man. He was completely selfish.

The woman came again and again to ask the judge for justice. Someone had cheated her. The judge would not help her. He did not care about her. He only thought of himself. Even so, she did not stop going to the judge. She knew he was the only one who could help her. She kept going to the judge and asking for help.

Finally, the judge said to himself, "I do not fear God and I do not respect men. But this woman is bothering me with her problem. I will get no rest until I do something. I will help her with the problem so she will stop bothering me" (v.4).

What does this parable mean? Is God like the unjust judge? Is he selfish? Does he care only about himself? No. Jesus said the unjust judge helped the woman who kept asking for help. Would not our Heavenly Father help his children whom he loves even more?

In verses 7-8, Jesus told the disciples that God would help his people. They should keep on praying to him night and day. God does not always answer our prayers at once. But he will answer. He will give us the best answer. We should have faith that God will answer our prayers. He will help us do his will. This will give us the happiest life we can have.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

1. God loves us. He is not like the neighbor who would not help his friend, or like the unjust judge who thought only of himself.

2. God wants to give us good things, especially the Holy Spirit. He will care for us better than our earthly father.

3. God wants us to keep on praying to him. We should trust him to answer us. He may not answer at once and his answer may not be yes 'yes'. He will answer in the best way and at the best time for us.

Here is a good plan to show this is true. Begin to write in an exercise book a list of things you pray for. Include your family, your church, unsaved family and friends. When

God answers your prayer about a certain thing, put the date by it on your list. This will help you to keep on praying for those not yet answered. It will remind you of all the times God has answered your prayers.

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Ephesians 1:15-23

Monday: Mark 1:35, Matthew 14:23

Tuesday: Matthew 19:13; 26:36

Wednesday: Matthew 5:44; 6:5-6

Thursday: Matthew 26:41, Mark 11:24

Friday: John 14:13-14; 17:1

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON SEVEN

HUMILITY BEFORE GOD

AIM: We must not think we are better than others. We must not think we have no need for God's mercy.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Luke 14:18

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Luke 14:7-11; 18:9-14

MEMORY VERSE: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 14:11

When I was a child, I heard a story which showed me the danger of pride. It showed me how being proud can make me fail.

Long ago, hare thought he was better and faster than any other animal. He loved to laugh at tortoise because he was so slow. One day, he challenged tortoise to race. He knew he could win easily.

They met at the starting point. When the race began, hare ran fast. Soon he was far ahead of tortoise. He thought, "That stupid tortoise is so slow, he will never catch me. I think I will just lie down under a nice shady tree and take a nap." He did just that.

While he slept, tortoise passed by. He did not stop to rest. He did not slow down. He kept going toward the finish line.

Much later, rabbit awoke. He realized he had slept for a long time. He ran fast toward the finish line. But when he got there, he met tortoise, who had just crossed it. The slow tortoise had won the race.

Humility is the opposite of pride. A person with humility will not think he is better than others. "Humility before God" means to show a right spirit before God. A person who shows a right spirit towards God will not think

he is good enough without God. He knows he needs the Lord.

THE BEST SEAT

Read Luke 14:7-11. When Jesus went to a dinner, he saw some men trying to take the best seats. He saw how proud the guests were. Jesus gave them some good advice by telling them a parable. Jesus told them not to sit in the best seats. He said a more important guest might come. Then those who chose the best seats might have to move. They would be ashamed when their friends saw them moved to another seat. They would know these people thought they were the greatest, but were not.

In verse 10, Jesus told them a better way. He said, "It is best to take a seat which does not show honour. Then if your host calls you to sit at the head table, your friends will see you moving up. They will think you are important. But they will know you are not a proud person. You did not choose a seat of honour for yourself."

I know a woman who is important but not proud. She has written many books. She teaches in a university. She is very smart, but she is not proud. She is often asked to sit at the head table. Her friends say, "That woman does not know how important she is." She is humble. Jesus said Christians should be humble. A humble person will not think he is better than others. He himself gave us a good example of how to be humble.

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Read Luke 18:9-14. Jesus told another parable about humility.

