

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

AT33S

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS RELATIONSHIPS

Student's Lessons

Contents

Lesson 1	Set Free to Serve
Lesson 2	God, the Christian and the Government
Lesson 3	Why the Family?
Lesson 4	The Godly Family
Lesson 5	The Christian Family is Different
Lesson 6	Families Leaving Home
Lesson 7	The Christian Family Facing Difficulties
Lesson 8	Alcohol and the Family
Lesson 9	Christians at Work
Lesson 10	Christians Relating to Non-Christians
Lesson 11	Christians Relating to Fellow Christians
Lesson 12	Christians Relating to People of Other Races
Lesson 13	Christians Relating to the Elderly

Lesson 1: Set Free to Serve

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: Galatians 5:1, 13-26

Memory Verse: "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another" (Galatians 5:13).

Central Truth: Freedom in Christ leads to service to others.

Man is free to shape his life the way he pleases. This often brings sin and misery to his relationship both with God and other people. For us to enjoy life the way God designed it, we need to apply his Word to our lives. This lesson will show us the meaning of true freedom and how to have a better life.

Freedom in Christ: Read Galatians 5:1.

Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians about their freedom in Christ. He referred to the slavery which we experience outside of Jesus. On a visit to a neighboring country recently, I saw a good example of this freedom and slavery. Beer was sold every place I went! Supermarkets, hotels, kiosks, homes, restaurants, snack bars -- all these places sold beer! Although the country is very small it has two beer factories. In every home I visited, people were drinking beer. Trucks carried it, refrigerators were full of it and coffee tables were covered with it. The result is that a high percentage of people in that country are alcoholics. Many die from it, but the survivors continue to drink. This is slavery!

The only place where I smelled no alcohol was at the Baptist church on Sunday! At the church, I found something different. There I saw children of God, filled not with beer but with the Holy Spirit. In spite of their "alcoholic" culture, they had freedom in Christ. There I saw the meaning of true freedom in Christ. The majority of people in that country give everything for beer -- their money, their energy and their health. They are beer's slave. But those who received Christ are sober, serving the Lord and his people.

Free to Love and Serve: Read Galatians 5:13-15.

Before I became a Christian, I was ruled by anger and self-defensiveness. I had friends, but I was friendly only if all was well. If my friend hurt me in any way, I would cut off the friendship. I would not forgive. I loved only when all went well for me. I lived my life in a way God hates. I served no one. I thought only of my own interests. I was selfish.

When I received Christ as my personal Saviour and Lord, I was made new by him. Christ put his love deeply into my life. He freed me from anger and took away my unforgiving heart. I wanted to serve him through helping and loving others. I had missed the joy of service. I found that service brings a life of peace and fulfillment. God's Spirit freed me from my natural selfishness to make me willing to follow God's leading.

Led By The Spirit: Read Galatians 5:16-18.

Man is free to do what he likes, go where he wants and decide according to his own desires. But man has two spiritual powers that try to lead him. These powers are the Holy Spirit and "the desires of the flesh." The Bible tells us that the "desires of the flesh" are from the king of this world, Satan. Man is free to

choose which leader to follow. If a person chooses to be led by the flesh, he is separated from the kingdom of God. Satan enslaves us to sin, but the Spirit of God frees us for abundant life!

When man denies the flesh and allows Christ to rule him, he is then led by the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit of God leads, but he cannot force us to do God's will. If we are willing, he empowers us and teaches us to follow God's will. The Spirit of God leads us to love and serve others. A true child of God is one who is always led by the Holy Spirit. He pleases God in his service. He freely follows where Christ leads.

Works of the Flesh: Read Galatians 5:19-21.

In these verses Paul listed some of the works of the flesh. First he listed sexual sins and impurity. These are still problems in our society. Young people copy the behavior they see in adults. This can lead to an unhappy life and even death through the terrible disease of AIDS. Following the flesh always leads to unhappiness.

Next Paul listed sins against God such as idol worship and witchcraft. These were common sins in Paul's time, as many of the people were pagans. We still have these problems among us, even in the cities. Many people worship material possessions rather than God. They do not trust God to take care of their problems. Some depend on witch doctors and traditional superstitions.

The other sins listed occur between people. People who live in the flesh always put their desires first. Enmity, anger, jealousy, selfishness and envy are some of the evil works listed. None of these creates friendship between men. They all bring problems and lack of peace.

Fruit of the Spirit: Read Galatians 5:22-26.

We have just learned about the works of the flesh. We realize how bad they make man feel. In these verses we will see the fruit which naturally grows when we are led by God's Spirit. Compare Galatians 5:22-26 and Galatians 5:19-21. In the flesh we work to produce a harvest of sin. In the Spirit we are filled with love, the characteristic which brings peace! The fruit of the Spirit brings peace between men.

A Spirit-filled person changes his habits according to the new life in him. He develops new likes and dislikes. All his attention is drawn toward the new life within. He listens and tries to obey its demands. He likes what the Spirit likes and dislikes what the Spirit dislikes. Evil habits change to spiritual ones. An after-work drinking habit turns to after-work worship. The week-end arguments at home turn to fellowship with loved ones. Our desire to show off our wealth becomes a desire to serve others in love.

What This Lesson Teaches Us:

There is no true freedom in a person's life without Christ's leadership. Christ always leads us to serve others on his behalf. None can serve God faithfully without being led by the Holy Spirit of God. His Spirit brings love and self-denial and promotes service to others.

The fruit of the Spirit brings peace and honor. The works of the flesh bring disaster and guilt. Every Christian must live a fruitful Spirit-filled life in order to bring others to Christ.

Things to Think About and Do:

Read Galatians 5:1. From what has Christ set us free? How can one submit to a yoke of slavery?

Read verses 13-15. After Jesus sets us free, does he expect us to do anything in return?

Read Galatians 5:16. What does it mean to walk by the Spirit? Why do the Spirit of God and the flesh work against each other? Can you show the difference between the work of the Spirit and the works of the flesh?

Read verses 19-21. Does any work of the flesh glorify God?

Read verses 22-26. Is any of the fruit of the Spirit against God's law?

Read all of Galatians 5 to understand Paul's message. Use it for your own needs today. Share these truths with someone this week.

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Galatians 5:1-5

Monday: Galatians 5:6-12

Tuesday: Galatians 5:13-15

Wednesday: Galatians 5:16-18

Thursday: Galatians 5:19-21

Friday: Galatians 5:22-26

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson for this week.

Lesson 2: God, the Christian and the Government

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-6

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

Central Truth: The Christian should do all he can to help his government function justly and responsibly.

In last week's study we learned that Christians are set free to serve God and his people. Christians can serve God by being good citizens. This story will illustrate one way you can be a good citizen.

One day, two women were looking at a farm they were considering buying. A group of boys passed by and stopped under a tree for a while, watching. Suddenly they ran by and snatched the women's handbags. The women ran back to their car hoping to chase the boys. They discovered that they had slashed the tires before the attack. The women walked to the police station, wrote a statement and went home.

Later they were asked to identify the thieves at the police station. Although the women knew the boys' general body structure and height, they had not seen their faces. They could not be sure. They did not identify them as the thieves. The policemen were surprised. The police said they would release the boys if the women failed to identify them. The women agreed that they should go free. A policeman thanked them for being good and truthful citizens. The women had the opportunity to share their Christian faith with four top officers at the station. They were impressed by these truthful women.

Christians should share God's justice wherever they go. In this way, the good news will spread to all people. In today's lesson we shall study how Christians can spread justice and faithfulness in their respective countries.

Christian Submission to Authority: Read Romans 13:1-5.

These verses state an amazing truth. God has put leaders in power. At times, this is hard to understand! There are many cruel leaders who do not rule righteously. How could God have chosen them? We do not know how to answer that question except to say that God is all-knowing. He has a plan that we do not see. At times, he uses even bad people to complete his plan. He is in control and will bring good out of all situations for those who follow and love him.

For a Christian, the teaching of these verses is plain. Obey the authorities. That is our job. If we disobey the government, it is the same as disobeying God. A Christian is to be a model for others. This includes being a model citizen of his country.

If we obey our government, we have nothing to fear. If we obey the laws of our land, we will not face punishment. God calls Christians to be obedient citizens wherever they live. If we obey the authorities, we will not have problems. If we rebel, we face judgement.

