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Written by Betty Morris



TEACHINGS OF FAITH AND
COURAGE

Designed By J.W.Tembo

Teaching of Faith and Courage
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"Ask another to read Isaiah 30:1-7. Say: "These verses tell of the same mission. God wondered why the people wanted to trust in the strength of Egyptian military might when they could use God's greater power."

Say: "In Micah 6:6-8, there are two speakers, the people and God. I want one person to read verses 6 and 7 which are the words of God."

When the reading is finished say: "The people were sarcastic in their questions. They knew God would not demand greater sacrifices from them. Indeed, God was not pleased with this outward show of their obedience to him. God knew their hearts. He knew they were sinful people, using their religion as security in a very insecure world. God told them that all he wanted from them were righteous and holy lives."

APPLICATION

Say: "God wants us to have good things in our lives: good jobs, home, families, education and so on. He does not, however, want us to trust in them completely and leave him out. He expects us to bring everything to him. He wants to help us. He is ready to fulfil his promises in our lives."

Ask if there are questions about any part of the lesson. Answer them if you can, or tell them you will bring the answer the next time you meet.

Close the meeting with prayer.

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CHAPTER 1

HOW DOES MAN KNOW GOD?

AIM: Studying this lesson will help me understand that I can know God through Jesus Christ, his Son.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1:1-2:9

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:1-9; Psalm 8

MEMORY VERSE: *"No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." John 1:18*

"I know John," said Samuel. What do we mean when we say we know someone? Do we mean we recognize him when we see him? Or do we mean more than that? We may mean we know what he will do in certain situations. We understand his purpose in life. We know how he thinks.

Can we know someone if the only contact we have with him is letter writing? Can we know someone to whom we speak on the telephone with no other contact? Do we really know these people? No, not completely. We will know something about them, but we really will not know them until we meet them face to face and spend time with them.

Do you know God? How well do you know him? Do you know him as your best friend? Our lesson today will help us know God.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The writer of Hebrews did not sign his name to his book, so we do not know who wrote it. However, he made his purpose for writing the book very clear. It was to help Jewish Christians be faithful to God. He showed Christians that God revealed himself completely through his Son, Jesus Christ.

The author explained that Jesus was and still is greater than angels, prophets or man. He wanted Christians to be faithful to God at all times. He knew that if Christians know Jesus, they will know God and be faithful to him.

Does a person get to know God? There are many ways to know God. His beautiful world around us tells us about God. God created man in his own image. (Genesis 1:26) Then God called men to serve him. He wanted them to love him and to know him. So he told men about himself.

God had lived, but it had been destroyed. God had allowed the destruction because of the sins of the people. He promised that he would do the same thing to Jerusalem that he had done to Shiloh, temple or no temple.

Isaiah 31:1-3 is an echo of Isaiah 30:1-7 where God condemned the Judean nation because they put their faith in the earthly strength of Egypt. God asked why they would trust such false strength when his was available.

Micah 6:6-8 has two speakers. The people of Judah spoke in verses 6 and 7. God answered in verse 8.

The people asked if God was not pleased with their fine sacrifices. They had done the very best they could do, they felt, and they wondered how much more it would take to please God. Their sacrifices did not seem to be enough. Would God be happy if they increased them a thousandfold? Did he want them to sacrifice their children as well?

God answered that he required the people to deal in a just manner, to love kindness and to walk humbly with him. All God required was that they live obedient, righteous lives. Outward displays of devotion had no meaning for God. He wanted the people to leave their sinful ways and live in agreement with him.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Ask: "What makes you feel secure and safe?" Write these on the board as they are named. They may say a good job, a well-built home, enough money to feed their families, good health, their families. If they have read their lessons, they may say, "Only God can give me real security."

Say: "It is true that God gives us the only real security we have, but we trust many other things. Our lesson today is about security and what happened when the Judean nation put their faith and trust in the wrong things."

INTERPRETATION

Ask the students to open their Bibles to Jeremiah 7:1-15. Have these verses read.

Ask another student to explain the Jewish history told in their lesson. If necessary, let others give any information that was left out.

Ask another student to explain the verses from Jeremiah. You might add information from the Background Study. Continue with this explanation until you are sure the students understand why Jeremiah was warning the people.

Read Isaiah 31:1-3. Say: "These verses tell us what God thought about the Judean nation when they sent a mission to the Egyptians, asking for military aid.

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: God is the only one who is worthy of our complete trust.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to recognize that they may be putting their trust in the wrong things. I will encourage them to trust God completely.

TEACHING AIDS: A chalkboard and chalk, or a large paper with a crayon or marker.

BACKGROUND STUDY

The event to be studied in this lesson took place at the Fall Festival, about the year 609 B.C. The Israelite nation had divided into two kingdoms in 922 B.C. The northern kingdom kept the name, Israel, while the southern kingdom adopted a new name, Judah.

At the time Jeremiah's sermon in the temple took place (the event in this lesson), the northern kingdom had been conquered and carried away into captivity. The same fate would happen to Judah in 587 B.C. only twenty-one years after Jeremiah's warning to the Judean nation

Jeremiah 7:1-15 contains God's warning, his charges against the people and his promise to keep them safe if they would live up to their covenant promise. God demanded that the people live lives that would show they were really God's chosen.

Jeremiah 7:1-4 tells that God had told Jeremiah to speak to the people. He was to go to the temple, stand at the gate where the priests would pass and warn the people. God said, "Turn from your sins back to me and I will allow you to stay in this land. Do not continue trusting in the security of the temple to save you from your enemies."

The priests and false prophets were assuring the people that God would not let any harm come to his temple. God said their chant of "This is the temple of the Lord" would not save them. The people were trusting that their outward religious observances in the temple would be enough to persuade God to save them. Jeremiah denounced the whole religious system that had gone so far wrong. In doing so, he put his life in danger.

In Jeremiah 7:5-7, God told the people that if they would return to the covenant and follow its teachings, he would allow them to stay where they were. He was really saying, "I still love you."

Verses 8-15 quote God as naming five of the Ten Commandments. Did the people feel they could break these commandments in their daily lives, then come to the temple to worship God? God would not accept such worship! The people could go to Shiloh and see what had happened there. It, too, was a place where

GOD SPOKE TO MAN THROUGH PROPHETS

Read Hebrews 1:1-4. God wanted to talk to man. He needed men who were obedient and who loved God. He called men to serve him. He called them in different ways.

God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. (See Exodus 3:1-6.) He spoke to Amos in a vision. (Amos 1:1) He spoke to Isaiah in the temple. (Isaiah 6:1-2)

The prophets told others what they knew about God. God wanted his people to know still more about him. So he sent his son, Jesus. The time was right, and all was ready for him. We can know God best when we know his Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Saviour.

CHRIST REVEALS GOD TO MAN

Jesus Christ is God. He was with God from the beginning of time. (John 1:2) Hebrews 1:3 means Christ is God's exact image. When we know Jesus, we know God. (John 14:9) Jesus is like God in every way. He is powerful. He can forgive sin. God has given his Son, Jesus, the place of honour and of power in heaven.

Angels are God's messengers. They were created to serve God. But Jesus is not an angel. Jesus is God's only Son. Jesus is greater than angels. God wants people to know him. He wants you to believe in Jesus. God wants you to be his child. If you are a child of God, what does God want you to do?

GOD WANTS PEOPLE TO LISTEN TO HIM

Read Hebrews 2:1-9. When God spoke to his people through angels and prophets, he expected them to listen and obey him. When they did not obey, God punished them. When children fail to obey their earthly fathers, they are punished. It is the same way when we are God's children.

When Jesus came to earth, many people listened to him. Some obeyed him. Jesus forgave their sins. He changed their lives. All who believed in him were saved.

God uses people who know his Son to tell others about Jesus. Is Jesus your Saviour? If he is, God expects you to obey him.

GOD CARES FOR ALL PEOPLE

If God did not love man, he would not have created him in his own image. (Genesis 1:26) God made man to rule over the world. Later Jesus came to earth. He lived, he suffered, he died on the cross for all men. Jesus rose from the dead so all who believed will be saved.

God cares for all people without regard to race, colour, tribe or customs. God wants all people to be saved.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Do you want to know God? First, you must turn from your sins and accept Jesus as your Saviour. You can know about Jesus without knowing Jesus. Do you understand this? You can know all about some famous person who died many years ago, but you can never know that person. He is dead.

In the same way, you can know all about Jesus who lived in the world many years ago. But until you accept him as your Saviour, you cannot know him. He is dead to you. He comes alive for you when he enters your life as your Lord.

After you accept Jesus as your Saviour, you begin to know him. As you study the Word of God every day and as you pray, you know him better. As you trust him more and more, you know him better and better. You must make an effort to know Jesus. He reveals himself, and he reveals God to the Christian who is obedient. He reveals himself to the one who tries to follow him daily.

We know God best through Jesus Christ. Jesus said he is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to God except through Jesus.

Have you trusted Jesus as your Saviour?

Micah told them God wanted three things. The people must: 1) do justice, 2) love kindness and 3) walk humbly with God. To do justice meant they were to do what was right, treating all people fairly. To love kindness meant they were to have a forgiving, loving and helping spirit. To walk humbly with God meant they were to depend upon God, trusting him completely.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God still wants the same things from his people. He wants us to trust him completely. He does not like to see us depending upon other false security.

Do you have false securities in your life? Are you trusting in the church to save you? Are you trusting in your money, your land or your family and friends for security? All these will fail you.

Why not trust God? He gives eternal security. Even if you have become a Christian, you may not be trusting God fully.

Sin in our lives prevents us from truly worshipping God. God wants us to trust him. God does not want us to trust in things which give us a false security. He wants us to trust him only. God promises to take care of us if we live for him each day.

Josiah was one of the kings of Judah. He was a good king, and he tried very hard to get the people to return to God. The people did not listen very well, and they soon forgot Josiah's words.

Jeremiah knew that the northern kingdom had fallen. He knew they had fallen because they had turned away from God. God spoke to Jeremiah and told him to warn the nation of Judah. Read Jeremiah 7:1-15.

Jeremiah told the nation they must not trust in the temple. It was built with the hands of men and could be torn down by the hands of men.

A CALL TO REPENT

Then, Jeremiah told the people of Judah to "....Amend your ways and your doings." (Jeremiah 7:3) They were to repent and stop doing wrong acts. Going to the temple was not enough. They must live for God every day.

They were to treat the people in a righteous way. They were not to mistreat strangers or orphans.

They were to be faithful to God. God was angry because so many were following other gods.

GOD'S PROMISE

God made a promise to the people of Judah. He said if they repented and were faithful to him, he would keep them in the land promised to Abraham. He would protect them from their enemies. If they failed to keep their promise to God, they would be taken into captivity just as the northern kingdom had been.

God proved once again how much he loved the people. It did not matter that they had continued to sin against Him, he still loved them.

Jeremiah wanted the people to understand all that was required of them. He asked them some questions: 1) Were they going to keep on sinning? 2) Were they going to continue to break the covenant by stealing, murdering, committing adultery, swearing falsely and worshipping other gods?

The people of Judah thought all they had to do was attend the temple services. Jeremiah told them God wanted them to live pure lives. Another prophet, Micah, told them what God wanted them to do.

WHAT GOD WANTS FROM HIS PEOPLE

Read Micah 6:6-8. The people of Judah thought God wanted many sacrifices. They did this, but it was not what God wanted.

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: Man can know God best by knowing his Son, Jesus Christ.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to know that the only way they can know God is through Jesus.

TEACHING AIDS None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Hebrews was written to a group of early Christians who had begun to drift away from their beliefs and their faith. The book was written by an unknown author to call these Jewish Christians back to the love and enthusiasm they had once had. To do this, the writer reminded his readers that Christ is above the prophets and above the angels.