Find the answers to these questions:

1. How many men went to the temple? (verse 10)

2. Who were these men? (verse 10)

3. What did a tax collector do? (A tax collector worked for the Roman government. He was known to cheat people.)

Verses 11-13 give the prayers of the two men. The prayer of the Pharisee was long. The prayer of the tax collector was short. The two men did not think alike about themselves. What kind of man was the Pharisee? Was he good? Proud? Greedy? Dishonest? Generous? The Pharisee felt no need for God. He thought he was good enough without God.

Six times in the prayer of the Pharisee he mentioned himself. What were some of the things he thanked God for? He thanked God that he was not sinful as other people. He thanked God that he was not like the tax collector. He saw the sins of others. He did not see his own sins. There is no humility in the prayer of the Pharisee. To whom did he say his prayer? Jesus said, "The Pharisee stood up and said this prayer to himself" (v11). God did not hear his prayer (v 14). He was not speaking to God. He was praising himself.

Look at the tax collector. Was he proud? No. He thought he was not good enough to go near the good people. He stood alone. His head was bowed. He was ashamed to look toward heaven. He did not brag about his goodness. He knew he had sinned. The tax collector was sorry for his sins. He asked God to have pity on him.

Read his short prayer from verse 13. He asked for God's mercy. He called himself a sinner. The tax collector knew he had sinned and knew only God could forgive him. Did God hear his prayer? (Read verse 14)

In the last part of verse 14, Jesus talked about the kingdom of God. It is different from other kingdoms of the world. Proud people will be made humble. They will not be accepted into the kingdom. Humble people will be made great. They will be given a place of honour.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

There are two main things this lesson teaches us. First, Jesus wants us to be humble. He wants us not to think too much of ourselves. We

should put others first. In this way, we will receive honour. The first will be last, the last first. This is the way the kingdom of God works.

Second, we should not compare our lives with the lives of other people. Jesus is our example. It does not matter what others do. We should always see if our actions are like Jesus'. He left heaven to die for us. That is our example of humility.

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Matthew 23:1-12

Monday: Mark 12:38-44

Tuesday: Mark 14:32-44

Wednesday: Acts 20:17-24

Thursday: 1 John 1: 1-10

Friday: Luke 22:24-30

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON EIGHT

KNOWING AND DOING GOD'S WILL

AIM: A Christian seeks to know and do God's will.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Matthew 7:21

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 7:21-27; 21:28-32

MEMORY VERSE: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 7:21

When Jacob was with his father and mother, he was very obedient. At school, however, he did not obey his teachers. When he was out with his friends, he did things he knew his parents would not like. Was Jacob

obedient? His father thought so! When Jacob was caught stealing in the market, his father was shocked. "But my son is so obedient at home. I cannot believe he has done this!" he cried.

Obedience is more than words and actions. It is also attitude. Although Jacob acted obedient at home, his heart was rebellious. He did not obey from love and respect. He obeyed to avoid being scolded by his parents.

A person may act obedient and say all the right things, but be disobedient on the inside. To please God, we must be changed on the inside. If we are not, our "good" words and actions mean nothing.

HEARING AND OBEYING

Read Matthew 7:21-24. Verse 21 gives us a truth we need today. It says no one will enter the kingdom of heaven unless he does the will of God. Saying you are a Christian and being a Christian are two different things. A person may call Jesus 'Lord' and still not go to heaven. Salvation is more than just saying words. It is obeying God's will.

At the end of time, Jesus will return to judge us. Many people will tell Jesus they are good. He will say that doing good things will not save us. Our attitude must be right for our works to be acceptable to God.

THE TWO BUILDERS

Read Matthew 7:24-27. Jesus told a parable about people who obeyed his teachings. He said they were like a man who built his house on rock. Faith in Jesus is the 'rock foundation' that helps us live the Christian life. His teachings give us strength in times of trouble. Following Jesus' teachings is wise.

If a person does right when his friends do wrong, he has a good foundation. If young people serve Jesus even when away from their parents, they have a good foundation. If a person trusts God in times of testing and difficulties, his faith is strong. He is like the wise builder.