By being obedient we learn to be patient with others. We learn to honor others for God's sake. Although they might sometimes make mistakes, they need our love and understanding. Our obedience to them is our worship to God. God is honored

when we respect the authorities that represent him. Every leader stands in God's office because he is the one who appoints them.

Christian Support For Government: Romans 13:6-7.

You might have met Christians who use their position to avoid paying due tax. Some might use a relationship with a government officer or a Christian organization to get out of paying. They fool the tax collector. Others put on a pastoral collar when they cross a border. As pastors they hope they will not be checked very much. Are these actions approved by God? What do these verses say?

Tax systems are for the benefit of the people. We pay taxes to pay for services which the government gives us. Christians should want to help their country and work for its blessing. Each should do his part. In this way, we will all be blessed. It is true that the more we have, the more we have to pay but that is proper. A poor widow struggles to pay her taxes to the government. Being a Christian means that we do our fair share to build our country. God blesses a country through faithful citizens. Christians should be the most faithful! Let us set a good example as we lead others to Christ.

A Christian's Responsibility: Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

God rules over all things, even politics. He is the only completely successful leader in the world. He does what he says he will. He is just in all aspects. He loves and helps everybody in spite of our sins.

World leaders fail. They might fail because they are selfish, ambitious, lazy or greedy. A good Christian will seek ways to help his leaders. The main way we help them is through prayer. We are to love them and pray for them. If they are not saved, we are to share Christ with them. We should show appreciation for their work. We can trust God to change their lives.

Some Christians do not like reading secular newspapers or magazines. They try not to get involved in government matters. These believers are missing an opportunity. When we are well-informed about events in our country or world, we can pray better. This is the power Christians have to change their world positively. Non-Christians see bad things happening, but they do not know what to do about it. They seek peace in plans or people. When these fail, they fight. When things go wrong the Christian leader prays to God. God is the only peacemaker one can depend upon. Prayer is the most powerful weapon with which a country can fight. Will you be faithful and pray for your country and your leaders? Will you learn all you can about matters so you can pray effectively?

God has committed the government of this world into man's hands. God might want you to serve him through your government as a Christian. Be ready to serve wherever God calls you to serve his people. Be ready to be his witness as a servant, not a boss. Christ will be glorified.

What This Lesson Teaches Us:

Christians should set good examples by being submissive to the authority over them. A Christian servant is to exercise his faith in every area of his life. He is to encourage potential Christians to be involved in government service. He is to pray for his government leaders and share Christ with them.

Paying due taxes is godly. Jesus challenged his disciples to respect the law. He paid his own tax from a coin he took from a fish's mouth to show that God will provide even money for taxes. If we ask him to provide for our government dues, he will do it. God is willing to bless our country if we obey him.

Things To Think About and Do:

Think about your own life and answer these questions: Who should obey the government authority? What will happen to a person who resists authority over him/her? Do you personally obey all authority as unto God?

Why should we pray for all who are in high positions? How does it help us personally?

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: 1 Samuel 8:1-9

Monday: 1 Samuel 8:10-18

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 8:19-22

Wednesday: Psalms 1

Thursday: Psalms 2

Friday: Psalms 3

Saturday: Read your Bible study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 3: Why the Family?

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18-25

Memory Verse: "But from the beginning of creation, `God made them male and female,' `For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh" (Mark 10:6-8).

Central Truth: God made the family as the basic unit of procreation and nurture for man.

God Creates Mankind: Read Genesis 1:26-28.

Man was created last and was the most important creature in God's sight. Man was created in the image of God. He was given power over all creatures in the world. God blessed man with a will, a soul and a spirit. He prepared a suitable home and environment for man which provided for his needs. He gave man water, light, land, vegetation, birds, animals, fish -- everything he needed to live.

Man was given responsibilities. First of all, man was to worship his Creator. Only when he meets his Creator and acknowledges his power does man find peace. In addition, God created man to multiply and fill the earth. Through his offspring, man was to rule the world and care for God's creation. Man is responsible for carrying on the thread of life. When God created woman for man, he began the family. We should respect and take care of our families. When we abuse or neglect them, God is not pleased. God will be pleased with those who provide for and love their families.

God Supplies Their Needs: Read Genesis 1:29-30.

God is a God of supply. In his house there is no want. When he created us, he knew what we would need to live. Before creating man, he prepared all man would need for his living. The world is full of all kinds of animals for our use. Some are domesticated by man. The various trees and plants are a source of food. Fruits and leaves from them provide us with very sweet and nourishing foods for our bodies. God did all of this to make our lives better. We are to praise God for all the wonderful things he has provided for our needs. Some may think we get food because we work hard for it. Yes, we do, but from where do the seeds come? They were created by God. We do not buy or create the air we breathe, the sun or the rain. It is there for us to use, created by a loving God.

It Was Very Good: Read Genesis 1:31.

Everything God made was good and pleasing. When we look at the order of things which God created, we wonder at how it all holds together. Everything depends on other parts of the creation. If you over-use certain plants, animals will suffer. The whole system of creation is interrelated. Human beings have often misused God's world. There is so much pollution now that the human race is in danger. God did not intend this. The world he created was very good. He did not plan for us to pollute or destroy it.

The ruin of God's creation started when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden. They obeyed their fellow creature instead of obeying their Creator. Their sin made four major hardships in the world: 1) death, 2) separation from God, 3) conflict with the serpent (Satan) and 4) the struggle of man to earn his living daily. Sin led to the ruin of the world created by our loving God. Man

has spoiled the soil to fulfil his desires. He has polluted the good air that God gave us in order to increase his wealth and power. The world was good, but man has destroyed many parts of it. It is no longer a very nice place to live.

Man was God's highest creation. When God looked at his creation he saw that it was very good. We were made beautiful and sinless. Families can be pleasing to God if we live according to God's plan. As husbands and wives live in obedience to God, their children will learn this pattern. If parents teach their children to care for God's creation, the world can be a better place to live.

God's Plan for Marriage: Read Genesis 2:18-25.

In God's plan, marriage was made to provide for man's need to be loved and to love. Man needed company. Marriage provided special companionship for mankind. The relationship between a husband and wife is greater than any other human relationship. The love of parents, children, brothers, sisters or friends is important, but nothing is comparable to the husband and wife companionship. Marriage is a real fulfillment of God's plan for man. It is in marriage that one feels free to share his or her personal life. As we become one flesh, we become complete. In a godly marriage, we are able to grow more than if we were alone. We are able to help one another in times of happiness and sorrow. A happy marriage is a good gift from God.

God planned for the physical union of man and woman. He planned for this union to make the couple physically one. He planned for this union of one man and one woman for their whole lives. We can see this clearly in our Memory Verse for today. God's plan for union is to take place only in the marriage relationship. It unites the couple and allows them to grow together. It brings pleasure to the relationship. It is the means for them to have children, which creates a family. This is part of God's wonderful plan. The uniting of two beings brings the blessing of a child.

God planned marriage and the family to meet the social needs of human beings. Families teach us how to live with others. A godly couple will raise a godly family. In the following lessons we shall see how we can live in our families in a way that pleases God.

What This Lesson Teaches Us:

It is good to enjoy God's gift of marriage and the family. Christians can enjoy marriage as couples work together to build Christian families. As each member strives to be like Christ, the Christian family can be a model in its community. They can work to overcome misunderstandings or weaknesses through prayer for one another. They can care for one another and correct one another in love. They can show others how to forgive a mate or children and forget their mistakes. They can show others how Christian families stay together and help one another.

Things to Think About and Do:

Read Song of Solomon 2:8-16 and answer the following questions. How do you welcome your mate, with joy or with sadness in your face? Do you agree with the statement in verse 16? Have you given totally to your mate? Do you feel whole with him or her? Do you sense that half of you is missing when your mate is absent? Does the spirit of oneness and love rule your marriage? Do you have any guilt or sorrow to confess which has caused problems in your marriage? Will you pray for your mate, trusting God to make your marriage and family strong according to his plan?

Read and meditate on Malachi 2:15-16. Ask yourself if there is a command to obey. Is there a teaching to apply in my life? Is there sin to confess? Respond as the Spirit of God directs you.