In these verses, special attention is given to angels. At the time of the writing, belief in the power of angels was growing. Men felt that angels acted as spokesmen between God and man. The writer wanted the Christians to know exactly where Christ is in relation to angels.

Hebrews 1:1-4 is a beautiful series of verses with a deep message. The writer says God has used many different ways to speak to man. God revealed himself to mankind through the prophets. He only revealed a part of himself each time, however.

Through Elijah, God told mankind that he alone was God. Isaiah was allowed to tell of God's holiness. Amos used a voice of thunder to say that God was a just God. He would punish those who disobeyed him. Jeremiah wept aloud as he saw how God would deal with individuals rather than nations. Hosea used the home as he pictured God as a forgiving God.

The writer went on to say that the revelation given to the prophets was incomplete, but the revelation was complete in the Son of God. He said that Christ, the Son of God, is heir as well as Creator. He reflects the glory of God as sharply as a mirror reflects an image. Christ is the image (very likeness) of God. He holds the universe together. His power is the same power God has. The Son has cleansed man of his sin. He has claimed his right to sit at God's right hand. His name is higher and greater than that of any angel.

Hebrews 1:5-14 is a series of quotations from the Old Testament. The purpose of these quotations is to show that Christ is indeed greater than the angels. The writer asked whether any angel had been called the Son of God. He ended this series of verses by saying that angels are just ministering spirits for the saved of the earth.

Hebrews 2:1-9 is a difficult passage of Scripture. The author warned the Christians that they must not drift away from the message they had received from God. They must take a firm stand so they can direct other men to the same salvation they have received.

Salvation is an on-going process. Many people feel that after they receive Christ, there is nothing more to do. Others look forward to sharing God's glory in eternal life, but they fail to share the message with the lost around them. Salvation has a beginning (the accepting of Christ), a continuing (the growth and daily following of Christ) and an end (eternal life with God). The Hebrews were not growing. This was what had concerned the writer. He wanted them to grow.

Then the writer of Hebrews quoted from Psalm 8 which is a scripture of what God intended man to be. Man was to be a ruler upon the earth. Man failed to fulfil this purpose. Read Hebrews 2:8. In verse 9, however, we see our hope. We see Jesus, and through him we can return to the place God intended for us. The Son suffered and died for us so we might not have to taste death (separation from God).

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "For the next five lessons, we will be studying in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews was written to call the Christians back to the message of salvation. Many of them had begun to believe strongly in angels and their power. We are not sure who wrote this book, but we know he wanted to remind the Hebrews that Jesus was greater than the prophets or the angels. In his letter, he reminds them of the faith they once had."

Interpretation

Ask the students to open their Bibles to Hebrews 1:1. Have one read the first four verses of Hebrews 1. Ask: "How can we know God?" Give time for discussion. Be sure the students say that we know God through Jesus Christ.

Say: "In Old Testament times, men knew God through the sayings of prophets. God used many prophets at various times to tell men about himself. He was able to tell them a little at a time about himself. Man was not able to receive all there was to know about God at one time. So, little by little, down through the ages God spoke to man, telling him that he was holy, that he was forgiving, that he was just, that he would punish those who failed to obey, that he loved them. Little by little, man was able to get a picture of God. It was left, though, for Christ to reveal God completely to mankind."

Ask: "How did God reveal himself through Christ?" Again, give plenty of time for discussion. Allow them to say that no one can know Christ until he accepts

CHAPTER 13

DANGERS OF FALSE SECURITY

AIM: This lesson will teach me that I must put my full trust in God and reject the false security of the world.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 30:1-7; 31:1-3; Jeremiah 7:1-15; Micah 6:6-8

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Isaiah 31:1-3; Jeremiah 7:1-15; Micah 6:6-8

MEMORY VERSE: "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (Psalms 118:8).

People trust in many different things. A man may feel safe and secure because he has a good job. What happens, though, if he should lose his job?

People may put money in banks, and this makes them feel secure and safe. then the banks fail, and their money is gone.

A wife may have a good husband who takes good care of her. She feels she is secure. She has nothing to worry about. But her husband dies leaving her with no money.

What can people trust that will not fail them? This lesson will tell us.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH

The nation of the Israelites had come to a disagreement. The northern part of the country wanted to worship idols. They worshipped the images of calves. They did not want to worship God. They thought God would not punish them. None of their nineteen kings tried to bring them back to God. This part of the nation kept for themselves the name, Israel.

The southern part of the nation chose the name of Judah. They followed the dynasty of David. They worshipped God, but some worshipped idols too. Some of their kings tried to bring these people back to God.

Israel, the northern kingdom, felt secure, but they fell first. They were taken captive by the Assyrians. Jeremiah warned Judah, the southern kingdom, to repent and return to God. Judah, however, felt very safe. Nothing could happen to them since the temple was at Jerusalem. They were sure God would allow nothing to harm his house.

Application

Ask: "Do you ever feel that you suffer for the sins of someone else? A wife whose husband drinks suffers. Sometimes we do suffer because of the sins of others, but this is not God's punishment for sin. We should never accuse God of being unjust."

Take some time for discussion of this lesson and conclude the meeting with prayer.

him as his Saviour. Make sure they say that it is through knowing Christ that we are able to really know God.

Ask: "After we receive Christ as our Saviour, do we know him completely?" Encourage discussion to include the necessity of following Christ every day, of trusting God's Word, reading it and praying.

Ask a student to read Hebrews 2:1-9. Ask another to explain verse 1, another to explain verse 2, a third to explain verse 3 and a fourth to explain verse 4. Ask what the gifts of the Holy Spirit are.

Say: "Verses 5 through 9 came from Psalm 8." Have a student find this psalm and read it. Say: "God created man to rule this world, but man failed to do what God expected. So Jesus Christ came to die so God would be able to restore man to the state he desired for him. The last verse takes our eyes off man and puts them on Jesus, who suffered and died for us."

APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

Ask: "Why are these verses important to us today?" Give time for the students to discuss this. You want them to see that the only way we can know God is through his Son, Jesus.

Say: "Are we being the disciples Jesus wants us to be? Are we following him as he has told us we must? Are there changes we need to make in our lives so we may know God better through his Son, Jesus?"

Close the meeting with prayer. Ask God to show each student what he needs to do in his own life.

CHAPTER 2

JESUS, OUR HIGH PRIEST

AIM: I will study this lesson to understand how Jesus acts as a priest between me and God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 2:10 to 5:10

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 4:14-5:10

MEMORY VERSE: *"For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."* Hebrews 4:15

In a war-torn area, a small group of men, women and children ran through the woods as fast as they could. The adults kept looking back to see the enemy who followed closely. As a child stumbled and fell, he was quickly picked up and carried by his mother. The leader knew that the group was too exhausted to go much farther.

Suddenly, just in front of the leader, the ground seemed to disappear. There was a wide gap and no way around it. The men could jump across, but the women and children could not. The leader called four men together and spoke to them quickly. Then the four ran with all their speed and jumped the gap. On the other side they supported each other and leaned far back over the gap.

The leader called two more men to hold his feet, then he stood and fell headlong across the gap. The four men grabbed his arms as he fell. There the leader hung between both sides! The men helped the little children to walk across on the body of their leader. The women followed, and the leader was pulled to safety by his friends. The last men made their jump.

Then the group hid quietly in the bush. When the enemies came to the gap, they were sure the women and children could not have crossed there. They divided and began to search in the trees beside the gap.

The small group quietly made their way on in the security of being on the opposite side of the gap.

JESUS IS OUR BRIDGE

Our lesson today tells us that Jesus is our priest. A priest is a bridge between God and man, and between man and God. He bridges the gap for us. In the Old Testament times the high priest was a very special person. He was the one who represented God to man and man to God. But the high priest of Israel was also

Then say: "Our lesson today is from Ezekiel 18. It tells us who should be blamed when a person sins."

Interpretation

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Ezekiel 18. Say: "Our lesson today is like the story we just heard. Part of it is about the righteous grandfather, part about his sinful son and part about the righteous grandson. Let us read verses 1-4." You as the teacher, may read these verses, or you may ask a student to do so.

Say: "The Israelite nation was in exile in Babylon. They had been conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and taken captive to his capital city. The exiles remained there for fifty years. The captivity was a punishment by God for the whole nation. The nation had sinned, breaking their covenant relationship with God. God had warned them he would punish them, and he did.

"While the nation was in exile, they began to wonder why. Older people died and younger ones began to ask themselves why they were being punished for the sins of their fathers. From this thought came the idea that they themselves had committed no sin at all. God was punishing them for something they had not done. He was an unjust God.

"They thought about this injustice so much that they made a proverb about it. We have just read that proverb. What does it mean to say that a son's teeth are set on edge by the sour grapes his father ate?" Discuss this. Help your students understand that eating sour grapes makes a person's teeth feel strange. This was to say the father's sin was being unjustly borne by the son

Say: "God sent Ezekiel to tell the people they were wrong. God punishes the person who sins. Punishment is not carried over from father to son. Let us read the first of the three examples Ezekiel used. Will someone read verses 5-9?" Use your Background Study to explain these verses to the students. Say: "This righteous man was like Solomon's grandfather in the story we heard at the beginning of the lesson."

Ask someone to read verses 10-13. Say: "These verses are about the sinful son who would compare to Solomon's father in our story," Again use your Background Study to help the students understand these verses.

Ask someone to read verses 14-20. Say: "These verses are about the righteous son of the sinful man, or Solomon in our story." Again, use your Background Scripture for explaining these verses.

Say: "Verse 20 is the summary of the lesson Ezekiel was teaching. Each man is responsible for his own sins." Read that verse again.

rewarded for his father's good acts and constant observance of the law.

This sinful, wicked son rejected everything that his father valued. He was guilty of every sin that his father had refrained from doing. His sinfulness exceeded the righteousness of his father because he had involved himself in violent acts, possibly causing another's death.

The sinful son will die for his sins. He has committed the sins by choice. Now he will pay the price for those sins. His father cannot save him either by his life or by his acts.

Ezekiel 18:14-20 brings us to the third generation. This son is righteous. Perhaps he had been taught by his grandfather. Perhaps he had observed the evil acts of his father, and realized that he wanted no part of them. He chose goodness for his life.

This righteous son has the same rewards as his righteous grandfather. He is not touched by the wickedness of his father. He will live because he is living a righteous and pleasing life.

In the belief the exiles held, this son should have to pay for the sins of his father. Ezekiel says that this is not true. This son has done nothing to deserve death. Each man is responsible for his own fate. He either lives or dies as he chooses righteousness or sin.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

"TELL THIS STORY"

"Solomon sat in the darkened house listening to the sounds of voices outside. He knew the police had come again, looking for his father. When the knocking on the door started, Solomon froze in his chair, barely breathing. If he were very quiet, the police might go away thinking no one was there. Then Solomon could go to his grandfather's house where he would be safe. The last time the police came, Solomon had been beaten because he could not tell them where his father was.

"Finally the sounds from outside stopped. Solomon waited a few minutes, then he slipped outside to run all the way to his grandfather's home. 'Why?' he wondered. 'Why was his father a criminal when he had grown up in his grandfather's home? Everyone knew how good his grandfather was.' Solomon tried to be as much like him as he could be. No one should blame his grandfather for his son's mistakes; but many did, just as they expected Solomon to be like his father."

Ask: "Could this story really happen?" Give time for discussion.

human. He sinned like the other people did. Part of his work was to offer sacrifices to God for his sins and the sins of his people. The high priest tried to teach the people about God, but he often failed. He tried to help people, but he also needed much help.

Jesus is our High Priest. He really helps people. He teaches us about God. He helps us understand God, because he is God. He was without sin, and so he can forgive our sin.

Christians have special privileges and blessings because we are children of God. When we accept Jesus as Saviour, he also becomes our High Priest. When we sin and ask for forgiveness, Jesus is there in God's presence asking God to forgive us.