Some people go to God only when they need help. Others do not think they need God at all. These people do not have a good foundation. They have nothing to help them in times of trouble.

Jesus said persons who do not obey his sayings are like a man who built

his house on sand. He was referring to the strip of sand along the edges of rivers and lakes. When the rains come, this sand will be flooded. Sometimes people build their houses in these sandy places. If they do not put down a rock foundation, the houses are washed away. The wet sand will not support the walls in a storm.

Jesus said some people's spiritual lives are like a house built on sand. They have no foundation. They know they should accept the Lord. They know they should do his will. But they try to get by without him. This is foolish. It leads to the destruction of their lives.

THE TWO SONS

Read Matthew 21:28-32. One day some religious leaders came to Jesus. They did not think Jesus came from God. They did not believe or obey his teaching. Jesus knew their thoughts. He told them this story.

A farmer had two sons. His grapes were ripe so he needed help to harvest them. He asked his sons to work for him. His older son was rude to him. He refused to work for his father. Later he was sorry and he went to work. When the farmer asked his second son, he was polite and agreeable. He said, "Yes, sir." But he did not go to work in the field as he promised.

In verse 31, Jesus asked the religious leaders to name the son who obeyed his father. "The older son," they answered. Jesus told them that tax collectors and prostitutes were like the older son. These sinners would get into the kingdom of God ahead of

religious leaders. Why? They had repented and believed in him (v.32).

The religious leaders were like the second son. They said they loved God, but they would not do his will. Jesus reminded them that John the Baptist came first, telling them the right way. They would not believe him. Now they refused Jesus' teachings.

Tax collectors and prostitutes were sinners. When they heard John the Baptist, and later Jesus, they were sorry for their sins. They believed what they heard. They changed their minds about their way of life. They repented and did what God wanted them to do. Jesus said, "You saw how the tax collectors and prostitutes were

changed. Still, you did not change your minds and repent like they did."

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

We must build our lives on a strong foundation. This foundation is Jesus. We must do the will of God to enter his kingdom. We will be able to do God's will if we do as Jesus taught. We can know his teachings by studying the Bible and praying.

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Deuteronomy 26:16-19

Monday: Joshua 1:8; 1 Samuel 15:22-23

Tuesday: Psalms 143:5-10

Wednesday: Matthew 26:36-42

Thursday: Romans 6:11-14

Friday: James 4:13-17

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON NINE

WHAT IS TRUE WEALTH?

AIM: Our attitude toward money and possessions changes when we become a Christian.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Luke 12; Matthew 6

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Luke 12:13-21; Matthew 6:19-21

MEMORY VERSE: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."
Matthew 6:33

Suppose a friend said, "See that man over there? He is very wealthy." What would you be thinking? Does he have a big house? Maybe a second house to rent? What kind of car does

he have? Maybe he has some taxis or some lorries. Where does he work?

In this lesson, Jesus told a parable about true wealth. He said things like money, a car, a fine house are not true wealth. True wealth are things which make us right in the kingdom of God.

A MAN'S WISH

Read Luke 12:13-15. Jesus was teaching his disciples. Others had come to listen. Many people gathered around the Lord. Jesus knew he did not have much time to teach his disciples. They needed to learn many things because after his death, they would do his work.

A man spoke out from the crowd of people. We do not know much about the man. We just know what he

asked. He wanted his brother to give him his part of their inheritance.

Jesus did not use his wisdom to answer the man directly. In verse 14, he said something like this: "I was not sent to divide property. Such things will pass away. I was sent to preach the gospel and to help people find eternal things."

Jesus knew the man was greedy and selfish. He wanted things for himself. Jesus used the man's wish to teach a lesson to his disciples and others.

In verse 15, Jesus said, "Do not always be wishing for what others have. Do not always be trying to get more and more." He wanted them to know that material things were not the important things.