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Song of Solomon 1:1-7
Monday: Song of Solomon 1:8-17
Tuesday: Ruth 1:16-17
Wednesday: 1 Samuel 1:1-8

Thursday: Malachi 2:13-17
Friday: 1 Corinthians 13
Saturday: Read your Bible study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 4: The Godly Family

Verses Used In Today's Lesson: Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4

Memory Verse: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

Central Truth: We need to put Christ in our families and pray for love and mutual understanding.

John came in the door after a hard day's work. He was tired and hungry. His wife was busy in the kitchen fixing food for the family. John was angry that the food was not yet ready. He went toward the kitchen to scold his wife. When he saw her, however, he changed his mind. She also looked tired. The baby was on her back and another child was hanging onto her knees as she worked. John remembered that he had read in the Bible that the husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church. Rather than scolding her, he greeted her happily. She smiled as he picked up the child at her feet. He talked with her as she finished preparing the food. Later, they shared a happy meal together and went on a walk in their neighborhood.

This is a picture of a home like God planned for man. In a home like this, the children will learn love. They will feel secure. They will learn how to be godly husbands or wives when they grow to be adults. They will learn how to be helpful parents. God planned the family to be a happy place for us to learn how to get along with others. It should show all the love of God which is present there.

The Basics of A Happy Home: Read Ephesians 5:21.

Many homes are not happy today. There is either a problem with the mother, father or the children. God intended that our homes would be happy. If our homes are not happy, the whole family suffers as a result. When family members suffer, the nation suffers. The Scriptures tell us that we can build happy homes if we love each other. The Bible says, "Be subject to one another..." (Ephesians 5:21). Husbands must be subject to their wives, and wives must be subject to their husbands. This means that each will think of the other before himself. Each will try to help the other and meet his needs.

Christians must make their home a good place in which to live. It is in the home that the first teaching about the church starts. It is here that the Word of God is read and taught. It is here that children learn to pray and trust in God. It is here that children are reared with a sense of truth and love. This will help them in future to rear their own children properly.

Christian Wives: Read Ephesians 5:22-24.

Women in Africa are highly respected. The strength of the family depends very much on the strength and the hard work of the mother. She is the main supporter of her husband. The mother is the best teacher in many homes today. She patiently teaches her children how to live in this world. She is close to the children, even when the husband is not at home. A faithful Christian wife rears her children in the fear of the Lord. She will always seek the Bible's teaching on how to bring up her children. At the same time, the wife should take care of her husband. She should be ready to help him. She should take care for his physical needs. She should treat him as the head of the home, the representative of the family. She should be proud of him and love him.

Family life is best when both parents work hand in hand. Then family unity and love will grow. If the parents are faithful Christians, the children will learn to be faithful also. Children learn from their parents how to have a happy and successful life. They will learn by following their example. They will learn to follow God because their parents do. They will want to be like them because they love and respect them.

Christian Husbands: Read Ephesians 5:25-33.

Verse 25 says: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." A Christian husband must show his love to his wife and his family. If he cannot do that, it will be difficult for the family to hold together. The family will not develop as God planned. He must love them and sacrifice for them, just as Christ sacrificed for us. He must be willing to put his own desires aside and serve his family.

Sometimes men express their love by giving presents. Presents are not bad, but they are not a substitute for love. A faithful Christian husband needs to show true love to his wife. He needs to help her rear the children and take care of the home. A wife needs a husband's presence more than his presents. A Christian husband must have time for his wife and his children. He needs to plan for time alone with his wife. They can sometimes go away from home in order to have time for private discussions and evaluation. They should take time to build their relationship in love.

The husband is the head of the family. The strength of the family in religious matters will greatly depend on his own initiative. To build a godly family, he needs to be in close contact with his family and the Word of God.

Children and Parents: Read Ephesians 6:1-4.

There is often a wide gap in the relationships between children and parents today. This needs to be corrected because it is dangerous for the welfare of the family. What has caused this? Sometimes relationships within the home are the cause. Other times, outside influences cause problems in the family. Families should work hard to work together for peace and unity. They should support and love one another.

Verse 1 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Children need to be taught that they are expected to respect their parents. The parents need to make the home a place where the Word of God is taught to their children. Parents need to emphasize to their children the value of Bible reading. The conflicting values in our society today should encourage parents to spend time with their children. They need to take time to listen patiently to them and know them. The foundation of love must be strong.

What This Lesson Teaches Me:

It is important for a Christian family to depend on the authority of the Bible in order to build a strong and godly family. This will be possible when the parents are united in their work. The dedication of the parents in teaching the Word of God to their children will help them make the right decisions for the children's future and welfare. The basis for a happy home depends on the good will of all the family members. Above all, it depends on their spiritual maturity in the Lord.

Things to Think About and Do:

This week spend at least one hour alone with your spouse. Talk to them about their frustrations and joys. Share yours with them. Plan to do one thing together this week, such as take a walk, go to a shop or pray together in a quiet place.

Try to spend at least fifteen minutes each day alone with each of your children. Play a game with them, talk to them, go for a walk together. Make each one feel special and loved.

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Genesis 4:1-16

Monday: Genesis 21:1-8

Tuesday: 1 Kings 2:1-4

Wednesday: Matthew 1:18-25

Thursday: Luke 2:41-52

Friday: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson
for this week.

Lesson 5: The Christian Family is Different

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: Colossians 3: 1-21

Memory Verse: "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:14).

Central Truth: A Christian must be Christ-like in his family life.

A New Creation: Read Colossians 3:1-4.

Christians are asked to give up their lives for others. We can understand this idea by thinking of a mother who carries a child in her womb. She gives from her own life and body for the sake of the child she is carrying. She gives happily and freely, thinking about the child she will bring into the world. She wants him to be the best he can be. She cares for him by taking care of herself during her pregnancy. This is an act of faith. Similarly, a Christian often has to give up something for the sake of another. He does it happily so that another can benefit.

When Christ comes into our lives, we become a new creation. Our natural self is transformed, bit by bit. This new creation brings a change in habits, attitudes and thinking. We want to be changed inwardly. An inward change will cause a change in our actions. We will do the things that please God. We will ask for his will for our lives. We will forget about ourselves so we can be his servants. We will put God first. We will have new hopes. We will have a new master who is our true Saviour and Lord.

New Characteristics: Read Colossians 3:5-11.

Everything has its own unique characteristics. Animals and plants have characteristics which govern their behavior and eating patterns. Christians are no exception. They also have characteristics which separate them from non-Christians. The Bible mentions these characteristics which all reflect God's nature. Some of them are love, meekness and kindness.

The natural man, the Bible says, does not understand the things of the Spirit. When we allow the Spirit of God to come into our lives, our old characteristics are replaced by new characteristics. Our inward life changes as we come into contact with God's Word, day by day. As previously mentioned, this brings change to our outward actions as well. We have new motives and new aspirations. Our horizons are widened, and we see our role as Christians in a new and challenging way. We are ready to offer and sacrifice ourselves in service to others. In this way, non-Christians see that we are different because our inward nature has been changed. We do not pride ourselves in our different outlook on things. We do not separate ourselves from people who are different from us. On the contrary, we seek to draw them to Christ. With God's Spirit, we are equipped to defend ourselves against the evil one. We are able to stand up as true witnesses.

New Actions Based on Love: Read Colossians 3:12-14

The Scripture teaches us that love is to be expressed by deeds. It is not enough to tell someone you love him or her. Your expression of love must go hand in hand with your actions. For example, you may say you love your parents. That is good.

However, words are not enough when they need your help. If you fail to help, your words of love are not evident.

The world has more than one meaning for the word, love. One is love which exists for its own sake. Do you love someone because he loves you? That is the natural way we relate our love to others. It is not a love of self-denial. It is love which exists for the sake of receiving love in return. Christian love is a love of self-denial. It loves those who are hated and who may hate you. Do you have that kind of love? If not, you need to ask God to help you to love those who hate you and those who are hated. When we love others, we will help them. We will share with them in their suffering. We will put our faith in God and surrender to him, serving others as he does. As Christians, we must put emphasis on love, for God is love. Without love, it is impossible to please God.