HOLD FAST TO FAITH

In Hebrews 4:16-5:10 Christians are told to "hold fast" to their faith. If we hold fast to our faith, we use it every day. We let it grow. We want to keep sin out of our lives.

Jesus knows we are weak. He knows we will sin. He understands us. He wants to help us. When we come and tell him about our sins, he forgives us and gives us his mercy and grace. These are wonderful gifts from our High Priest. He gives us forgiveness, mercy and grace!

Jesus is our bridge, our bridge to God. He knows our sufferings and our weaknesses. He is there to help us.

THE OLD TESTAMENT HIGH PRIEST

In the Old Testament days there were many priests, but there were only a few high priests. What were the requirements for being a high priest?

1. He had to be called by God. He had to be Jewish. He was called to act for the people before God. He was to try to understand his people and try to help them.
2. He had to offer sacrifices for his sins and for his people's sins. The high priest must offer an animal sacrifice for his sins. Then he had to offer another sacrifice for the sins of the people.

Being a high priest was difficult work. No one asks for a job! He was chosen for this work. God chose Jesus and told him he was a "priest forever." He will always be our High Priest.

Melchizedek was a high priest of God. Abraham paid tithes to him, (Genesis 14:18-20). God called Melchizedek to be a priest. He was well-known. Yet Jesus is greater than Melchizedek.

When Jesus drew near the cross, he prayed with "loud cries and tears" to God. He knew that it was only God who could save him from death. Yet, because he was obedient to his Father, he accepted his death on the cross.

Jesus understands us. He understands our sufferings. He has been through every suffering we have, and he did not sin.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Jesus wants his people, believers in him, to be obedient. He wants us to obey him. He has saved us from our sins. He will forgive us our sins. Therefore, we should be humble and obedient to Jesus.

Remember the man who became a bridge to save his people? Read the Introduction of this lesson again. Jesus is just like this man. He offered himself to be the bridge for man to pass over to reach God. Do you still have sin in your life? Will you ask Jesus to forgive you? Will you obey him? He wants to help you. He will help you live an obedient, happy life. He is waiting for you to say, "Your will be done, Jesus."

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH:

Every person is responsible for his or her own actions.

TEACHING AIM:

I want my students to take responsibility for their sins. Further, I want them to know they can be forgiven for their sins if they ask God.

TEACHING AIDS: None

Background Study

Ezekiel 18 gave the Jewish exiles a new view of their responsibility for sin. All through the Old Testament we can find instances where God held individuals responsible for their own acts. The exiles, however, had begun to feel that God was punishing the nation as a whole for sins their ancestors had committed. They had started thinking God was unjust. This chapter was written to discount a proverb the people popularly held, and to make God's position clear. Each person suffered the rewards or the punishment for his own deeds. The fruits of right living along with the punishment for sins are not passed along from one generation to another.

Ezekiel 18:1-4 contains the proverb that God said was wrong. A son's teeth cannot be set on edge by the sour grapes eaten by his father. God commands that this proverb be removed from the thinking of the people. God tells the exiles that each of them is responsible before God for the acts he does. Each soul belongs to God. This points out that each person is separate. When one sins, that sin is his alone. God says the soul that sins will die. He will not die for the sins of some other person. He will die because he himself has sinned. This recalls the New Testament teaching from Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death.

Ezekiel uses three pictures to explain this new idea of individual or personal responsibility for sin. First he told of the righteous man in verses 5-9. Then he told about the sinful son of that righteous man in verses 14-18.

Ezekiel 18:5-9 tells what the righteous man does. This is the thought that Ezekiel maintained, the righteous man is known for what he does rather than for his abstaining from forbidden acts.

The righteous man keeps the law. The acts named in these verses are those that were recognized as righteous acts in the law. If a man is to be counted as righteous, Ezekiel said, he must observe the total law.

Ezekiel 18:10-13 shows us the second generation. This sinful son had a righteous father. The righteousness of the father did not touch the son. He was not

the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn, and live."

What is God's message? Repent and turn from your sin. Repent and live. Repent and get a new heart and a new spirit. Repent and be forgiven.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God still wants man to repent. God wants to forgive men today. God has even prepared the way of salvation for all who believe in Jesus, his son. Now we can have eternal life with God. No one likes to be wrong. We all like to be right. Have you been blaming someone else for your mistakes and your sins? Why not confess your sins to God? Ask God to forgive you. Repent. Turn away from evil. Ask God to help you live by his laws and his teachings. God will give you a new heart and a new spirit. He will give you eternal life. He waits only for you to accept his gift.

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus is our High Priest. He represents man to God and God to man.

TEACHING AIM: My students will learn that Jesus is our High Priest, representing man to God and God to man.

TEACHING AIDS Draw a picture of a bridge on paper or the chalkboard, or you may bring a picture of a bridge.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Hebrews 4:14-16 introduces Jesus as our High Priest. The word used for priest is the same word used for bridge. That is what a priest is. He bridges the distance between God and man.

A high priest was the one who took the sacrifice for the atonement (payment) of sin from men to God. He was the one who returned from the presence of God to grant forgiveness for sins.

Jesus is our High Priest who has passed through the heavens. The earthly high priest passed through the veil in the temple of the holy of holies to atone for his and his people's sins. Jesus passed through the veil of death and has passed through the heavens until he has arrived at the very throne of God. He is exalted (lifted up) because he has arrived into the presence of God himself.

We are to hold fast to our confession. The word used for hold fast is to seize with great power. We are told to hold on so tightly to our "confession," which is our faith, that nothing can shake us loose.

The High Priest we have is exalted, but he is not far away from us. Indeed, he has suffered all that we suffer. He can understand our weaknesses, although he was not weak. Because of this, we may come boldly to God's throne to receive his mercy and grace.

Hebrews 5:1-10 is a very interesting group of verses. They deal with the mysterious high priest, Melchizedek. The writer of Hebrews says Jesus was a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Who then was Melchizedek?

Melchizedek was mentioned two times in the Old Testament, in Psalm 110:4 and in Genesis 14:17-20. The Genesis account tells that he was a priest of the most high God. Abram gave tithes to Melchizedek.

Nothing is said about the ancestors of Melchizedek. This is strange because people could be high priests only if they were descendants of Levi. Melchizedek

seems to appear from nowhere and disappear into nothing. He has no mother nor father listed.

The meaning we must understand is that Melchizedek qualified as a priest, not because of his family, but because of his own qualities and personality. He had no beginning and no ending. He was a priest forever. Jesus is our High Priest because of his qualities. He is Priest forever.

Jesus did not choose to become a High Priest. He was appointed to the job by God, just as the Levitical priests were.

When Jesus lived upon the earth, he felt the same weaknesses we feel. He cried aloud with cries and tears. He learnt to obey, and through that obedience he was made perfect. As the perfect Priest, Jesus became our bridge to God (the source of eternal salvation).

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Show your students the bridge you have drawn or the picture. Say: "Bridges help us to go places where we could not go otherwise. Some bridges cross deep, wide rivers. We could not cross to the other side without the bridge. Some bridges cross deep gorges. We could only desire to go to the other side if we could not cross the gorge by the bridge. Our lesson today is about a very special bridge, the bridge from man to God."

Interpretation

Have your students open their Bibles to Hebrews 4:14 and follow as you read 4:14 through 5:10.

Say: "Let us look at verse 14 first. Who is our great high priest?" Let the students answer.

Ask: "What does it mean to say Jesus 'passed through the heaven;'" Let the students discuss this. Bring them to the conclusion that Jesus has arrived in the presence of God after passing through the veil of death. Explain that in the temple worship the high priest was required to pass through the veil or curtain to enter the holy of holies where he offered atonement for his sins and the sins of the people. Ask the students to explain the meaning of atonement. (To atone means to make amends for. If a person robs another of some money, the way he atones for this act is by paying the money back.)

Ask: "What is the confession we are to hold fast?" Let the class discuss this until they understand that they are to grasp their faith so strongly that nothing can shake it from their grip.

GOD'S REPLY - A NEW TEACHING

God was not happy with the Israelites because they were using this false proverb. God said, "...*this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.*" Ezekiel 18:3

The new teaching given by God to the Israelites in Ezekiel 18:4 had two parts.

1. "All souls are mine." Every person belongs to God. Every person answers to God for how he uses his life.

2. Every person, every soul, must pay for his own sin. No one could blame his parents, his friends, his children or anyone else for the sins he committed. Each man, each individual soul has to pay for his own sins.

The payment for sin in the Old Testament was death. (Ezekiel 18:4) The payment for sin in the New Testament was death. The payment for sin today is death, and it will be so forever. This is a just law that God has given us and to all people for all ages, for all times. But God does not stop with punishment for sin. He continues by giving hope to those who obey him.

REWARD FOR GOOD LIVING

Read Ezekiel 18:5 and 9 again. God told Ezekiel that each person would be judged on his own actions. He would not be judged nor condemned to death because of his father's or his forefathers' sin.

Ezekiel knew his people. God listed acts a just man and a righteous man would not do. 1) He would not worship idols or false gods. 2) He would keep himself sexually pure and faithful to his wife. 3) He would treat all people fairly, without partiality. 4) He would show mercy to the debtor. 5) He would feed the hungry. 6) He would give clothes to those who needed them. 7) He would not cause violence or trouble between men. 8) He would obey God. 9) He would follow God's teachings in his daily life. 10) He would not charge interest on loans to fellow Israelites. God said that a man who did these things was just or righteous.

EVIL LIVING IS PUNISHED

In Ezekiel 18:10-13, the prophet Ezekiel listed the evil or the sins which would be punished by God. He said that the one who sinned, the one who lived the evil life would be the one who would be punished. A son would not be punished because his father sinned. A father who lived a good life would not be punished because his son lived an evil life. Each person would pay for his own sin.

God always gives a person an opportunity to repent. God is just. In Ezekiel 18:30-32, God said he would judge according to each person's way of living. Then God said, "...repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin...Get yourself a new heart and a new spirit'...For I have no pleasure in

CHAPTER 12

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

AIM: I will learn in this lesson who is really responsible for my sin and wrongdoing.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 18

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Ezekiel 18:1-20

MEMORY VERSE: *"Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sins shall die."* Ezekiel 18:4

How often do you blame someone else for your mistakes? It seems to be the way of most people today. We blame others for our mistakes and wrongdoing. We do not want to feel guilty.

Adam said, "Eve made me do it." From that time, people have blamed others for their sins.

Today we shall learn that each person is responsible for his own sins. The blame for wrong actions, for mistakes, for sin cannot be placed on someone else. We cannot blame family, friends or enemies. We must answer to God for all our sins and wrongdoing.

The Israelites thought God would not punish them because of the covenant he had made with them. They expected God to punish their enemies but not them. They were wrong. God punishes anyone who does wrong. God will forgive sin, but we must ask for his forgiveness.

A FALSE PROVERB

In Ezekiel 18:2-13, we read about a false proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

The children of Israel were saying they were suffering for sins they never committed. What they were really trying to say was, "The sins of which you accuse us were born in us. We cannot help having them. We must sin. Our fathers sinned, and the evil passed to us. We cannot change ourselves."

The Israelites did not understand that God's judgement in the past fell on the nation of Israel because the nation failed to obey God. Individual people were choosing to disobey God now. They were blaming someone else for their sins.

Say: "Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses because he is completely man. He remembers exactly how pain felt. He understands what suffering is. He must have understood temptation much better than we understand it. He was tempted much more than we are. Usually, when the temptation becomes very great, man yields to the temptation. Jesus never yielded. It is like pain. We can feel only so much pain before we lose consciousness. We can feel temptation only so long before we yield to it. Jesus did not 'lose consciousness' but suffered the full degree of temptation and 'was without sin.' We see this in verse 15 and again in chapter 5, verse 2."