THE RICH FOOL

Read Luke 12:16-21. Jesus told a parable about a rich farmer (verses 16-17). His crops were good. Did he give part of his crops to feed the poor? No. Did he thank God for giving him good crops? No. He was just pleased with himself about his good luck. But he had a problem. His barns were full. Verse 18 tells us what the man did with his big crops. He did not give any away to feed the poor. Instead, he tore down his old barns. He built bigger barns to store his great wealth.

He was a very selfish man. He was very proud of himself. He thought to himself, "I have really succeeded now!"

Read verse 20 again and see what God said. God called the man a fool. A fool is a man who cannot think for himself. Jesus used hard words to show what a mistake the man made. Jesus meant this man could not think

when it came to matters of the spirit. This man knew there was a God, but he did not want a relationship with him. He did not need God.

In verse 20, what did God say would happen to the man? The man would die. Then who would get his riches? They would be worth nothing to him. He could not be helped by them after death.

In verse 21, Jesus told what the parable meant. This man had thought only about his wealth on earth. He did nothing to make his relationship right with God. Jesus taught that every man who gets rich on earth, but not in heaven is a fool.

RICHES IN HEAVEN

Read Matthew 6:19-21. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave more teachings on riches in heaven.

Jewish people in Jesus' day did not have many things which we have today. Clothes were one of their most valuable possession. In Palestine, clothes were worn during the day and used as cover at night. These clothes had to be protected against moths. They did not want their clothes and blankets eaten! Other valuable things, like jewelry and tools, might rust. Robbers took everything they could find in those days, just like today. None of their material possessions was safe.

Jesus told his hearers not to put their efforts into saving things here on earth. Those things will not last forever. He did not mean that a person should not save for his old age. He meant that we as Christians should not put money above all things. We should not use all our money to buy

possessions for ourselves. If we are Christians, we will use part of our money for him. Then our riches will be where our heart is.

How can we put treasures in heaven? We should show God's love to others. We should set our minds on things of heaven. These things are truth, love, mercy, goodness, kindness, peace, joy, justice.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

What about you? You may make much money. You may not have many things. Remember that true happiness does not come from things we own. Such things will not last long. They can be taken from us. They will not buy eternal life. True riches come from knowing God. This kind of

wealth brings love, joy, peace and eternal life.

The important question is: Are you rich with God? Do you have to give to God with a free heart from the money you have? Do you serve him by helping others. Do you spend time learning how to be more like Jesus? These are eternal treasures. They will last even after death.

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Mark 10:17-22

Monday: Mark 10:23-31

Tuesday: Luke 16:19-31

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 6:6-11

Thursday: Ecclesiastes 11:18-19

Friday: Philippians 4:8

Saturday: Read your lesson

LESSON TEN

LIVING BY THE LAW OF LOVE

AIM: Christians must love as Jesus loves.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Luke 10

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

MEMORY VERSE: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." Romans 13:8

How many neighbors do you have? Do they all live near you? Do you see them every day? Do your children play together? Are they members of your tribe or of your church?

Who is our neighbor? How should we treat persons outside our own

family? Jesus answered these questions in one of his greatest parables. This parable is called the "The Good Samaritan."

Question and Answers

Read Luke 10:25-29. Many believed Jesus was the Son of God. They believed his teachings. Others did not believe. These people tried to trick Jesus. They tried to prove he was a false teacher.

One day a lawyer tried to trick Jesus. He asked, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus knew the lawyer was testing him. This man taught the Law of Moses. Moses' law told how God's people should live. The man knew the law by heart. He knew what he should do.

Jesus did not answer him. Instead, he asked him a question. Jesus asked the lawyer to say what he thought, since he knew the law himself. The lawyer answered quickly. In verse 27, he put together the law to love God and the law to love one's neighbour.

Jesus said the man answered right (verse 28). Jesus knew it was easy to learn the law. He knew it was hard to live what the law taught. He told the man to obey the law. If he loved God first, and then loved his neighbour, he would have eternal life.

These words seemed to worry the man. He believed he loved God. He was not sure what loving his neighbour meant. He knew he did not love all people. He did not even *want* to do that! So he asked another question: "Who is my neighbour?" Who did he have to love? Again Jesus did not answer his question. This time he told a parable.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOR

Read Luke 10:30-35. A man went down to Jericho from Jerusalem (verse 30). The road was 32 kilometers long and went in and out among hills. The hills were full of caves. Robbers lived in some of these caves. These robbers took money and other possessions from people who travelled that way. Robbers beat this traveller and took his possessions. They left the man almost dead.