New Family Relationships: Read Colossians 3:18-21

How do members of a Christian family relate to each other? When you accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, did you change? Do you relate to your children or wife or husband in the same way as before you were saved? What about your judgement of other? Do you still judge others as you did before? Are you still overcome by fury, hatred, jealousy, frustrations and hopelessness? These bad attitudes do not change overnight. They change bit by bit as we surrender our will to God's will. Our family relationships should improve, however, because our inward nature is being changed by God. We relate to others in love. We are ready to forgive. We have a new Spirit which is becoming stronger and more evident in our lives. This new Spirit brings changes to the whole family. The family sets new goals for itself. The members try to please one another. The family lives to please God and not to please itself.

What this Lesson Means to Me

The Bible is a guide book for living. It is a book which tells us how we can live to please God. It is able to change our inward nature and replace it with a new nature. God wants us to live as changed people, people who are ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others. Are you a new creation? You need to give yourself for others. Do you want to have new characteristics in your life? You must surrender your will to God. He is ready to give you new characteristics. Do you have God's love? Ask him for it and he will give it to you. Are you relating to your family properly? Jesus Christ will enable you, if you let him really rule in your life today.

Things to Think About and Do

Read Colossians 3:2 Where are we told to set our minds? _____

Verse 3: Why? _____

Read Colossians 3:5, 8-9. List 11 things we are told to "put to death."

Read Colossians 3:12-14. List 8 things we are told to "put on." _____

Read Colossians 3:15. What will be the results? _____ and _____

Read Colossians 3:16. Where do we get instruction? _____

Read Colossians 3:17. How should we do all our work and action?

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: 1 Corinthians 2:10-16

Monday: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Tuesday: Galatians 5:16-26

Wednesday: Ephesians 2:1-10

Thursday: Ephesians 4:17-24

Friday: Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Saturday: Read your Bible study lesson
for this week.

Lesson 6: Families Leaving Home

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: Hebrews 11:1, 8-16; Genesis 12:1-3

Memory Verse: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Central Truth: Faith in God brings stability to families in a world that is changing.

Faith As a Basis for Living: Read Hebrews 11:1.

There are many gods and faiths in the world today. Many people put their faith in things that are temporary. They worship gods who are not living. Putting your faith in temporary things like money, power and possessions will cause disappointment. Faith in these things is false. Such faith will not save you. It has no value. The Christian puts his faith in things which are hoped for and not yet seen. Christian faith is built on a living God, not on power or money or material possessions.

These days many people are leaving their home villages for the towns. In some families, both parents move. Then the family faces the problems of their new life together. Although this is difficult, it is the best way. Sometimes, the wife is left behind in the village with the children. Many problems can arise when children are reared by a single parent.

When a family, whether part or whole, leaves home, they face a lot of problems. For those leaving and those left behind, the changes are not easy to cope with. There can be a change in climate, prices or kinds of foods. There will be many new people to meet and get along with. All these changes, the family must accept and try to live with. In these changing situations, the family must put its trust in the Lord.

For a Christian, faith is the foundation of his life. It is through faith that he is able to face the challenges of new situations. When a family moves, prayer will greatly help in adjusting to life in the new home. The family can put its faith in Christ. He will help them to cope with any difficult changes.

Abraham's Example: Read Hebrews 11:8-12.

When Abraham was called by God, he obeyed without question. He did not know how far he had to travel to the Promised Land. He did not know which direction he would travel. He did not know how much food he would need on the way. He did not know how long he would travel. There were no good roads like today. There were no cars. He followed God's leading without knowing where he was going. It is difficult to understand what Abraham did. It is clear that he had put his trust in God. Abraham knew all would be possible because the living God promised to lead him. In fact, because Abraham obeyed in faith God blessed him. It was in the new land that Abraham became the father of Isaac, the child of promise.

Abraham was encouraged by his faith in God. His faith is an encouragement to us today, also. When we move to a new home at God's leading, we can trust him to help us. Sometimes we worry about the people there, the availability of food, the church we will attend. We think about school for the children, or social groups we will want to join. For all these worries we need to put our trust in the Lord.

The Scripture says Abraham looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (See Hebrews 11:10.) Are you looking for a city with solid foundation? Do not count on the city or village you have left behind. Forget about its good people or houses. All that will pass away. Like Abraham, focus your mind on the city of the Lord--the everlasting city. We are all on the way moving toward it. We do not have a permanent city here. We should not be discouraged by circumstances but continue to put our faith in the Lord. Faith in a Changing World: Read Hebrews 11:13-16.

Christians are people of faith. It is impossible to love God if we do not have faith in him. Christians are called upon to live in faith in the world today. Our world has greatly changed from the times of Abraham. There is more scientific knowledge than ever before. Communication between people is faster and better. This does not mean that Abraham's faith is not valid. We need to have as much faith as Abraham did, perhaps more. We must hold fast to our faith in a world that denies God and his power. We need to keep in mind our eternal life with God. We need to remember that our faith is in things not visible. Like Abraham, we are seeking a homeland, which may be foolish to others. Even so, our faith is firm.

Abraham did not see the fulfillment of all God's promises to him. The Bible says "...having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). What a heart-breaking experience this would be to some of us. It would be hard to come short of the hope and dreams you had been promised. Even so, Abraham's faith did not fail. He trusted God to fulfil his promises in his own time. To be able to keep our faith in these changing times, we must be very close to our Lord and Saviour. There is much temptation and suffering in the world today. To overcome this, our faith in the Lord needs to grow day by day.

A Part of the Family of Faith: Read Genesis 12:1-3.

Like Abraham, we are part of the family of faith. Like Abraham, we need to be people of faith. Abraham was an old man when he was called of God. Why did God call such an old man to go on such a long journey? God knows each of us. He knew Abraham too. He wanted to build his nation through him. Even today, God wants to build nations and families through people. He wants people who are ready to put their trust in Him. If you trust him, he will use you to complete his plan for his creation.

What This Lesson Means To Me:

All Christians are on a journey to the Promised Land. The Scripture tells us that we do not have an everlasting city here on earth. If we want a happy life, we need to be people of faith. We have examples of such people in the Bible. A good one is Abraham. We might say he put his faith in impossible things, but to God nothing is impossible. Abraham was rewarded for his faith. Today we call him the father of faith. We also need to keep and grow in our faith in these changing times. We are all part of the family of faith. We need to ask God to increase our faith every day.

Things to Think About and Do:

Read Hebrews 11:17-19, 23-28, 31 and describe the acts of these three people of faith.

Think about a time when you showed faith in God. Tell a friend about your faith and how it has helped you.

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Hebrews 11:1-3

Monday: Hebrews 11:4-8

Tuesday: Hebrews 11:17-22

Wednesday: Hebrews 11:29-30

Thursday: Hebrews 11:32-34

Friday: Hebrews 11:35-40

Saturday: Read your Bible study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 7: The Christian Family Facing Difficulties

Verses Used in Today's Lesson. Joshua 24:14-15; Romans 12:1-2, 9-18, 21

Memory Verse: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2). Central Truth: Christian family members must work together to help one another remain strong in the Lord.

Faithfulness to God Above All: Read Joshua 24:14-15.

Many families, both Christian and non-Christian, have great problems these days. Many families do not teach or read the Word of God together as in times past. Families need to be constant in God's Word.

Joshua was angered by the inconsistency of his own people. He told them to "...choose you this day whom you will serve..." (Joshua 24:15). Every Christian family needs to make this choice. We cannot be neutral. We are either serving God faithfully or Satan faithfully. We have to make a choice. If we choose God, life will not always be easy. He demands our total commitment. He calls for our dedication and devotion, but he promises to give us his love and protection. Are you ready to choose God? Is your faith in God or in things which will pass away? Do you hold on to an everlasting redeemer or to material possessions? Is Christ in your life? Is he first in your life? We must build our foundation on Jesus Christ alone. Hold on to him because no one who does is ever put to shame.

Be Different: Read Romans 12:1-2.

People should see a difference in the way Christians live. This difference is seen in our relationship to our family first. Are you a witness in the way you relate to your family and those around you? If you are a faithful witness, people will come to know Christ through you. If not, the Church of Christ will be ridiculed and put to shame. We need to sacrifice ourselves. Without this, the gospel will have no roots on which to grow.