Read verse 16 again and ask the class to explain it.

Say: "In Hebrews 5:1 and again in verses 4 and 5, we read that Jesus did not choose the job of High Priest. God appointed him to this position."

Use your Background Study material to explain to your students the meaning of "after the order of Melchizedek." Have students read Psalm 110:4 and Genesis 14:17-20.

Say: "When Jesus lived on the earth, he prayed and requested God to do things. When it came time for him to die, he asked God to save him from death. His cries were loud and full of tears. When God refused to 'let the cup pass from him,' Jesus willingly drank it. The cup that Jesus wanted to avoid was the cup of death on the cross. Because of his willingness then, to accept God's will and to obey it, he was made perfect. He has become our perfect High Priest and the source of our eternal salvation."

Ask if there are questions. Answer any that are asked, using your Bible or Background Study.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "What does this lesson mean to us?" Let the class discuss this. Help them to conclude that because Jesus is our High Priest, we have a doorway to God. Remind them that when Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn apart. This was a symbol that the doorway to God was now open to all men.

Ask: "Is there one here today who has not accepted Jesus as your Saviour? If so, I would ask you today to consider making Jesus your High Priest. If you will stay after the others leave, we will discuss how you may become a Christian."

Continue by saying, "Jesus was appointed by God as his High Priest. In the same way, God appoints men today to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. If a man chooses to preach without the call of God, he will fail in the job. He will face many kinds of difficulties. God chooses, not man. When God calls, Christians need to learn to recognize the call. We cannot know what God is saying unless we spend time with him daily, talking to him and listening to him." Discuss this

idea with your students, assuring them that God uses his Word as well as our inner feelings to speak to us.

Close the meeting with prayer.

Then have verses 9-18 read, and explain the meaning of these verses. Let the students add any information they have from the pupil's book, their Bibles or their personal knowledge.

Show the Ten Commandments which you have written on the chalkboard or paper. Ask the class to compare the two lists. They will notice several of the commandments in this passage.

Say: "God expects us to follow his laws of holiness. First, holiness requires habitual, regular care for the poor. Second, holiness forbids us to steal, to deal falsely, to lie or to swear falsely. Third, holiness requires that we observe laws against oppression and violence. Fourth, holiness demands just and fair judgements, without regard to wealth or lack of wealth. Fifth, holiness prevents us trying to discredit a fellow man by telling lies about him. Sixth, holiness requires that we love our neighbour."

Application

Ask: "Do you remember our lesson from chapter 10 concerning God's presence? You were asked to think about your own life and whether you need to change some part of it. If you will, I would like for us to share some of our decisions. I will be first." (Teacher, you tell something that you have decided to change in your life. This will encourage the others to share also.)

Give enough time for this sharing. Encourage your students in the new decisions. Promise that you will pray for them. If no one has shared, or is willing to share, tell them you understand. Do not let them feel humiliation. If, however, they have not shared because they forgot to do the activity, suggest they do it today.

Conclude the meeting with a prayer of commitment for yourself and your students.

welcome the family to her home for food. Mary liked Esther very much and decided that she would be a natural leader in the women's activities. She heard Esther sing and talked to the pastor so he would ask Esther to sing at the church.

"As the weeks, then the months went by, many in the church recognized Esther's many talents and asked her to do several different jobs. Mary was delighted. Esther was not. It was evident to Esther that although the church members asked her to do many things, they still thought of Mary as the leader. Soon, this began to bother Esther more than she could stand. She thought about Mary very much, and she began to have an idea.

"Esther thought, 'What if Mary is not really as good as everyone thinks? What if she is just as ordinary as the rest of us? It drives me crazy to see how everyone always wants Mary's advice on everything that goes on. It is not fair.' The idea grew in Esther's mind that Mary was not as good as she acted. But, she needed to convince the others. Esther thought, 'The church members would not want Mary to lead the youth group if they knew she was a sinful woman. They would hesitate to talk to her about their problems if they knew she was not true to her husband. That was it! It would be easy to discredit Mary. Mary's husband often had to be away from home for weeks at a time. How did everyone know that she was "pure" while he was gone? She lived a long way from most of the church members.'

"So Esther started to spread her lies. She did not have to say much, just a few questions here and there. She started with a woman in the church who liked to talk by asking her, 'Who was that man I saw going into Mary's house Tuesday night?' A few more suggestions made first to one and then another, and Esther's lies began to bear fruit.

"Mary continued her good work, not knowing what was happening. She was shocked when the pastor came one day to ask her to let Esther lead the youth group. When she went to the market and saw three church members talking, she went eagerly to them for a short visit. Before she got to them, all three saw her, and quickly walked away, each in a different direction. Mary was confused. She wondered what was happening."

Ask: "Could such a thing happen in our church?" Give the class a few minutes to discuss this.

Say: "If we desire to make our lives holy, we will not do what Esther did. Our lesson today is about living holy lives."

Interpretation

Have the students open their Bibles to Leviticus 19. Ask one to read verse 2. Use your Background Study to explain this verse.

CHAPTER 3

JESUS, THE NEW COVENANT

AIM: This lesson will help me understand how Jesus became our new covenant, the way to God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 6:1-10:39

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSONS: Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:10-25

MEMORY VERSE: *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."* Hebrews 10:23

We do not often hear the word, covenant, except among Christians. It means an agreement between two or more people. Today we use the word, contract, for agreements between people.

This lesson is about the agreement God had with man in the Old Testament and how this was changed in the New Testament. We need to remember as we study that the covenant was the way God related to man.

God knew man would need words of comfort. He knew men would need to know he loved them. So God made a covenant with Abraham, his children and his grandchildren. Later God gave them the law through Moses. He knew his people would need laws to help them live right. God's people promised to obey him and his laws, but they did not. They broke their promise to God. Let us look at God's covenant with Abraham.

THE OLD TESTAMENT COVENANT

Read Genesis 12:1-3. This is one of the Old Testament covenants between God and man. After Adam had sinned in the Garden of Eden, God looked for a new way to have a relationship with man. His words in Genesis show that he had chosen a nation, Abraham's descendants. They were to serve as a priest nation, bringing men to God and God to man.

Later the descendants of Abraham were called Israelites. God promised many good things to Abraham *"...so that you will be a blessing."* Genesis 12:2. They quickly accepted all the good things, but Abraham's descendants forgot that they were to be a blessing too. They had agreed to obey God. After a period of time, however, the Israelites forgot their promise. They forgot God's laws. They sinned against God.

THE NEW, EVERLASTING COVENANT

God knew the old covenant had failed. He told Jeremiah to warn the people that there would have to be a new one. The new covenant would be one of love and willing obedience to God.

Read Hebrews 8:7-13. The new covenant was made by the blood of Jesus. Jesus' death on the cross made the new covenant, *"for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."* Matthew 26:28

The new covenant would be written in the hearts and minds of those who believed. They would not be able to forget it. The new covenant would keep them from sin. It would help them want to love, serve and worship God.

GOD'S MERCY

In Hebrews 8:12, we read about God's mercy. "Iniquities" are sins. God promised to forgive our sins. "Mercy" means God will forgive us, even though we do not deserve it. Because of our belief in Jesus, he will take away the guilt of our sin.

The new covenant was made because God loves us. Since he loves us, we want to obey him. We do not fear him. We love and respect him.

We have a new covenant with God. We have a new life of faith and hope. This new life makes us want to help others.

This new life is without fear. It is without loneliness Jesus promised to be with us always when we believe in him. He who promised is faithful. Jesus made the new covenant, so we have life everlasting.

Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Because of what Jesus did for us, we can go boldly to the throne of grace with full assurance in faith. We know God loves us. We are not afraid. Jesus will never break his covenant with us. He is faithful.

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

We have faith and can go into the very presence of God. Jesus, our high priest, waits there to help us.

We need to hold strongly to the hope that is within us. This is the strong, secure hope that we will spend eternity with Jesus. We will share God's glory

We must think about ways to encourage our Christian brothers and sisters around us. This is our time to show the love that God has given to us. We serve others in various ways, displaying the love we have for them.

Sin rarely goes alone. One sin leads straight to another sin. Stealing or fraud leads to lying to try to cover up the first sin. Lying then leads to false swearing. The sin in the beginning was against man, but quickly turned to sin against God also.

3. 19:13-14. Holiness requires that we observe laws against oppression and violence. The Lord was speaking in defence of the helpless and the defenceless. Taking unfair advantage of the poor is against God's law of holiness. Wages should not only be fair, but they should be paid promptly.

Holiness prevents our taking advantage of someone's bad eyesight or carelessness or stupidity. When the word of a curse is uttered, it does not matter whether the person is deaf or not. This shows the power of the spoken word. The curse is there whether the cursed knows it or not.

4. 19:15-16. Just and fair judgements, without regard to wealth or lack of wealth, is the next law of holiness. The rights of the wealthy, as well as the rights of the poor, are to be safeguarded. Legal discrimination is wrong.

5. Trying to discredit a fellow man by telling lies is completely opposed to a pursuit of holiness.

Slander is forbidden. In a court of judgements, slander must not be listened to nor spoken. If human courts become unjust, as Christians we know God will make things right when his day of judgement comes.

6. 19:17-18. The last law of holiness is very familiar. "Love the neighbour as thyself." It deals with the state of one's heart toward his neighbour.

In Leviticus 19:17, as well as in Galatians 6:1, God's people are told to help their neighbours by telling them when they do something wrong. It must be done in a loving, gentle way. If you see someone doing wrong, and do not speak to him about it, then you share his guilt before God.

Do not seek revenge when you are wronged. This is God's business. Christians should be holy because the Lord is holy.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Mary was a good Christian woman who attended her church regularly. When there was work to be done in the church, Mary was there doing all she could to help. If there was a class that was beginning, Mary made sure there was good preparation for it. She was appreciated by most of the church members.

"Then one day, a new family joined the church. The wife and mother of the family, Esther, was a very friendly, lively woman. Mary was one of the first to

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: God wants us to be like him which means we will be holy.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to use chapters 10 and 11 to help them work toward holiness.

TEACHING AIDS: Write in short form the Ten Commandments, either on the chalkboard or on large pieces of paper. Put them where the members can see them.

Background Study

Read Leviticus 19:2. Why did God give man laws to live by? In this verse, we have the reason: "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am Holy."

We must understand that God wants men and women who are willing to obey and to live holy lives. These words were written to the Israelites for the purpose of reminding them that their inward thoughts show themselves in outward moral actions.

If men obey God's laws, they will develop strong moral and spiritual characters. To be holy is not easy. Yet it is so important that in Leviticus 19 the Lord emphasized his laws by saying, "I am the Lord," fourteen times. If these laws are this important to God, then God's people need to listen to them, obey them and live by them.

Leviticus 19:9-18 can be divided into five distinct teachings. Each deals with man's relation to man, and the duties which the law of holiness requires from man to man.

1. 19:9-10. Holiness requires habitual, regular care for the poor. God is the God of the poor and needy. God's people are his stewards to carry out his commands. Greed and stinginess should have no place in Christian character.

The Israelites followed this law by leaving one corner of each field untouched. Their idea was that they should leave one sixth of a field for the poor. In the vineyards, workers gleaned the biggest clusters of grapes first. The smaller clusters, unseen during the first gleanings, were to remain in the vineyards for the poor and needy.

2. 19:11-12. Three of the Ten Commandments are included in these two verses. This section is concerned with stealing and false dealings. Lying and false swearing are regarded as being connected with theft and fraud.

Even in the early days of Christianity, some people had decided to stop attending the worship services. The writer of Hebrews reminded them that they must meet together so they could help each other. Read Hebrews 10:25 again. Christian people must meet together in worship in order to obey God. As we meet with other believers, we can encourage each other.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Since we have a new life of faith and hope, we should help others of the faith. We should encourage each other. We should work together doing good deeds.