Soon a priest came by. He was a religious man who worked in the temple. He led worship services. He knew the law about loving his neighbor. Read verse 31 again. What did the priest do when he saw the man

lying half dead on the road? He went by on the other side of the road.

Another man came by (verse 32). He was Levite. Levites helped the priests in the temple services. The Levite knew the law about loving his neighbour. What did he do? The Levite looked at the man and walked on by.

Jesus' next words must have surprised the lawyer. He said a Samaritan came by. Samaria was a land next to Judea. That made them neighbours to the Jews. But the Jews did not treat the Samaritans like neighbours. Samaritans were a mixed-blood people. They were part Jew and part Gentile. Full-blooded Jews would have nothing to do with them.

Read verses 33-34 to learn what the Samaritan did. When he saw the man lying on the road, he felt sorry for him. He put medicine on his wounds. He bandaged where he had been hurt. Then the Samaritan placed the man on his donkey. He led the donkey to a hotel. He took care of the man for that night.

The next day, the Samaritan had to leave. He gave some money to the hotel manager. This money was to help take care of this man. He promised to pay more when he returned, if it were needed. Jesus ended this parable with a question. "Which of these three men was a neighbour to the man who was hurt?" (verse 36)

The lawyer knew the answer. But he did not want to say that it was the Samaritan. He said, "The one who was

kind to him." Jesus said to him, "You go and do the same."

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Let us think what Jesus meant. The Samaritan did not know if the hurt man was good or bad. He did not know if the man was rich or poor. It did not matter that he was of another race. The Samaritan had only one question: "How can I help this person?" He treated the man the way he wanted others to treat him. The Samaritan lived by the law of love. He showed love to his neighbour.

Neighbours are all around us. They are good and bad, young and old. They are educated and illiterate, black and white, clean and dirty. They are

rich and poor, friendly and unfriendly, Christian and non-Christian. Is it hard for us to think of people who are not "like us" as our neighbors? Jesus commands us to love all people, even those who are different from us. Each day during the coming week, select one individual who needs your help. Try to understand this person. Find a way to show him the love of Jesus.

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Monday: Leviticus 19:9-18; 32-37

Tuesday: Mark 12:28-34

Wednesday: Matthew 5:38-48

Thursday: 1 John 3:11-18

Friday: 1 John 4:7-21

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON ELEVEN

FORGIVEN AND FORGIVING

AIM: God forgives us, so we should forgive others.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Matthew 18

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 18:21-35

MEMORY VERSE: "Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors." Matthew 6:12

Mark and Peter worked for the same company. Both had the same education. Both had the same work experience. A position in management became available. Although they were friends, they both decide to apply for this job. They agreed that they would still be friends, regardless of who got the job.

Peter wanted the job badly. Although Mark was his friend, he would do anything to get this job. He began to tell some of the other workers that Mark had a problem with drinking. He knew this was not true, but thought it would help his chances. He hoped the boss would hear about it and not consider Mark for the promotion.

Unfortunately, Mark heard about it first. He found out what Peter had tried to do. For days, he would not speak to Peter. Then he decided to tell Peter what he had found out. When he did, Peter begged for forgiveness. Peter said, "I will go to the boss and tell him that you are the better man for the job. I will tell him that you do not drink. Please forgive

me, Mark. I want your friendship more than this promotion. I am sorry I told a lie about you."

At first Mark was not sure what to do. But then he remembered how God had forgiven his sins. He knew God had forgiven and forgotten every sin. So Mark forgave Peter. He forgave him completely.

Later, someone reminded him of what Peter had done to him. Mark said, "I do not remember that happening. I think you must be mistaken." Mark had learned to forgive as God forgives.

The parable we will study today teaches forgiveness. It says that we must forgive others if we want God to forgive us. To forgive means to forget the wrongs that are done to us. We must not think about them any more. This is the way God forgives us.