The difference comes when we are changed by the Word of God. This change will affect how we treat our spouse and our children. People should see God's love in our love and care of them. Have you been changed by the Word of God? Do people see a difference in your life since you accepted Christ? People want to see the actions of faith in our lives. They want to see changed minds, values and attitudes. The Bible says that although we are in the world, we are not of the world. We should be different from others around us. This difference should be visible in the way we treat our families.

Depend on One Another: Read Romans 12:9-13.

To make a good fire, you need to use many sticks of firewood. You put several sticks together in order to make the fire strong. If you remove a stick from the fire, the flame on that stick will die. Christians are like sticks of firewood. They need one another in order to build a strong relationship with God.

Families need each member in the same way. It is unfortunate when members of churches and families fail to love each other as they are commanded. It is worse when they fail to forgive each other. Without forgiveness it is impossible to please God. We need to forgive each other before we ask God to forgive us. We need to admit our need for one another in our families. We need to value each as part of the whole.

Another important Christian characteristic mentioned in these verses is hope. We hope in things not yet seen. Without hope, our faith is fruitless. Hope helps us to be patient and constant in prayer. Patience and hope go together. We must be patient despite our problems. We should not give up but hope in faith that our present suffering will come to an end in glory.

Do your family members help each other? Do you depend on your husband or wife or children? Do you count on them as worthy and dependable? Husbands and wives must work together to build a strong fortress of faith. This will keep the family together against external attacks. Above all, we need to depend on God and obey his Word. We fail when we depend on and listen to people rather than God. People can fail us. God will never fail us! Put your faith in him. He is dependable. The family built upon him has a firm foundation.

Love as Christ Loves Us: Read Romans 12:14-18, 21.

The Bible mentions love as the first of all the commandments. A loving Christian will love everyone despite differences and problems. The Scripture says we should even love those who hate us. If we love only those who love us what good have we done? To love as Christ loved, we must have his power to enable us. It is difficult to love some people, especially those who want to harm us. The Word of God demands that we do everything possible on our part to live in peace and love with everybody. Is your relationship with your neighbors and family what it should be? You need to re-establish your relationship of love with all of them today.

The Word of God says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). How can you do this? It is not easy on our own. We must surrender our will to the will of Christ. We need to make him the foundation of our homes. Our homes will not stand if they are not built on Jesus Christ. Also, we must express our love by sharing our concern with those in trouble. Those who have been hurt by the world need to hear loving words from us. They want to see our love expressed in actions. We can discover ways our families can relate to others in need. Our family can be a light to our community.

What This Lesson Means to Me:

Life is full of choices. Christians need to make choices for their lives. They need to choose to serve God and show love in their families.

However, Christians live in an imperfect world which is suffering. Those who are suffering need God's love. God's love will come into our lives when we surrender ourselves to Jesus Christ. His power will help us relate to our families and others in love even when they cause us pain.

Is your family suffering? Do you have problems with your children, your wife or husband? If we want to have happy homes we need to put our faith in Christ. We must build our homes on a foundation of Christian love.

Things To Think About and Do:

Family life in today's world is difficult. Life in the cities has changed the family unit. List some problems that families have today that they did not have 20 years ago:

List some problems that you or people in your church are facing in their families:

God can have victory in these situations. Pray for his help as you try to help your family and others overcome the problems you face.

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Philippians 1:27-30

Monday: Philippians 2:1-4

Tuesday: Philippians 2:5-11

Wednesday: Philippians 2:12-13

Thursday: Philippians 4:4-7

Friday: Philippians 4:8-9

Saturday: Read your Bible Study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 8: Alcohol and the Family

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; Romans 13:13-14; Ephesians 5:8-18

Memory Verse: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

Central Truth: Christian families should avoid using alcohol so they can be strong and stable.

The Results of Alcohol: Read Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35.

Drinking alcohol is a very destructive activity. Many people say they need to drink to relax their minds. Others say drinking is a social activity. Others say they need to drink to suppress their fear or frustrations. Strong drink is capable of doing many bad things to its users. Drinking can destroy our Christian witness, use up all our money and hurt our bodies. In addition, it can hurt our families. When parents drink heavily, children suffer. They do not get proper food or clothing. They have no money for school fees. They feel neglected and unloved.

Proverbs 23 describes the foolishness of drinking and drunkenness. It makes a person look and act foolishly. Alcohol changes our thinking. In addition, it uses up our finances. Lives can be ruined because of drinking. It can be very dangerous, as well. Today many people are killed on the roads and in other accidents due to the effects of alcohol. It is the cause of crimes in many countries. Rape and abuse toward spouses and children increase when there is heavy drinking. Alcohol is not a good thing for a Christian family. We are the light of the world. We must be careful to guard our witness to the lost. Whoever is led astray by alcohol is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1)

Clothed With Christ: Read Romans 13:13-14.

Christians have a duty to be different from those around them. We are expected to live a faithful moral life. We are people of light and not of darkness. Verse 13 says, "Let us conduct ourselves becomingly...." Becoming behavior does not include drunkenness. Drunkenness is often followed by the other sins listed here: debauchery, licentiousness, quarrelling and jealousy. It often ends in fights and other unbecoming behavior.

Christians need to clothe themselves with Christ. Then they will be protected when they are tempted to sin. His Holy Spirit will remind us how he expects us to live. Can you imagine Jesus becoming drunk and quarrelling with his family? Can you imagine him fighting with his friends? Christians must conduct themselves in becoming ways by changing their minds, attitudes, behavior and values. These should conform to those of Christ day by day.

Please the Lord: Read Ephesians 5:8-14.

Light is good because it enables us to see. Light is also very important, because without light nothing would grow. We would have no food without sunshine. In the same way, Christians are compared to light. The Scriptures demand that we shine as light to the world around us. We are to give light and life where there is darkness. A Christian is called to be light in the world of spiritual darkness.

To be a true light we are called to be faithful witnesses. We are to show the growth, the fruit, which comes from God's light. We are to discover the behavior that is pleasing to God. To do this, we must be willing to read and study his Word. We must desire to know more about God and what he expects from us. We must never participate in the "works of darkness." We must help our children to be light, also. We must make our homes a place where God's Word is important. It must be read daily with prayer and discussion. We must give our children the chance to increase their knowledge of God, so their faith can grow. Our homes must be a light to those around us.

Be Filled With the Spirit: Read Ephesians 5:15-18.

We need to know the work of the Spirit in our lives. Without God's Spirit in our lives, it is impossible for us to please God. Verse 18 says, "...Do not get drunk with wine,...but be filled with the Spirit." God's Spirit is our counselor. He is our teacher. His work is to show us the good and the bad. The Bible says, "...The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). The work of the Holy Spirit is to teach us. He is also there to remind us of what is expected of us. God's Spirit will remind us to defeat the temptation to use alcohol. He will empower us to do his will. He does not want any evil influences like alcohol having a hold over us.

What This Lesson Means To Me: The suffering of many families today is due to neglect by parents. This neglect is often caused by using and abusing alcohol. Many families, especially wives and children, have suffered because the husband and father has misused their family's money. He has spent his family's money on alcohol. He has sacrificed a good family for the momentary enjoyment he finds in alcohol. Many have become slaves to drink, alcoholics. Wives have been left as widows because their husbands have died due to accidents or fights caused by heavy drinking. Children have dropped out of school to seek employment to support the family because parents have failed to take care of them. The Word of God has not been applied in these families which are slaves to alcohol.

The results of alcohol have caused suffering for all involved. Without Christ in our lives we cannot stand true to the Word of God. We need to invite him into our lives so we can withstand the temptations around us. We need to seek our peace in God, not in alcohol.

Things To Think About and Do:

Read Proverbs 20:1. How is alcohol described? _____ and _____

Read Proverbs 23:29-30. What are the results of using alcohol? _____ and _____.

Read verse 32. To what is alcohol compared? _____

Read verses 33-35. What will alcohol do to your mind? _____

Can you think of any ways in which using alcohol can help you? No! It may seem to for the moment, but the end of it is destruction. Be wise. Do not be deceived. Decide not to use alcohol for your own good and for the good of your family.