We should meet together to worship God and to hear what God has done for others. Meeting together as Christians helps all to know God's presence. It helps us to realize we are not alone. Jesus is with us.

The Israelites forgot God. Have you broken promises you have made to God? Some Israelites neglected to meet with other Christians to share God's love. Have you failed to worship with other Christians and share God's love? Have you been encouraging others in their faith?

Remember that when you forget God, you have sinned. Jesus died once for our sins. That great sacrifice was enough for all eternity, for all men.

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus is the new covenant between God and man.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to learn that the Old Testament covenant between God and man has been replaced by a new covenant made possible by Jesus.

TEACHING AIDS: If you can, bring a copy of a contract or an agreement of some kind to class.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Hebrews 8:7-13 there is a long quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34. Keep these verses from the Old Testament close as you study the verses in Hebrews. Jeremiah was able to see that the old covenant would be ineffective. A new one would be established.

God made three old Testament covenants. One was with Noah, one with Abraham and the other was with Israel. The last of these between God and Israel is the covenant Jeremiah said would be ineffective.

God promised Israel certain things if Israel would obey God and serve him. This covenant was not between two equals, like the covenant between David and Jonathan. Rather, it was like the covenants between kings and nations they had conquered. The covenant between Israel and God was more in the nature of a gentle demand from God. Israel would become a priest nation, and God would reward them. In fact, he already had rewarded them by bringing them out of Egypt.

Verse 7 states that this covenant was faulty, but the fault lay in man's disobedience, not in God. Thus, man made it necessary for a new covenant to be made.

Verses 8 through 12 is the quotation from Jeremiah. Note that it is not a direct quotation, and so it was probably quoted from memory. There are differences in the two covenants. First, it would be for both the house of Israel and the house of Judah. This is to say that the new covenant would bind up divisions in mankind. Second, the new covenant would be for all. Every one from the least to the greatest was included. A third difference was that it would be written upon the hearts of men, not in a law book. This meant that men would willingly obey God because they love God, not because they are forced to obey him.

Verse 12 is an especially beautiful verse which says that God will remember sins no more.

teller, "You gave me too much."

The bank teller was very happy to correct the mistake. He would have been required to replace that money at the end of the day when all was counted. Christians must be honest at all times.

We cannot be Christians only on Sundays. We must live our Christian faith every day. God loves us. We show our love for God by the way we live every day. We must be honest.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Christian people must treat all people fairly. God treats all people fairly because he is holy. He wants us to be holy too. He wants us to live like Jesus.

Are you honest in your dealings with others? Do you steal from anyone? Do you cheat your employers? Do you keep your promises to other people? Do you borrow money and fail to return it at the agreed time. Do you gossip?

Do you need to make some changes in your life? Do you remember the lesson in chapter 10 of this book? God is with us all the time. He knows us completely. We cannot hide anything from him. He wants us to be holy like he is. How do you measure up to God's plan for your life?

CHAPTER 11

RULES FOR RIGHT LIVING

AIM: This lesson will help me to decide to choose holiness as a way of living.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Leviticus 19

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: LEVITICUS 19:2, 9-18

MEMORY VERSE: *"..You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy."*
Leviticus 19:2

A missionary remembers that when she was a very young child, she often felt she should go to her mother and tell her she loved her. It did not matter if she were busy playing or not. If she had the feeling, she got up, left her play and went to say "I love you" to her mother.

How pleased the mother must have been to hear her tiny daughter tell her she loved her. A smile would come to the mother's lips, and she would hug the little girl.

God is like this too. He likes to hear us tell him we love him. In this book we have studied about God's love and concern for us, his people. We learnt how God continues to give good things to man. Such love requires that man respond to it. Man responds by the way he acts. He responds in the way he obeys God.

In our lesson today we will learn about some of God's rules or laws. The test of true Christianity is the way we live. We must put God's laws into action in our lives. We must respond to God's love in a positive way.

THE REASON FOR RIGHT LIVING

Read Leviticus 19:2. *"..You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy."*

"Holy" was used in the Old Testament to mean "set apart." When "holy" is used in referring to God, however, it meant God is always right. He is perfect. He is without sin. He is pure. God is not the same as man. God is holy.

Because God is holy, he wants his people to be holy also. God's people must be set apart from the evils in the world. The New Testament says that Christians should be in the world but not of the world. God wants man to show his love for God by living righteously.

Verse 13 goes back to the statement in verse 7 that the old covenant was faulty. It tells where the fault lies. It has become out of date, no longer usable, and it is so old that it is to be discarded.

Hebrews 10:19-25 gives four instructions to Christians, three of them positive, one negative. The writer tells us to exercise our faith, hold on to our hope and show our love by encouraging one another. The fourth instruction is to not forsake or neglect gathering with other Christians for worship experiences.

Verses 19 through 22 states that we are to come boldly into the presence of God (sanctuary) because the blood of Jesus gives us confidence. Jesus is the new and living way to God. The old way was the sacrifice of animals. The animals died, but Jesus is living. When we arrive in the presence of God, we find Jesus waiting to serve as our high priest. Our hearts and minds are made clean by his blood. The hope that we must hold fast is our salvation. This is the sure hope we have that God will redeem those who have trusted in Jesus as their Saviour. It is not a vain hope such as men show in everyday life.

We are to encourage one another through love and cause one another to do good works. A Christian should never rejoice in the downfall of another. Rather, we are to lift the fallen and get them on their way.

The writer of Hebrews recognized that already in this early Christian group, some were failing to meet together. He warned them that they must not fail to do this, because they needed each other for spiritual growth. A piece of flaming charcoal taken from the fire will soon lose its own fire. In the same way, a Christian cannot live without being with other Christians in worship.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Show the class the document you have brought with you. Explain that it is an agreement between two or more people. Tell the class what the result of the agreement is. (Two people are married, one has sold land to another, one has agreed to work for the other for a stated period of time and so on. Tell what your contract is.) If you do not have a contract or agreement to show, talk about what they are, how people enter into them, why they are necessary and so on.

Ask the class if any of them have entered into a contract. Spend a few minutes allowing them to tell about these contracts.

Then ask: "Who will give us the meaning of the word 'contract'?" Let the students answer.

Say: "God has had some contracts with mankind. His contracts are called covenants. We will talk about these two covenants today and discover how effective each of them is."

Interpretation

Have your students open their Bible to Hebrews 8:7-13. Ask them to find Jeremiah 31:31-34 as well. Ask someone to read the scripture in Hebrews and another to read the scripture in Jeremiah.

Ask: "What covenant is the first covenant?" Let a student tell what the old covenant was. Use Genesis 12:1-3 to discuss the terms of the old covenant.

Say: "The Old Testament covenant was based on a complicated system of laws and sacrifices. The high priest went into the holy of holies carrying the blood of dead animals to atone for his own sins and the sins of the people. We talked about this the last time we met. Soon, men began to forget God. They refused to obey him. They failed to offer their sacrifices for atonement.

Through the prophets God pleaded for man to return to him. As the years passed, the voice of the prophets became more urgent. Then, God gave a special message to Jeremiah. A new covenant would be necessary. The old one had not worked."

Ask: "Will one of you read Hebrews 10:19-25?"

Say: "Jesus is our new covenant. The high priest had to enter the holy of holies (sanctuary) through the curtain which separated God from men. The flesh of his own body served as the curtain through which Jesus entered into the holy of holiness. His flesh was torn apart and his blood was spilt. Jesus entered the sanctuary of God carrying his own blood, not the blood of dead animals. He is the new and living way to God.

"Jesus makes our faith strong. The writer to the Hebrews encourages Christians to hold on to their hope in Christ. That is the hope that we will spend eternity with God. This is not a false hope, but a sure one.

"We are to love one another and encourage one another to live a Christ-like life. The best place for Christian growth is in the church, but some of the early Christians had already stopped meeting together for worship. Are there any questions about these verses?" Answer any that are asked.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Jesus has become our new covenant. That means he has become the doorway to God. Through him, we can relate to God. In the new covenant, all men of every race, colour and tribe may become God's heirs. The covenant is written on our hearts. Indeed Jesus has come into our hearts where he rules our lives as Lord. He sits on the throne of our hearts, and we willingly obey him.

"We serve a wonderful God. He has tried through all time to bring mankind to himself. He succeeded when Jesus died on the cross."

that he is with us or not.

"Sometimes when we pray, we cannot feel that God is hearing. We may feel that God has left us alone and our prayers are not being heard by him. But God hears our prayers every time we pray. If we cannot feel his nearness, it may be because we have sinned and put a barrier between us and God. This may make it impossible for God to answer our prayers, but he does hear them. He keeps listening for the prayer in which we ask for forgiveness. Then he can restore our relationship. God is always waiting for us to turn to him. Someone has said that if you are not able to feel that God is close, it is because you have moved, not God. In Matthew 28:19-20 God has promised that he will be with us always, even to the end of the age. God will be there wherever we are."

Application

Ask the students to open their books to the section called "What This Means to Me. Ask one of them to read that section aloud.

Ask: "Are there places you should not go, places you would not want God to see you visit? Do you have friends that God might not enjoy being with? Do you have thoughts that would offend God? God is with us all the time. He knows our thought. He knows our words before we say them. Does your conversation please God? Do you ever want to hide from God?

"Let us think about these ideas very carefully. Spend some time today going over what happened in your life this past week. Do you need to make some changes in your life?"

Have your students bow their heads. Pray for them that they will spend some time thinking over their words, their thoughts, their actions. Ask God to give them courage to make the changes they need to make in their lives to enable them to live lives pleasing to God.

Verses 13-18 tell us that God is our maker. He knows our body better than we ourselves know it. He knew it before we became anything at all in the womb of our mother.

The psalmist continued by saying that God's thoughts are precious to him. They are so many and cover so much knowledge.

Verses 19-24 are a prayer that the wicked will perish and that God will search the heart of the psalmist. The wicked seem to be the enemies of both God and the psalmist.

The quiet words of verses 23 and 24 are those of complete surrender to God. After he declared that God knows him entirely, the psalmist asked God to search him and find any wickedness that was in him. He wanted nothing to prevent his being allowed to enter the everlasting way.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Use the stories that you have collected to share with your students true experiences of Christians who have felt God's presence in a special way. Take enough time to share each of the accounts since your students may learn more from these than they will from the written lesson.

After you have told your stories, ask the students if any of them has a similar story they will share with the class.

Say: "God is present with us all the time. When we need help or comfort he is there to give it. Our lesson today is about one person's sense of God's presence with him."

Interpretation

Ask the students to open their Bibles to Psalm 139 and to follow along as you read these verses.

Using your Background Study as a guide, tell the class that the psalm can be divided into four parts. Proceed with an explanation of each of the parts. Ask for questions after each part has been discussed.

Ask: "Have you ever tried to run away from God? It is an impossible thing to do. We Christians sometimes act strangely. On Sunday we may stand in the church and pray that God will be with us. We may ask that he direct our lives and show us his will. Then on Monday, we may try to hide from him because of some sin that we have committed. We want his presence with us, but we do not want it all the time. We would like to choose those times when we ourselves can call him to draw near. But God is not like that. We do not call him to come near us. He is already there. His presence is with us day and night whether we feel

Ask the members to close their eyes and pray silently, thanking God for the sacrifice of Jesus so we may be his chosen family.

CHAPTER 4

FAITH, STRONG AND REAL

AIM: This lesson will increase my understanding that God expects me to continue to grow spiritually.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:1-12:29

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 12:1-17

MEMORY VERSE: *"It is for discipline that you have to endure, God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" Hebrews 12:7*

The teacher told his student, "I have faith in you." What did the teacher mean? Faith means a strong belief in someone or something. It means the teacher had confidence that the student would do the right thing.