PETER'S QUESTION

Read Matthew 18:21-22. If a person did something bad to you, most Jews agreed that you should forgive them three times. Others said you should forgive seven times. Peter wondered what the disciples should do. He asked Jesus if they should forgive as many as seven times? He thought that to forgive seven times was being very forgiving. Jesus' answer surprised him. He told him not to forgive just seven times, but seventy times seven. Jesus meant a person should keep on forgiving those who wrong him. He knew some people asked God to forgive them, but did not forgive others. Jesus told the parable of the unjust servant to show that it is wrong not to forgive others.

THE FORGIVING KING

Read Matthew 18:23-27. Jesus said the kingdom of God was like a king who called his servants before him. These servants were in charge of the king's money. The king wanted to check the money records. He wanted to see if the money was all there. He found that some of the money was missing. One servant had borrowed a lot of money. He owed the king millions of shillings.

In the time of Jesus, laws were very harsh. A man could be sold as a slave if he owed more than he could pay back. This man could never repay all of this money. So, the king ordered his workers to sell the man, his family and everything he owned. In this way, the king would get some of his money returned.

The servant begged for mercy. He promised to pay the debt. The king knew he could not pay the debt. He owed too much money. But the king had a kind and forgiving heart. In verse 27, we find three things that show the king was kind. 1) He felt sorry for the servant; 2) He forgave the whole debt; 3) He freed the servant.

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Read Matthew 18:28-31. The servant was forgiven his huge debt. He should have been ready to forgive anyone who owed him anything. But we see that the servant did not learn to forgive as he was forgiven. He met a man who worked with him. That man owed him a few shillings. Did he give the man who owed him money time to get it? No. He held the fellow

worker by the throat. He said, "Pay back what you owe me."

Look at verses 26 and 29. How are these verses alike? In verse 26, the first man begged for mercy. He promised to pay a debt that could not be paid. He wanted to be forgiven. In verse 29, the second man begged for mercy. He promised to pay a small debt. The first man would not forgive him. He had his fellow worker put in jail.

Other servants heard about it. They knew the king had forgiven him for a large debt. The servants told the king what had happened. Again the king called his servant before him. This time the king was very angry.

PUNISHMENT

Read Matthew 18:32-35. The king called the servant 'wicked.' Why? The servant would not forgive others. The king told him, "I forgave you millions of shillings just because you asked me to. You should have mercy on others because you received mercy."

The king punished the servant in the same way he had punished his

fellow worker. The king put the servant in jail until he could pay all he owed. And of course, he could never pay it all back. He would die in jail.

In verse 35, Jesus warned his disciples. He said God would punish them if they did not forgive others.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Jesus told the parable to show how God forgives us. Like the servant, we can never pay our debt to Jesus. He gave his life on a cross to pay for our sins. He will forgive us when we ask him to. Then God expects us to forgive others. Some people want to be forgiven, but they will not forgive others. We must forgive those who wrong us if we want God to forgive us.

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Psalm 85:1-7

Monday: Psalm 32

Tuesday: Acts 13:26-33; 38-39

Wednesday: Mark 2:5-12

Thursday: Ephesians 4:22-32

Friday: Matthew 6:12-15

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON TWELVE

PREPARING FOR HIS COMING

AIM: The Christian should work to serve God today so we will be ready when Jesus returns.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Matthew 25

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 25:1-13

MEMORY **VERSE:** "Watch therefore, for you do not know on

what day your Lord is coming."
Matthew 24:42

Maria was very excited. Her brother was coming home from the university today. She had not seen him in many years. She could hardly wait to see his smile. She did not know what time he would come. But she had everything ready for his arrival.

She decided to go ahead and cook the meat for her brother's favourite dish. She knew he had missed African cooking while he had been abroad. When she tried to start the stove, she realized that she was out of cooking gas. What should she do? Now she would have no food for her brother. What an unhappy party what would be! Maria decide that she must go to town to find some gas. She told her children to watch for their uncle. He might come at any time.