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Matthew 5:1-6

Thursday: Matthew 6:22-23

Monday: Matthew 5:7-12
Tuesday: Matthew 5:13-16
Wednesday: Matthew 5:43-48

Friday: Matthew 7:13-14
Saturday: Read your Bible study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 9: Christian at Work

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12; Colossians 3:22-25; 4:1

Memory Verse: "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men" (Colossians 3:23).

Central Truth: Christians should work hard and honestly in order to give a positive witness.

John worked very hard in school. He was a faithful Christian who was serious in his studies. His aim was to become a college professor. His friends laughed at him whenever he told them his dream. He often told his friends, "God helps those who help themselves." After secondary school he got a very good college education. He got good employment and has continued to study every day. He is still working toward his goal. He believes he will achieve it because he has worked hard.

Christians Set a Good Example: Read 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9.

Some people say work is a curse from God, but God himself worked when he made the universe. He is our example. It is work that completes us as men. If God made the earth for us, he expects us to work by taking care of it. God expects Christians to be the stewards of his creation.

Paul and other apostles worked for their needs. Paul was a tent-maker. In 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8 he said, "...We were not idle when we were with you, we did not eat any one's bread without paying...." Sometimes church workers depend too much on those they preach to. They expect that all their needs will be met by the church members. Paul set a good example for church workers and all Christians to see. He did not depend on anyone to provide his food. He worked hard to get his own food. He paid for what he ate. He did not become a burden to anybody.

If you work as a civil servant, work honestly and set a good example for others. If you are a cleaner, clean with all your might. If you are a teacher, prepare your lessons well. Christian workers are not lazy people.

The Scripture says those who are Christians but do not support those of their own house are worse than unbelievers. Christians need to know the Bible principles about work. They need to set a good example for others always and in all ways. When we set a living example for them, our witnessing to them about Jesus will be easier.

Christians Work Responsibly: Read 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

Work completes us as men and women. Work is a blessing from God, not a curse. A Christian who depends on others to support him is not faithful to those around him. Paul, for this reason, commanded idle Christians not to waste time in idleness. We are to work responsibly, as if the Lord is there watching us. We should work for the number of hours that we get paid. We should work as if the work we do is for our own benefit. Do you work only when others are working? A Christian should not do that. He should work even when no one else is working. A Christian does his work and is committed to it. A faithful Christian does not exploit his employer. He does his work responsibly and earns his living out of it. To a Christian, work is an obligation and a blessing. It completes God's plan in creating us. He did

not want us to be idle but to strive to make God's world a better place. Idleness lead to boredom. This often causes problems in a community. Boredom usually leads to misbehavior.

Christians Do What is Good: Read 2 Thessalonians 3:13.

Christians are the light of the world. Their light needs to shine before all men at all times. People everywhere expect us to do what is good. We are not like everybody else. We do not belong to the crowd. We may be in the crowd, but we have a special mission. God expects us to be a special people. This is sometimes very difficult. We grow tired of always helping others. We want someone to help us for a change! But God wants us to keep on working. Christians are expected to work with other Christians to shape their communities. We are to do all we can to make the world conform to God's will. We are challenged to continue doing this without tiring. We are challenged not to grow "...weary in well-doing" (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

Christians Try to Please God: Read Colossians 3:22-25.

In New Testament times many people in the world were slaves. Paul counselled slaves to work hard for their masters, as if they were working for God. He reminded them that they would be rewarded by God for their faithful service and obedience. Hard work, even for unkind masters, is pleasing to God. He will reward us and punish those who mistreat us.

Perhaps if you are not happy in your job, you think you do not have to work hard. But the Bible is clear that God expects us to do our best in any

situation. If we love God we will want to please him. We cannot experience the joy of Christian living if we are not ready to please God. We need to be instruments through which the gospel will reach others. We need to labor faithfully where we are. Be ready to depend on God in all circumstances of your life.

Christians Are Fair: Read Colossians 4:1.

Christians are always expected to set a good example. Others see our actions and reactions. They will judge us, not by what they hear from us, but by what action they see from us. Are you fair to people over whom you have authority? How do you relate to those who labor under you? Do you treat them fairly? Do you pay them fairly and according to law of the land? Do you have a sympathetic heart to their suffering? Do you give practical help? Christians do not neglect to ease the hurts of the suffering people. We need to be sympathetic and willing to help those in need. We need to treat those who work for us fairly and pay them what is their due. Doing this shows that we realize that all we have comes from our Master, God.

What this Lesson Means to Me:

Christians are hard-working people. When we work as we should, we support God's principles of work. We need to work in order to make an honorable living for ourselves. We also need to work so we can take care of the earth God gave us. We are the stewards of the earth. When we work, we please God because he also worked. We need to work as responsible people who are responsible to God.

Things to Think About and Do:

Read Genesis 1:26-31. From these verses, we see that God created _____ in his own image. He created man as _____ and _____.

(verse 27) When God gave them the world, he _____ them. He gave them the world to _____ and _____. He wanted them to _____ all the fish, birds and animals. He gave them all the _____ to use as food. Everything that God made and saw was _____. (verse 31)

God planned for man to work in the world. He wanted man to care for the world and control it. God's plan was good. Work is part of God's good plan for his creation.

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Genesis 4:1-4

Monday: Genesis 26:12-14

Tuesday: Exodus 3:1

Wednesday: Judges 6:11, 19

Thursday: 1 Samuel 16:11-12

Friday: 1 Samuel 17:17-18

Saturday: Read your Bible Study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 10: Christians Relating to Non-Christians

Verses Used In Today's Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10; 4:1-2; Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Memory Verse: "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).

Central Truth: Christians should live so others are drawn to Christ through them.

Two of Ruth's neighbors were strong Muslims. Ruth's parents hated them. They did not want Ruth to play with the children of these two neighbors. One day during Sunday School, the teacher taught them about love. He said, "We must love all God's people."

Ruth raised her hand at once and asked, "Sir, does it mean we should also love those of other faiths like the Muslims?"

Her teacher said, "Yes Ruth. God commanded that we love all his people. All people are God's. Those of other religion are God's also." Ruth wondered about her parents and what they had taught her.

Christians are Imitators of Christ: Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

Christians are like a mirror of Christ. They should reflect Christ in their lives. Christians and non-Christians want to see Christ in our lives. A person who is a faithful Christian reflects Christ in his life.

Christians should reflect Christ because they are imitators of Christ. How can we be imitators of Christ? First, by loving those who are different from us. Jesus loved the Samaritans who were half-pagan and half-Jewish. The Jewish people did not associate with them. They hated their neighbors. Jesus ate with tax collectors. These people were hated in the Jewish community. When Jesus came, he showed love to both of these groups. He became a "cross-over" person. He "crossed-over" to people of other cultures and faiths. Christians need to be cross-over people, people who mix with and love non-believers. Christians need to be imitators of Christ.

Paul, Silas and Timothy imitated Christ in this matter. In this passage, Paul described how they shared their lives and witness with the pagan people of Thessalonica. They were gentle, affectionate and generous to them. They imitated Christ to these people and so drew them to Christ. As Jews, they would not have even spoken to these people, let alone shared their lives with them. But because they imitated Christ, they were able to bring these people into the family of faith. Imitators of Christ are called to cross-over to those who are disliked and different.

Christians Live to Please God: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

Paul challenged the Thessalonians to live a life that pleases God. How can we please him? Paul listed several specific ways. First we are to be holy like God is holy. This leaves no place for impurity in our lives. We are to be "clean" in all our relationships, especially those between men and women. God hates sexual sin. He wants us to be clean and pure, as Jesus was when he lived on earth.

God wants us to love all people. When we invite others into our homes we are pleasing God. We should show love to those we work and live with. If we hate our brother, there is no way we can please God. God wants us to live in harmony with all men. When we are in harmony with our brothers, it is possible for us to please God.

Paul instructed the people to live quiet lives, minding their own affairs. We are to avoid gossip and idle talk. We are to be positive people in our community, building it up, not tearing it down. We should build it by being responsible, taking care of our own families and working hard. In this way, we will please God and be a good witness to others. Christians Live in Peace: Read Ephesians 4:25-31.

Christians are called to live in peace with each other. They are to speak the truth and settle their differences quickly. Paul did not say that Christians would never become angry or have problems with others. He did warn about letting the anger grow. Differences and problems should be settled quickly and in a spirit of love.