To a Christian, a true believer in Jesus, faith means much more. Faith is our trust and belief in Jesus, God's Son, and in God himself. We trust Jesus to save us. This is the beginning of faith for a Christian.

Our faith, however, needs to grow. It must begin to grow as soon as we are born again. It continues to grow until we die and go to be with God.

A GREAT PURPOSE

In Hebrews 12:1, we are reminded that we are not alone in our faith in God. The writer tells us in chapter 11 about men and women who believed in God. They were persecuted, many died and yet they remained true to God because of their strong faith.

Every person who has accepted Christ has a great purpose in the life he lives. His purpose is to become like Jesus. There is no goal more worthy for any man to have.

We know sin keeps us from doing our best to reach our goal in our lives. We should put off, leave behind us, any sin which keeps us from reaching our goal.

Imagine a runner in a race, beginning to run, carrying a fifty kilo weight. He will soon toss the weight away when he sees how slowly it causes him to run. Neither can a Christian try to live like Jesus while carrying a heavy load of sin. It is not possible. We must throw off the sin in our lives, so we can live for Jesus every day.

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: God knows everything about every person.

TEACHING AIM: My students need to understand how completely God knows them.

TEACHING AIDS: Talk to several people (four or five) about times they have felt a special sense of the presence of God. The pastor would be a good one to ask. These people might be helped to remember such a time if you say something like this: "Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt God's presence so strongly it was as if you could reach out and touch him? Maybe it was during an especially difficult time in your life such as the death of a loved one, or your own sickness or a time when your life was in danger. Or it would have been when something wonderful had happened, such as a recovery from serious illness, the birth of a long-awaited child or some other time of great joy." Make notes on these experiences so you can tell the class about them when you meet. Ask each person you talk to if you may tell the class whose experience it is. They may ask you not to tell their names when you tell their experience. If they do not want you to use their name, be sure you do not use it.

Background Study

Psalm 139 is a very personal psalm. The writer had experienced the presence of God in such a deep, personal way that he caused his readers to feel God's presence also. God, for the psalmist, was not a far-away unreachable being. He was as close to the writer as the man's own skin. God knew this man, even the inside of his body. He knew him before he was born. The psalmist was also aware that God was always and forever with him. It did not matter where he went. God was there.

The psalm can be divided easily into four parts, each with a different theme: Verses 1-6, 7-12, 13-18 and 19-24. We will examine each part separately.

Verses 1-6 tell us that God knows everything. He knew the psalmist because he had searched him and known him. He knew when the psalmist stood or sat. God knew his thoughts. God has knowledge of the man's days. He had encircled him completely. What the psalmist meant was that God walked in front of him, by his side and behind him. He was amazed that God knows so much.

Verses 7-12 tell that God is everywhere. The psalmist asked where he could go to run away from God. Wherever he went, God was there. If he went into the skies, God had already arrived. If he descended into the depths of the grave, God was there. He said that if he took the wings of the morning (this means that if he were able to move with the speed of the sun during sunrise) God would be ahead of him throughout his journey. Even the blackest nights cannot prevent God from seeing the psalmist.

Who are your friends? Who do you spend your time with? Are you glad God sees you with those people? Do you need to make some changes in your friends and companions?

What do you talk about most? Do you talk about your work, your money, your place in life, your ambitions, your friends or God? Do you need to change what you talk about? Most of us do.

Can we really say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts."

God already knows our thoughts. He already knows our plans. He knows everything about us. He is always near us and ready to help us. God wants us to obey him. He wants us to have clean thoughts and clean lives. He wants us to love him and praise him.

Do you need to make some changes in your life today?

JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE

In Hebrews 12:2-3 we read that Jesus sacrificed himself so we might be saved. He died for all of us. We have not had to suffer like Jesus suffered. He took our place on the cross.

Discipline helps our faith grow strong and real. Suffering for Jesus increases our faith.

He is our perfect example. He suffered willingly for sinful men.

We read in Hebrews 12:5-11 that Christians are sons of God. This Greek word for son is not the word for a small child. It means an adult son who has come of age.

An adult son understands his father's instructions. Because we are children, adult children of God, we will understand his instructions. We will understand our need to be disciplined when we fail to obey him.

THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD

"Discipline" is the training of the mind and character of a person to produce self-control and obedience. Discipline is for training.

God loves us and must discipline us so we may become what he wants us to be. Our love and respect for him grow when we are disciplined.

When God trains his children, it is often painful. Later, however, the results are wonderful. These results are righteousness, holiness, willing obedience to God's will and purpose in our lives, right living, right working, right standing with God, patience, trust, peace, love and gentleness.

These results of God's discipline are eternal results. We become children who are clean, pure and holy. We become obedient children of God.

There are, however, some dangers a Christian must face in trying to live a faithful life. God provides his Holy Spirit to help during those times of trouble and danger. In Hebrews 12:12-17, Christians are encouraged to keep growing spiritually.

It is very easy for a Christian to be lazy. A lazy Christian will stop reading his Bible. He will stop going to church regularly. He has become lazy, and he does not visit and witness to others as he should.

Christians should be aware of this serious danger. If they see signs of laziness in their lives, they should repent and ask God to help them overcome that laziness.

God's discipline causes his children to want to be obedient. They want to share God's love and teachings with others. God's children share with each other in

their faith.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Every Christian needs more faith. As we use the faith we have, it increases. How do we use our faith?

Think about someone you know who is not a Christian. You want that person to be saved. You think you have little faith. You decide to use the faith you have to try to win that person. You are frightened, but you know you can pray. You pray, "Lord, make it possible for me to see that lost person today." God answers the prayer, and you see the lost person. You may be too frightened to say anything to him about Jesus.

That night you remember how God answered your prayer. That gives you courage to pray again. So you pray, "Lord, thank you for letting me see that lost person today. Tomorrow let me see him again, and give me courage to tell him I am a Christian."

The Lord will answer that prayer too. You are using the faith you have, and it is growing stronger. You are obeying God and practising obedience. If you continue in this way, God will help you show the lost person how to become a Christian.

Every Christian should have a goal or purpose for his spiritual life. That purpose should be to become more like Jesus every day. Reaching that goal will require discipline from God. He will teach us to obey him. He will help us develop a strong and real faith.

Are you willing to have that discipline in your life?

GOD'S PRESENCE IS EVERYWHERE

When you were a child, did you ever do something wrong then try to hide from your parents? You may have been successful in hiding from them for a while. But we can never hide from God. No matter where we go, he is there.

God goes with us to lead us. He wants to protect us from harm. He wants to comfort and encourage us. He wants us to obey him.

GOD KNEW US BEFORE WE WERE BORN

Before you were born, God knew every part of your body. It was he who made your body inside your mother's womb. Every bone, every organ, every part of your body is known to God.

When you were waiting to be born, God knew the days you would live. He made a plan for your life. The psalmist is so amazed with all this knowledge that he told God that God's thoughts were precious to him.

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS PRESENCE

When was the last time you thanked God for his protection? We have many things to thank God for. There can be no harvest of maize if there is no sun and rain. Man does not control the sun and the rain. God does. We should thank God and praise him for everything he does for us.

It is hard to understand how people can continue to be enemies of God. God has done so much for man. Yet, the writer of Psalms said God's enemies were his enemies too.

SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART

The writer of this psalm wanted God to test his heart and his thoughts. He did not want any evil in his life. He did not want anything to stand between him and God. He wanted God to lead him forever.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Do you think it is good that God loves you? Of course it is! Do you think it is good that God knows every one of our thoughts? Perhaps that idea makes you stop and think. Sometimes we may be ashamed that God knows our thoughts.

What kinds of places do you go to visit? Are they places you would like God to see you visit? Maybe you need to change the choices you have been making about where you spend your time.

GOD'S PRESENCE WITH MAN

AIM: How well does God know me? This lesson will tell me.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 139

MEMORY VERSE: *"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"* Psalm 139:7

A small child was playing outside his mother's house. He had gathered some sticks together. He wanted to make a fence. As he took hold of one of the sticks, he suddenly cried out and dropped the stick. It was covered with thorns. One of the thorns had pierced his hand, and blood was coming from the hole. He turned as the tears began to fall and ran to his mother. Mothers know what to do when a boy needs help.

Children go to their parents when they are hurt or need help. To whom do adults go? If we go to our friends or relatives, they will sometimes misunderstand. Sometimes they cannot help even when they want to. There is One, though who can help. He will always understand. He is God.

In today's lesson, we learn that God promised to be with men. The psalmist turned to God when he needed help. He knew God would understand. He knew God loved him and was always near.

GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT US

Read Psalm 139. Have you ever heard someone say, "Come on! Nobody is looking!" Did you feel uncomfortable as though there was someone watching you? You were right. Someone was watching you. God is always watching you.

Many times we forget that God knows everything about us. Jesus said even the hairs on our heads are numbered. God knows all about us.

A young man said, "I tried to run away from God, like Jonah did. But everywhere I went, God was already there." The writer of Psalm 139 said the same thing. We cannot get lost from God. He always knows where we are and what we are doing. God knows what we are thinking, and he knows what we are going to say before we say it. God knows everything. We can tell him our deepest thoughts. We can tell him our hurts and sorrows.

We do not need to pretend with God. He already knows what we are. If we know that God knows everything, then we should realize that it is important to obey him.

CENTRAL TRUTH: God expects every believer to grow spiritually.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to understand what growing spiritually means. This lesson will give them some specific activities they can use to help their spiritual growth.

TEACHING AIDS: Enough paper and a pencil or pen for each student, and a chalkboard or a large paper.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Hebrews 12:1-17 are the verses which teach about a strong and real faith.

In verse 1, the writer to the Hebrews tells that Christians are surrounded by a great number of witnesses, so many that they are like a cloud. This cloud of witnesses are the Christians told about in chapter 11 and all the other Christians who have ever lived. These watchers are there for several reasons. They are to watch to see if we reach the goal. They carried the faith for a distance. Now they want to see how well we carry it for the distance we have to run. They are there to encourage the present runners.

The race the Christian runs must be run with diligence. Any weight of sin must be put aside for the runner to do well. The "sin which clings so closely" gives a picture of a long, flowing garment which the waiting runner lays aside when he steps out to run. This clinging sin might seem harmless at first glance, but it will keep us from running the best race we can run.

Verse 2 tells us not to look at the cloud of witnesses and try to achieve what they achieved. Instead, our eyes are to be fixed on Jesus who is the only witness who ran the perfect race. This Jesus was the one who suffered death on the cross, a very shameful death. In some countries today, the most shameful death a man can suffer is hanging. In the time that Jesus lived, the most shameful death a man could die, the death reserved for the worst criminals, was death on the cross. Jesus despised that shame, but he was looking forward to the joy that he was bringing to all Christians through all time who have been saved because of his death.

Verse 3 tells us to keep our eyes on him because he is our goal. We are to live as Jesus lived. Jesus suffered courageously so we will not grow faint and tired and fall by the way without finishing the race. We struggle, but none of us will ever face crucifixion for the sins of the world. Jesus did. Most Christians will never die for their faith. Some have and some will, but they are few. The writer

to the Hebrews may have been trying to prepare his readers for the coming persecution when many of them would die.

Verses 5-11 tell about the discipline Christians must have. Earthly fathers discipline their children. Our heavenly Father disciplines his children. If we are left without being disciplined or trained, then it is because we are not worthy of discipline. Our training is toward holiness, and it is for our good. It may be painful for a moment, but the results will be good for us.

Verses 12-17 give some advice. We are to lift ourselves up. If we keep stumbling along, it will eventually become impossible to walk straight. We will have abused our muscles and made them unusable.

A second bit of advice is to strive for peace with all men. This striving is not simply a suggestion that we try to have peace. Rather, the picture is of a man trying so hard that the effort is visible on his face and body.

The third advice is to strive for holiness. Holiness is being set apart for God's use. We are to continually grow to be like Jesus so we may be used by God.