Sure enough, while Maria was gone, her brother arrived. He was surprised to find his sister gone. He was disappointed that she had not prepared the foods he liked. He had thought he would receive a warm welcome. Instead, she was not even at home when he arrived. Nothing was ready for his return.

Jesus knew he had only a short time left on earth. He began to explain to his disciples that he must go away. He also told them that he would return some day. He wanted them and others to be ready for his return. That is the reason he told them the parable of the "ten maidens."

WAITING FOR THE BRIDEGROOM

Read Matthew 25:1-5. In Jesus' day a couple was engaged for a year. At the end of the year the bridegroom gave a supper. When the supper was ready, he went to get his bride. The wedding, therefore, took place at night.

Some of the wedding guests went with him to get his bride. Each person carried a lamp which used oil. The lamp lighted the way to the home of

the bride. Some of the guests waited at the home of the bridegroom. When they heard him returning, they went out to meet the bridegroom and the people with him. Then he took his bride and the guests into his house and closed the door. The bridegroom would not let anyone else come in. Even invited guests could not come in after the door had been closed.

In the parable which Jesus told, ten girls went out to meet the bridegroom. The girls carried lamps with wicks that soaked up the oil. Five of the girls had brought extra oil. Jesus called these girls "wise." Five "foolish" girls did not bring extra oil for their lamps.

Why would they need extra oil? At our weddings the bride usually keeps the guests waiting. In the days of Jesus, it was the bridegroom. He did not hurry as he paraded through town. Sometimes he kept guests waiting for a long time. The girls did not know when he would return. The foolish ones were not prepared for the long wait. They had no extra oil.

The girls waited where they could hear the bridegroom's approach. Hours went by. He did not come. The girls became sleepy. At last they all went to sleep. Both foolish and wise girls slept. But the wise were still ready. When they heard voices, they would awaken. Then they would trim their wicks and put oil in their lamps. They would join the wedding party. The foolish girls slept peacefully. They did not worry as the oil in their lamps burned lower and lower.

THE BRIDEGROOM IS COMING

Read Matthew 25:6-10. At midnight a cry was heard. The girls

awoke to the sound of "The bridegroom is coming! Come out and welcome him!" The wise ones trimmed their wicks and put in the extra oil. They were ready to join the party.

The foolish girls trimmed the wicks, but had no extra oil. They saw their mistake. The bridegroom was coming. They were not ready to meet him. They hoped their friends would help them. The foolish girls said to the wise ones, "Let us have some of your oil." The wise girls would not help them. They only had enough for themselves. They told the foolish girls to go buy oil.

While the foolish girls were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. The wise girls joined the wedding party. Their lamps lighted the way to the bridegroom's house. The guest went inside. The door was closed. Now no one else could enter. The feasting began.

THE DOOR WAS SHUT

Read Matthew 25:11-13. The foolish girls bought oil. Later they knocked at the door of the bridegroom. They begged the bridegroom to let them in. These girls did not march with the wedding party. Their lamps did not light the way. They were not ready when the bridegroom came. It was too late!

Jesus compared his return to the bridegroom's coming. No one would

know when he was coming again. Like the ten girls, some people would be ready and others would not be ready.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Jesus will return to earth again. He has promised us that. When he comes, he will judge all people. He will take those who are part of his kingdom to heaven with him. Those who are not his children will be separated from him forever.

If we are ready for the return of Jesus, we must be saved. We must live as Jesus wants us to. If we live the Christian life, we will tell others about Jesus. Our lives will light the way for others to know about God.

Many will try to get ready when Jesus comes. Then it will be too late. Now is the time to prepare for the Lord's return. Are you ready to meet the Lord? Are you living a life that is pleasing to him? Would you be happy to see him come anytime of the day or night? Like the maidens, we do not know the hour the bridegroom will come. We must be ready at times.

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Mark 13:28-37

Monday: Psalm 15

Tuesday: Isa. 41:1-6

Wednesday: Luke 3:7-17

Thursday: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Friday: Matthew 24:36-44

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson

LESSON THIRTEEN

USING ALL FOR THE MASTER

AIM: God has freely given salvation and spiritual gifts. Christians are responsible to God as they use what he has given them.