Paul warned thieves to stop stealing and work honestly so they could help others in need. He warned those who use bad speech to stop. Only good words should come from the mouth of a Christian.

Paul clearly stated that bitterness, wrath, anger, slander and malice be put away. These are words which have no place in the life of a Christian. They are actions which come from the father of darkness. We are children of the light. We bring peace and not discord wherever we go.

Christians Love as God Loves: Read Ephesians 4:32-5:2.

Kindness is a Christian characteristic. When we are kind, we are like Christ. Being "tenderhearted" means we are able to see the needs of others. It means we care about someone other than ourselves. This is also like Christ. He was so tenderhearted that he was willing to die for us! Being tenderhearted leads to acts of kindness as we imitate Christ.

We are reminded many times in Scripture that to be forgiven, we must forgive. We must forgive, because God forgave us. If we are not willing to forgive others, it means we do not think we are really sinners. We think, "God needs to forgive others, but me? I am not so bad" By forgiving others we admit our own sin. We admit that we need to be forgiven for our sins. This should make us ready to forgive others.

As imitators of Christ, we are called to walk in love as he did. How did Jesus walk in love? He was ready to sacrifice himself for us and for all men. He was ready to do whatever was needed to bring people to God. Are we ready to do that for others? Do you love other people as God loves you?

What This Lesson Means to Me:

The way we relate to non-Christians is very important to us Christians. Since we are imitators of Christ, we must try to live like him. Christians must live each day of their lives to please God. This is because we are people of the light not darkness. We are to live in God's light to show others the way to God. We are therefore called to love as God loves.

Things to Think About and Do:

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

How is a Christian to show that he is different from others? (verse 3)

In verse 7, we learn that God has not called us to _____ but to
_____. To disregard this is to disregard _____. (verse 8)

How much are we to love each other? (verse 10) _____

How can we win the respect of others? (verse 11) _____, _____ and

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Galatians 5:13-15

Monday: Galatians 5:16-21

Tuesday: Galatians 5:22-26

Wednesday: Ephesians 4:11-14

Thursday: Ephesians 4:15-16

Friday: Ephesians 4:17-24

Saturday: Read your Bible study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 11: Christians Relating to Fellow Christians

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Galatians 2:20; 3:26-28; 5:13-14; 6:1-10

Memory Verse: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"(Galatians 3:28).

Central Truth: Christians must commit themselves to work and improve their relationships with fellow Christians.

Christians are Loving and Kind: Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Galatians 5:13-14.

Christians use the Bible as the pattern for their lives. One teaching which is clear from start to finish is that we are to love one another. First Corinthians 13 describes Christian loving-kindness. These verses show that we must be humble before others. Humility will result in patience as we deal with others. We will recognize the good in each person. Christian love is gentle and considerate. It thinks of the needs of others. It is happy when others are blessed. It can not be jealous or boastful. Christians persevere with others even when things are difficult. They are ready to ask for forgiveness and ready to forgive. Christian love is hopeful. It believes the best about other people. It is trusting and pure. If we have the Spirit of God in us, we need to show love and kindness like Jesus did.

Paul realized that we have problems within the church and conflict between fellow-Christians. But we are to relate to one another in love, serving one another. There is no place for pride or jealousy. Christians do not think they are better or more important than their fellow-Christians. They realize that God gave different people different gifts. All gifts are for the good of the church. Spiritual gifts should not be a source of division between us. Our relationships should be founded on loving-kindness and service to one another and to God.

Christians Are Ruled by Christ: Read Galatians 2:20.

When a person decides to be a Christian, he chooses to die. Does this surprise you? Did you know that when you accepted Christ, you died? What does that mean? It means that when we accept Christ, we give up our right to rule our own lives. We let Christ rule and direct us. In this way, we grow to be like him. We can relate to others in love, as he did.

Non-Christians are often negative toward Christians. We must be careful to avoid the friction that can develop in our relationships with non-Christians. Good relationships show non-believers God's love. Our love and patience in relationships can bring them to God.

Unfortunately, sometimes Christians have serious misunderstandings. We must use self-control to avoid such a situation in our own lives. We need to use Jesus' example to avoid these problems. The Word of God is the best tool for Christians. If we are ruled by Christ, we need to show that we are different in our relationships with others.

Christians Are All Children of God: Read Galatians 3:26-28.

The greatest gift we have from God is the right to become his child. This gift put right our relationship with God and with our fellow man, as well! It put us

all in the same family. If we are his children, we are brothers and sisters. We need to live together in love and humility. Christ broke down barriers which had existed between different groups of people. He made us one in Christ Jesus. No longer is one group of people more important than others. All are of equal value before God through Christ.

Christians Help One Another: Read Galatians 6:1-6.

When are Christians expected to help each other? Paul mentions at least three situations here. First, we should be ready to help a brother who is having spiritual problems. We should guide him back to God in a spirit of humility. We should not be proud of our spiritual strength. Anyone can experience problems in their spiritual life.

Next, we are to bear one another's burdens. We may think this refers only to physical support. A brother can seek our help in solving any kind of problem. We need to help. It may be a misunderstanding in the family. Our advice can help. We need to watch for the suffering of other people. We should be ready to listen and help where we can. Are we generous, or do we help only those who are in a position to help us? Will we inconvenience ourselves to help others? Others are watching to see if we act like Christ.

Christians Do Not Get Tired of Doing Good: Read Galatians 6:7-10.

The Bible speaks of our deeds as seeds which we plant. If we plant good seeds, we will reap good harvests. Bad seed produces bad harvests. Seed planted in the Spirit will reap eternal life! Our kindness to others is eternal seed. God wants us to show love to all without getting tired. He does not count the number of people we have helped. He does not count the things we have given to those in need. God measures our faith by our continuing desire to help. Showing love is not temporary. It is a way of life. Do not get tired of doing good things to others. With God's help you can go on and on. In the end you will be given your reward.

What this Lesson Means to Me:

The main characteristic of a faithful Christian is loving kindness. When Christ comes into our lives, he rules us and our nature changes. We give up our self-rule and let Christ lead. Because we are ruled by Christ, we are his children. A child obeys, so we must follow and obey Christ. Are you helping one another as Christians? Do you sometimes complain that you do not want to help anymore? Christians do not tire of doing good. Do not get tired of helping those who need your love and help.

Things to Think About and Do:

Read 1 Corinthians 13. Give an example of how you can show others each of the words which describes Christian love.

patient: _____

kind: _____

not jealous: _____

not arrogant: _____

not rude: _____

not selfish: _____

not irritable: _____

not resentful: _____

rejoices in the right: _____
bears all things: _____
believes all things: _____
hopes all things: _____
endures all things: _____
never ends: _____

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: John 14:15-17

Monday: John 14:23-24

Tuesday: John 14:30-31

Wednesday: John 15:9-11

Thursday: John 15:12-17

Friday: John 15:18-21

Saturday: Read your Bible study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 12: Christians Relating to People of Other Races

Verses Used in Today's Lesson: Acts 10:34-35; 17:24-26; Ephesians 2:13-18

Memory Verse: "...Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35).

Central Truth: All men are created by God, and he loves them all. We should do the same.

Moses asked his father, "Daddy, why is Mark so brown?"

His father asked, "Who do you mean, my son?"

He said, "I mean the son of our missionary. Why is he not black as we are?" His father answered, "My son, God created all human beings, and they are alike in many ways. However, there are differences in them, too, like the color of skin or their culture or language."

Then he said to his son, "Look at the flowers and trees in the field. They do not have the same figures. Each different tree has its own kind of flowers. Their flowers are of different colors and very pleasant for us to see, smell and admire. God made things like that for our enjoyment. People are the same. Each one is a special creation, each one different."

God Loves All Men: Read Acts 10:34-35.

Christians need to understand that God created everyone even though they are different. When he created man and woman, he said they should multiply, subdue the earth and fill it. He did not say that all the people would be just alike. Adam and Eve's sons Cain and Abel showed us that. There are all sorts of people in the world. God made some to be tall, others short; some are thin, others fat. All were created by him. Whether Asian, European or African, all are equal in the eyes of God. All are loved by him.