A fourth advice is to watch out for roots of bitterness that may spring up which will trouble us. The reference to Esau shows that Esau did not regard his birthright properly even after it was gone. Much later, he could not get the birthright back, even though he wept with bitter tears when he realized what he had lost.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "The announcer had just told the crowd of people that the 440 was about to run. He invited the runners to prepare themselves for the race. Here and there, men stood up and began to get ready to run. Some started running in one place, lifting their legs high to loosen the muscles. Others reached down to relace shoestrings that had become loose. As the minutes passed, the runners began to remove their outer clothing. Off came their warm-ups. Sweat pants came off next. Towels that had been around necks were tossed aside as the men walked to their places at the starting line.

"The race was about to begin, and the runners were ready to run to win. They were trained runners, practising running every day. These men had given themselves completely to the task of being the best runners they were capable of being. Each expected to win the race."

Interpretation

Say: "Like the runners in the 440, we too are running a race. Some of us are running well. Others are far behind because they are stumbling along. Christians need to know how to run this race just like they need to know how to do anything

be saved, that each must repent and accept Jesus. Then each person must tell others that he has accepted Christ. Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9-10 are good verses to use in witnessing. End the skit by having the "lost" person pray a prayer of commitment.

Close the meeting with prayer that anyone present who is lost will accept Jesus.

Ask: "Where were the Israelites when these words were spoken to them by Isaiah?" (They were in exiles in Babylon.)

Say: "Let me give you some historical background to these verses. The Israelites had entered into a covenant relationship with God after they were led out of captivity in Egypt by Moses. They promised they would obey God. They failed to do what they promised. God sent prophets and messengers many times to recall the covenant to the people. They refused to listen. Rather than sharing God with all the nations round about them, they had separated themselves as much as they could from all the people who lived around them.

"Finally, God had to punish his people. He allowed other kingdoms to come in and conquer his chosen people. He permitted the conquerors to carry the Jewish people away at three different times.

"At first, the Jewish people lamented their captivity. They wept tears because they were not able to return to their own homes. But things began to be easier. Some of them were given land. They began businesses. They became money-lenders. They started enjoying being in Babylon. They liked the Babylonian people. They forgot their great desire to return to Jerusalem. They had been in Babylon for fifty years. It had become home to them.

"The prophet came to them, urging them to return to Jerusalem. Permission had been given to them. But they did not want to go. The journey was hard, long, and unpleasant. They did not want to leave all they had and go back to a land they had almost forgotten. This is a brief explanation of why these words were written."

Ask: "What else was the prophet asking the people?" (He was asking them if they had lost their desire for God.)

Say: "The prophet reminded them that God was waiting for them to return to him. He would continue to love them as he always had. He warned the people that God would not wait for them forever. They must call upon him while they could. God would forgive them their sins. He reminded them that his thoughts were above theirs and his ways were above their ways."

Application

Say: "God is still loving us today. He loves us whether we have accepted his Son or not. He wants each of us to do that. It is not his plan that any should perish. Today I have asked two people to prepare a skit for us showing us how to witness to a lost person."

(Be sure to ask Christians to do the skit. The person doing the witnessing should begin by talking briefly to the person about his work, family or home. Then lead into the question, "Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Saviour?" He should use his Bible to show the "lost" person that all men have sinned and must

else they expect to succeed in. Let us read our Scripture for today and see what the writer to the Hebrews had to say about this race."

Ask the students to open their Bibles to Hebrews 12:1-17. Have the first verse read, then use your Background Study to explain the verse. Ask the students to add any information they wish to add, or ask any question about this verse. Especially, talk about the sin which clings so closely. Mention possible sins that might be included here such as laziness, anger, gossiping, unforgiveness and so on.

Continue in this way, discussing verse 2, then verse 3, then 5-11, and finally verses 12-17. This will follow the discussion in your Background Study. Be sure to give the students the time to add information or discuss matters that relate to the verses. You are teaching adults, and many times what they say is more important than what is written in this book to say.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Verse 14 tells us that we are to strive for peace and holiness. Holiness is being like Christ. As Christians this is our life goal, to be like Jesus. If we run the race well, keeping our eyes on Jesus, we will become more like him every day. Today, let us talk about ways we can become like Jesus."

Give each person a paper and pen or pencil. **Say:** "We will discuss these activities. I shall write on the board the ones we decide will help us become like Jesus. You write them on your paper. Later you should put the list where you can see it every day. That way you can add new activities often, and you can judge your own progress."

Discuss each of the following leading members to see that each of them will lead to spiritual growth. The class members may add other activities. Make sure they will help the Christian grow according to Scripture.

1. Attend worship services regularly.
2. Read your Bible daily.
3. Pray often (before meals, before sleep, during quiet time and so on).
4. Tell others about what Jesus has done for you.
5. Prepare yourself to show others how they may become Christians. You may use Romans 3:23; 6:23; John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10.
6. Practise forgiving others immediately when they have done something to harm you.

7. Do a kind act for someone else. Try to do it without letting him know you did it.
8. Give at least one tenth of your income to the church.
9. Give additional offerings when you can.
10. Give the pastor a gift of food.
11. Visit someone who is lonely, sick, old or in prison.
12. Practise praise. Praise God for his creation, for things you often forget to thank him for.

After your list is complete and satisfactory to each student, you may close the meeting in prayer. Ask God to allow the students to begin their efforts this week to become like Christ.

is very clear. "The wicked" are those who sin openly. "The unrighteous" men are those who sin in thoughts and in private places. All are known to God. All are called to repentance. All are guilty before God.

God will abundantly pardon all who repent and turn to him.

Isaiah 55:8-9 says that God's thoughts are not like man's. Man's actions are not like God's. A man who prefers peace rather than war is considered "weak" in the world today. God is long suffering. He is slow to anger. God is calling one more time to try to get people to repent and turn to him.

Second Samuel 7:8:16 is a statement of the covenant relationship God established with David. He promised David that his (descendants, heirs, sons) would be unbroken. These words of Nathan to David told him that he would not be allowed to build a house for God in the earthly sense of the word. Rather, God would allow him to establish a "house" or a line of descendants which would include the Messiah. God assured David in verse 15 that he would not take his steadfast love from his descendants.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Psalm 136 and have someone read it aloud. Ask your students to explain what the steadfast love of God means. Lead them to a conclusion that God's love has no ending. There is absolutely nothing we can do that will take away God's love from us. We do not have to be "good" to earn his love. His love is there in good times and in difficult times. It is there when we are living victoriously, and it is there when we have slipped and are experiencing spiritual weakness.

Make sure that each of you have the same version of the Bible, or that all of you may see one version. Then explain: "I will read the first part of the verse 'O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.' Then I want all of you to read 'for his steadfast love endures for ever.' I will read 'O give thanks to the God of gods,' and you will read together, 'for his steadfast love endures for ever.' We will read the entire psalm in this way."

Now read as you have explained. If you make some mistake at the beginning, start again, until you are able to read the psalm as a responsive reading.

Then, say: "Our lesson tells us that God's steadfast love is with us forever."

Interpretation

Ask your students to turn to Isaiah 55:1-9. Ask someone to read these verses to the class.

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus offers salvation to all who will receive his free gift.

TEACHING AIM: I will use this lesson to try to lead my lost students to the Lord and to teach my Christian students how to lead another to the Lord.

TEACHING AIDS: Make sure you can arrange your room so two people can sit at the front for role playing.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Isaiah 55:1-2 is written to the exiles in Babylon. The whole chapter is a plea by the prophet that they leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem since they have been granted permission.

At first the Jews had wept and longed to return to their native land, Israel. As time passed, however, they found their captivity to be less difficult than at first. They were given land, and they started businesses. They became good at business, at trade and at money-lending.

The Jews were no longer known as priests and prophets of God. They forgot they had told God they would be a nation of priests.

Money, land and work can help a refugee, but these things cannot take the place of his own home. God had created the heart of the people of Israel to hunger for his Word. Peace of soul could only be found in God's Word to them.

In Isaiah 55:3 we read that God is still seeking those lost in sin, "Turn and listen to me," God is saying. If men will hear God, they will live. God's love never changes. God's Word never changes. Still today God is calling all people to repentance.

Isaiah 55:4-5 reminds the people of the covenant they had made with God. It also recalls the covenant God made with David. The people had promised to be a "kingdom of priests, a holy nation."

Now they had forgotten the covenant. They were traders, money-lenders, wealthy and influential people. Yet, God continued to call to them. He cannot break a promise, but he can invite people to return to him. He can punish them. He can discipline them. He does not want to do this. So again God called the Jews to repentance.

Isaiah 55:6-7 tells us there is a limit to how long God will call a person to repent. No one knows when this time will come. "Seek the Lord while he may be found"

CHAPTER 5

VICTORY IN LIVING

AIM: This lesson will teach me why I need to have strong convictions about God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 13:1-25; 1 Corinthians 15:58

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Hebrews 13:1-8, 20-21

MEMORY VERSE: *"Jesus is the same yesterday and today and for ever."*
Hebrews 13:8

A young Baptist girl was accepted as a student at a Baptist high school. Her father thought there was a hostel for girls at the school.

They arrived at the school on a Sunday afternoon. They were very surprised and discouraged to learn there was no girls' hostel.

The headmaster telephoned a pastor to tell him about the girl and her need. He asked if the pastor knew of a Baptist family who could keep the girl. The pastor invited the headmaster, the father and the girl to his home.

The pastor said he and his wife would like to keep the girl. They would treat her as if she were their daughter. The father was surprised. His tribe and the pastor's tribe had been enemies for many years.

Because of his faith in Jesus, the pastor had victory over tribal hatred. He and his wife showed the girl so much love that she felt at home with them during the years she lived with them.

We too can live victorious lives. If Jesus lives in us and we are obedient to him, we will have victory.

LOVE OTHER CHRISTIANS

Read Hebrews 13:1-8. To live a life of victory, Christians must love other Christian brothers and sisters. If a Christian says he loves God but does not love other Christians, he lies. *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."* 1 John 4:20

It does not matter which tribe he is from. It does not matter what colour he might be. If he is a Christian, he is our brother. Today Christians need to show love for one another even more than ever before.

When the book of Hebrews was written, the inns and hotels were very bad. Christians helped others by giving them food and a place to sleep.

Today in Africa, we can offer hospitality to our Christian brothers. We can visit the sick in hospital. We can shop for food for a sick neighbour. We can care for the neighbour's children if the mother is sick. We can help a neighbour do his farming.

There are many ways to help people who are in need.

BUILD CHRISTIAN HOMES

God teaches us to be faithful to the person we have married. It does not matter whether the marriage is tribal, Christian or legal. God's plan is for one man to be married to one woman for life.

Christ helps us have homes that are filled with love, concern, discipline and prayer. He helps us to live so trust and love will grow in the home. Trusting each other and loving each other builds strong Christian homes.

BE HAPPY WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

Hebrews 13:5 tells Christians they should learn to be content with what they have. He is not saying a Christian may not have material things. He is saying we must work hard and honestly to get the things we need or want.

If we spend money foolishly without planning and saving, we will never have anything of value. Money is a tool. It is a way to buy what we want. Money is not to be loved.

Christians who obey God will have the things they need.

JESUS IS ALWAYS THE SAME

Times change. Governments change. People change. Jesus is always the same. He never changes. Today Jesus has the same power that brought him out of the grave. It is the same power he had when he lived on the earth.

Jesus has promised to give us that power if we will obey and trust him. That power, Jesus' power, will help us get victory in our Christian life every day.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

How strong a Christian are you? Do you stand up for your convictions? Do you really believe God and his promises?