BACKGROUND **SCRIPTURE:**
Matthew 25

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 25:14-30

MEMORY VERSE: "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy." 1 Corinthians 4:2

In the parable of the ten maidens, Jesus talked about his second coming. He told people to be ready. If we are ready, we will be saved. We will live the Christian life. As we have for Jesus, we will use our talents (abilities) for him.

Some people are able to do many things. They have many abilities. Others can do a few things. Some people have only one talent. Whatever our abilities are, we should use them to serve God.

Jesus did not ask us to do things that are too hard for us to do. But he has given each of us abilities to help build his kingdom. He wants us to use these abilities to help win others to him.

DIVIDING THE TALENTS

Read Matthew 25:14-15. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like a man going on a journey. Before he left, he called in three of his servants. He gave money to each servant. He put them in charge of his possessions and business. The servants had different

abilities. So the master gave to each man the amount of money he could use.

One servant was given five thousands shillings. The second man was given two thousand shillings. The third man was given one thousand shillings. The master wanted each of the men to use the money to earn more money.

USING THE TALENTS

Read Matthew 25:16-18. The man with the five thousand invested his money. He worked hard and used what he had been given. He doubted his master's money.

The man with the two thousands shillings did the same. He worked hard and doubled his master's money. He too, made wise investments and used what he had been given. He used his money to earn more.

The third man had received only one thousand shillings. He did not use his gift. He did not even put the money in the bank to earn interest. He just hid the money in the ground. He did no work while the master was gone.

THE RICH MAN RETURNS

Read Matthew 25:19-25. The owner was gone for a long time. When he returned, he called his servants to him.

Each man had to report what he had done with his gift. The servant who had received the largest amount of money stood before his master. He was not afraid nor did he feel any shame. He had used his master's

money wisely. He doubled the money. The master praised him. He called the man "good and faithful." He gave the servant a bigger job.

Next the man with the two talents stood before the master. Like the first man, he had twice as much to give back to the master. The master praised this man like he had praised the first man. He also increased this servant's opportunities.

THE DANGER OF DOING NOTHING

Read Matthew 25:26-30. The third servant was not happy to meet his master. He knew he had not pleased him. In addition, he did not trust his master. He called him "hard and unjust." He said he was afraid to use his money. He had hidden his money in the ground. The master called him "lazy." He said the money should have been put in the bank. A bank would have paid interest on the money. He then would have had a little money to return to the master. But the servant did nothing, and he had nothing to give. His money was taken away from him.

In verse 29, Jesus stated the truth about the use of talents. If a person uses his talents, they will grow. The first time you try to do something, it is hard to do. But it gets easier. Why? Because you learn how to do something by doing it. Your talent grows.

A young woman heard an old woman play the piano. She said to the lady playing the piano, "I wish I had your talent."

The old woman answered, "Play the piano eight hours every day for fifty

years. Then you will be as old as I am and you will have my talent."

Talents grow as you see them. They do not come from doing nothing. This is what Jesus meant in the parable. He does not expect as much from a one-talent person. But he does expect something from everyone.

The first two servants went on to better things. Verse 30 tells what happened to the last servant. This useless one went to darkness and everlasting sorrow. He had lost his relationship with his master.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God gives each person talents or abilities to serve him. He does not give one the same talent or the same number of talents. God is pleased when we use them in the right way. Then he gives us more abilities and more places to serve. But God takes away abilities and opportunities from persons who do not use them in the right way. They will be given to persons who are faithful.

Are you using the abilities God has given you to serve him? That is what he expects of every believer. Are you showing God that you are a "good and faithful" servant? Or would he call you "wicked and lazy?" Remember what happened to the lazy servant. Let his example help you to do what God wants you to do with your "talents."

Scripture to read this week:

Sunday: Luke 19:12-26

Monday: Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-16

Tuesday: Hebrews 11:17-12

Wednesday: Hebrews 11:23-28

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Friday: Hebrews 3:1-6

Saturday: Read your Bible lesson