God chose to reveal himself to the world using his chosen people, the Jews. He chose and prepared the Jewish people to share their knowledge of God with the world. Even so, God does not have favorites. He loves all who worship him in truth and sincerity. He wants us to see Christ in each other. The color of the skin, the race or culture should not matter. He showed this truth to Peter in a vision in Acts 10. At the end of the vision, Peter realized that God was for all people, not just the Jews.

There are people who do not attend church because of differences in color, culture or race. Some feel inferior to others. Others think those who are different are inferior. They do not want to be with others who are not like them. This attitude may be the result of the unfortunate period of colonialism. In many parts of the world, colonialism divided God's people. It was not God's intention that one race of people would rule over and dominate another race. It was a sad time in history when this was happening. It is sad that people still try to dominate others by misuse of power. Even so, the question remains: Is Jesus Christ at the center of your life? If so, you must love as he does. He loves all regardless of race, tribe or color.

God Planned the Different Races and Tribes: Read Acts 17:24-27.

God created so many different things in the world that we still have not seen them all! Plants, trees and flowers come in many varieties. They do not all have the same color or smell. They do not produce the same fruits. Why did God create various things with all their differences? He had a purpose. He wanted us to enjoy their diversity. He wanted to add to the richness and fullness of our life. God is creative. He knew we would enjoy our lives more if there was variety. We would become bored if everything looked the same. Therefore, we are different, animals and plants are different because God made them that way. Our races, tribes, cultures or languages should not separate us from him. They should draw us to him in appreciation and worship.

They should not separate us from one another. We should enjoy our differences, not fear or despise them.

Jesus Has Broken All Barriers Between Us: Read Ephesians 2:13-18.

For centuries before the coming of Christ, the human race was divided. Each race or tribe kept to its own kind. The whole world was filled with prejudice and hatred. The Jews, whom God has chosen to tell the world about his love also hated all others.

Verse 14 says Jesus Christ "...has broken down the dividing wall of hostility." The Old Testament gives a very good account of the Jewish social system. It was very difficult for a non-Jewish person to break the barriers of the Jewish community. The Jews' lives were governed by laws which were meant to help them only be true to God. For this reason, the Jewish people kept away from strangers. Jesus Christ revealed God's new plan for man's salvation. We are not counted righteous by keeping the laws now. When we surrender ourselves to him, to his Lordship, we become his children. We bury our desires and accept his. We surrender our will for his will. We are then accepted by him. His love breaks down all separations.

The Jewish Christians refused to accept non-Jewish people as Christians until they performed Jewish purification rituals. The early Christians soon realized that this was not necessary. Jesus died on the cross for all people. He did not go to the cross for the Jewish people alone; he went there for the sins of the whole world. For this reason, he has broken the barriers that stopped others from accepting him as their Saviour. Jesus Christ has broken racial, tribal and national barriers. He belongs to all who come to him by faith alone. We are not acceptable by keeping certain laws, by purifying ourselves or observing certain rituals. We are acceptable by surrendering to him in faith.

What this Lesson Means to Me:

God has no nation or tribe. He does not belong to a certain continent or special people. God loves all men regardless of their tribe or nationality. He has no geographical favorites anywhere! His favorites are those who have given themselves freely to him, those who are ready to surrender their will for his. Do you think God is unreachable because of who you are? Do you think he does not love you because of your color or tribe? All the barriers that divided us from him have been broken. We have been joined to him again through his Son on the cross. Come to him today, for he belongs to all.

Things to Think About and Do:

Read Galatians 3:23-29. Answer these questions:

How were people saved in the past? _____

What saves us now? _____

In Christ we are all _____

There is no longer Jew or _____, slave or _____ male or _____.

We are all _____ in Christ.

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Acts 10:1-16

Monday: Acts 10:17-23

Tuesday: Acts 10:24-33

Wednesday: Acts 10:34-43

Thursday: Acts 10:44-11:10

Friday: Acts 11:11-18

Saturday: Read your Bible study
lesson for this week.

Lesson 13: Christians Relating to the Elderly

Verse Used in Today's Lesson: Proverbs 16:31; Leviticus 19:32; Psalms 71:17-18; 92:12-15; Isaiah 46:4; 1 Timothy 5:1-4, 8

Memory Verse: "Even to your old age I am he, and to grey hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (Isaiah 46:4).

Central Truth: Christians should respect, love and care for the elderly.

Old Age is a Crown: Read Proverbs 16:31 and Psalms 92:12-15.

Traditionally, in African society old people have been highly respected. They have an important place in the family. Old age is seen as blessing from God. Many believe that those who have lived well are rewarded by God with a long life. Those who live with no regard for God, live a short life. This may not always be true. but it is often so. Many Africans believe this to be true.

In many African churches, the old are greatly respected. In some churches, it is only the old who are admitted into the pastoral ministry. The fact is that both the old and the young need to work together in doing God's work. Young people sometimes look upon the old as retired people who are not fit to do God's work. The old have a contribution to make in the church today. We must love and respect them. We need to see them as valuable people who have a role to play in our churches and society. We also need to encourage them to continue serving God as they can.

We Are to Respect the Aged: Read Leviticus 19:23 and Psalms 71:17-18.

Most African societies still respect old people. They are important because others seek advice from them. Whenever a problem arises, the old are always involved in the discussions. This shows how important they are in our society. We value their experience and points of view. Often it is the elderly who have taught us about God and our social values.

However, this practice is slowly changing. New ideas from other cultures are coming into our society. Our way of life is changing. Many young people are leaving the village to find a "better" life in the cities. This often means that the old people are left alone in the villages. They are left with much of the work which was once done by the younger people in the extended family. They are the ones who take care of the farms. They are sometimes neglected. They rarely see the young members of their families. When they do return, the young people think they know more than the elders. They no longer value their advice. Their respect and role in society are changing greatly.

Christians are commanded to be different. We need to treat our elders differently than others do. We need to continue to respect them and care for them. We need to meet their needs, see their value, wisdom and gifts. We need to love them as Jesus does.

The Aged Can Minister and Serve God: Read Isaiah 46:4.

In some parts of the world, the old are seen as a curse on those who have to care for them. Sometimes they are put in special homes for old people. In these homes, they are cut off from the people they are used to. They feel lonely and unloved. God loves and cares for the aged. He wants us to show them his love.

Many times we have opportunities to show God's love to old people. They are usually happy to have someone to talk to. They have a lot of time to sit and think. They often think about their lives. They wonder what will happen to them when they die. During this time in their lives, we have a good opportunity to share God's good news with them. The elderly are often eager to hear about God's love. If they do not know Jesus as their Saviour, we have a good opportunity for witness. We can help them by assuring them of God's love and salvation.

If the old person is a Christian, we may help him understand that God still thinks he is important. He wants the old to serve him, to preach his Word and be his witness. He wants to use them if they are willing. God loves the old people who have been faithful to him. He wants them to share their knowledge and experience with younger Christians.

We Love and Care for Them: Read 1 Timothy 5:1-4, 8.

In our villages we often see the suffering of old people. Some of these old people need food, clothing and shelter. No Christian should ever let members of their family suffer. The Bible condemns such behavior. It says that such neglect is as bad as being a pagan. Christians need to support and help the aged. We should help provide food for them. We need to show our love and care.

We should value them because they have a lot of knowledge and wisdom which we need. If they are Christians, they have Bible knowledge which has accumulated over the years. We need to see their worth and involve them in serving God. We need to learn from them how to live a life that is pleasing to God.

What This Means to Me:

Christians need to have a positive attitude toward the elderly. We should look for opportunities to help them. Old age is not punishment from God. It is a normal process of life. God loves the elderly as he loves anybody else. He wants them to serve him because he loves and cares for them. At the same time, he wants us to love and take care of them. We should not disregard them. God loves them all, we must do the same.

Things to Think About and Do:

Think about the many old people in the Bible who served God. Read the following passages. Give the name of the old person God used in his work.

Genesis 6:5-8; 7:6 _____

Genesis 12:1-4 _____

Exodus 7:1-7 _____

Joshua 13:1 _____

Joshua 14:6-12 _____

Verses to Read This Week:

Sunday: Psalms 56

Monday: Psalms 25

Tuesday: Psalms 46

Thursday: Psalm 21

Friday: Psalm 92

Saturday: Read your Bible Study

Wednesday: Psalms 84

lesson for this week.