Isaiah knew that sin begins in the mind. A sinful man must leave his bad thoughts. He must change the way he acts. Then God will forgive and pardon him. (Isaiah 55:7)

GOD IS GREATER THAN MAN

God does not think like man. He does not act like man. God does not have sinful thoughts like man. God cannot sin. Even his thoughts are higher, better and greater than man's. God wants us to be like him.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Have you truly repented of your sins? Have you truly invited Jesus to save you? Do you say you are a Christian because your mother and your father were Christians? Are you depending on their relationship with God to save you? It will not save you. You must decide for yourself. You must repent of your sins yourself.

If you are a Christian, is sin causing you to live a defeated life? Why not repent of your sins? Confess them to God. He will forgive you and help you live for him.

God loves us. He prepared a way for us to be saved. We must repent of our sins and believe in God's Son, Jesus. God will forgive us then.

If we love God, we will obey him.

Have you ever been thirsty? Really thirsty? You looked for something to drink. People can live without food for a short time, but they cannot live without water. Our physical bodies must have water.

Our spiritual bodies, our souls, must also be satisfied. Some people have a strong thirst or desire for spiritual things. Isaiah knew that souls needed spiritual food and water. Isaiah said, "Come to God."

The children of Israel, who were God's chosen people, refused to obey God. They were living sinful, disobedient lives. Isaiah told them God was going to send a Saviour. The Saviour was coming to save all people who trusted in him. Everyone was invited to come. People who had no money were invited to come.

Everyone could come to God. God's free grace would go to whomever came to him. God's grace would make men happy. Men tried buying things to make them happy, but they were not happy. Men worked hard, but they were not happy. Only God can satisfy man's needs, both physical and spiritual.

GOD'EVERLASTING COVENANT

God had a message for his people. He wanted them to listen to him. He wanted them to do what he told them to do.

God had made a covenant with King David. Read 2 Samuel 7:8-16. God promised to love the people of Israel. He also promised to punish them if they did wrong, if they disobeyed him. God wanted Israel to love and obey him.

David was the king of Israel. He was their leader. Isaiah told the people of Israel that God was going to send someone else to lead them. He was going to be the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). He would pay the price for the sins of God's people. Jesus Christ was that Suffering Servant. He paid the price for the sins of all men who believed in him. God's new covenant, the everlasting covenant, was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

GOD FORGIVES SIN

Read Isaiah 55:6-7 again. God wants to forgive our sins, but we must want to be forgiven. God will not always be near. We cannot be sure we will be alive tomorrow. Today we know we are alive. Today we know we could believe in him. Today we could be saved.

If we want to be saved, we must do two things. First, we must want God to forgive us. We must know we have sinned and want God to forgive that sin.

Second, we must truly repent. Repent means to be sorry for having sinned and to turn away from that sin. We must decide that we want God to forgive us. When we repent, we turn to God. If we choose not to repent, then we will die. (Luke 13:3)

The world is filled with weak, helpless, ineffective Christians. No one can depend on them to stand up for anything. They let the world decide what they will do. That means they behave just like all the rest of the unsaved world. Their families live no differently than the families of everybody else in town. They work on Sunday to get more money because they feel they must have more and more. They do not realize that they love money. Their speech is like everyone else's speech. Non-Christians feel free to tell any kind of story or make any remark they want to in the presence of those people. Their church cannot depend on them. The pastor cannot depend on them. Their fellow Christians cannot depend on them. God cannot depend on them or use them in any way.

In Revelation 3:1-2, God told the church at Sardis something he is likely to tell many Christians today: "I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead."

Are you dead? Are you alive? You need to decide if you are willing to stand up and be counted on the Lord's side. God needs Christians who have strong convictions and who will act on those convictions.

Victorious Christians love their Christian brothers. Jesus said, "Love one another." Victorious Christians help others who are in need of help. It is a way of witnessing.

A victorious Christian is faithful to the one he or she has married. They have loving, praying, trusting, disciplined Christian homes. Victorious Christians will not covet things that belong to someone else. They trust and obey Jesus, who is always the same. Jesus never fails us.

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus will help Christians live a life of victory.

TEACHING AIM: This lesson will give my students and me an opportunity to judge whether we have strong convictions and whether we are really living for God.

TEACHING AIDS: None.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Hebrews 13:1-3, the writer urges us to love our brothers. When our love for our brothers begins to fade, our love for God fades also. The readers of the letter are encouraged to show hospitality to strangers. Hospitality is inviting people into our homes to eat and sleep.

The writer reminded the people that by inviting strangers into our homes, we may have the opportunity to entertain angels. Abraham did. The early Christians provided hospitality for each other when they traveled. When the hotels and inns were as bad as they were in those times, and the travelling evangelists were many, Christians needed to take them into their homes.

He urged the readers to minister to those who were in prison. Many were in prison during those times, for nothing more than that they were Christians. Those who are ill-treated must be cared for, too, since they are part of the body of Christ.

Hebrews 13:4 gives instruction concerning the purity of marriage. At that time in the early church, many men and women were not marrying. They were giving all their time to witnessing and discipling new believers. They were together much of the time, but they were living apart (without sex). The Romans were surprised to see people living like that. The Romans practiced many kinds of sexual sins in their religions. They were amazed that the Christians taught against these sex sins and did not do them.

Some of the unmarried Christians had begun to think that their lives were a better testimony than the lives of married Christians. Perhaps pride was becoming a part of their lives. The writer tells the unmarried Christians not to despise married Christians. Married sex was to be honoured by all of them.

Those who were married were to be as holy and pure as those who were unmarried. They were to remain faithful to their marriage partner. This again was an idea that was new to the Romans.

CHAPTER 9

THE STEADFAST LOVE OF GOD

AIM: This lesson will help me understand how to repent and turn to God, or how to lead someone else to do it.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 136; Isaiah 55; 2 Samuel 7:8-16

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Isaiah 55:1-9; 2 Samuel 7:8-16

MEMORY VERSE: "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever." Psalms 136:1

During an evangelistic campaign, three Christians were going to each house in a certain part of town. They knocked on one door. A very simple-minded man came to the door. His appearance frightened the women, but one had more courage.

"Sir," she said, "Jesus loves you and wants you to believe in him." With tears in his eyes the man said, "Nobody loves me."

Patiently the Christian women told the man about Jesus and how much he loved him.

Everyone needs to know that God loves them. They need to know someone cares about everything that happens in their lives.

The children of Israel did not always obey God. They did not always return God's love. They were not faithful to God. Yet God continued to love them. He continued to keep his part of the covenant he had made with Israel.

God does not change his mind, neither does he break his Word. God's love is steadfast. We can trust God to keep on loving us.

AN INVITATION TO ALL MEN

Read Isaiah 55:1-9. When someone invites you to their house for food, you must either say yes or no. The host will not force you to come to his house. The decision is yours.

God has invited all men to come to him. God encourages men to come to him. But God will not force anyone to come. They must come because they want to come to him.

the mountain. We will study these commandments today.”

Using the student book and Exodus 20:1-17, let the students discuss each of the commandments. This will take some time. With the remainder of the time, ask the students what a “kingdom of priests” means.

Application

Say: “The Ten Commandments have formed the foundation for the laws of many nations. If we obey the Ten Commandments, we will live in peace and harmony both with God and man. A person, however, can try to obey all the commandments and still be lost. Obeying the Ten Commandments does not bring salvation. Jesus is the only way we can have salvation.”

Say: “It is good to obey the Commandments, and we should try to do so. But we must remember that Jesus is the new covenant as we have already studied in lesson three. Jesus tells us that he is the only way that we can become reconciled with God. If you are here today, and you want to be saved, stay a few minutes after our closing prayer, and we will discuss the very simple things you must do to be saved.”

Say: “Last week and the week before, we talked about praising God for who he is. How many of you found time to praise God this week?” Again let the students tell about their successes or failures in practising praise. Then, close your meeting with a praise prayer in the same way you did last week.

Verse 5 tells the reader to stay away from the love of money. This verse and the one about adultery go together because often the two sins go hand in hand. Money is good. It buys what we need. But it is possible to begin to love money itself and to want to get as much of it as possible. We are to be content with what we have because God will make sure that we have the things we need.

Verse 6 quotes Psalm 118:6. This should strengthen a Christian to hold fast to those beliefs in God that he has. God is greater than man.

In verse 7 we are to remember those who have gone on before, those who were faithful to deliver the Word of God to us. We can imitate their lives and faith.

Verse 8 gives joy to all Christians. Jesus never changes. He is the standard by which we can measure everything else. He remains the same as he was when the world began.

Verses 20-21 is a benediction of prayer for the readers. The writer had asked for prayer in verse 19. He prayed for his readers in verses 20-21.

He asked God to equip or outfit the Christians with everything good they would need to do the work God had planned for them to do. This is the God of peace who brought Jesus from the dead. Jesus is the Shepherd of the sheep. He has provided his own blood to establish a new covenant.

The writer ended this section of his letter by giving Jesus Christ glory forever and ever.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: “There was a man named John. John said that he was a Christian. He attended church every week. He was a student in the adult Bible class. He often stood up in church to give his testimony. The pastor remembered when he was baptised.

During the week, John did his business just like everyone else in town did theirs. He visited a woman of the town two evenings every week. He hoped that his wife believed he was working. That was what he told her. He would not buy cigarettes, but he would smoke one if someone else bought it. He liked to hear what was going on in the town, and laughed with the others about the things that were happening.

Was John living like a Christian? No. Do you know anyone like John?”

Interpretation

Say: “The writer to the Hebrews did not want his readers to turn out to be like John. He wanted them to live victorious Christian lives. In today’s lesson, he gives them further advice about how to live.”

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Hebrews 13. Ask one to open his Bible to 1 Corinthians 15:58. Have one student read Hebrews 13:1-8 and the other to read the verse in 1 Corinthians.

Say: "Paul says we are to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. What does Paul mean?" Give the students time to discuss this. Lead them to see that we are to have strong convictions about our belief in God. We are to be ready to stand up and be counted for him. We are to live so that everyone everywhere, not just at church, will know we are Christians.

Ask: "What advice is the writer to the Hebrews giving his readers?" Allow the students to discuss this advice. Add the information you have from your own study. Continue to ask during the discussion whether this advice is still good today.

When you feel the students have understood the meaning of these verses, read to them the beautiful benediction in verses 20-21.

Say: "This is the only time the writer to the Hebrews used the picture of Jesus as our Shepherd. He cares for us as tenderly as the shepherd who carries the new-born animal on his shoulders. God always gives us the tools we need to do the job he wants us to do. He calls us all to victorious Christian living and gives us all the equipment we need. All we need to do is to trust him and obey him."

Application

Ask one student to read the section called "What This Means to Me" from their books.

Say: "People are being born into the world faster than they are being saved. The reason for this is Christians are failing to live strong Christian lives. They are failing to share the good news with those around them. They may have beliefs, but they do not live them out in their lives. They may hate sin, but they are too weak to quit sinning. God is calling Christians today to live strong, victorious lives. He is calling us to throw aside the 'sin that clings so closely.' Are we ready to answer his call? Ask your students to bow their heads. Begin your prayer by confessing to God where you have failed to live up to your convictions. Then ask any student who wishes to confess as you have done, to do so. Continue in prayer until each person has had the opportunity to pray. Then close the prayer by asking God to equip each one of you to live victorious Christian lives.

The Ten Commandments give God an opportunity to tell man three things about himself. First, they tell us that God is. He exists. He did not create man and depart for some unknown place. He lives here and now and is concerned with the whole of life, that of man as well as the rest of creation.

Second, the Ten Commandments allow God to tell us that he speaks to men. He communicates with man. Moses heard his words and told them to the waiting Israelites. The third thing the laws tell us is that God gives guidance to men in their everyday living.

The Ten Commandments are not all the covenant. They are stated in general terms, rather than specific ones. For instance, man is forbidden to kill, but the Ten Commandments do not tell us what things are out of limits. We know that certain animals were killed in the temple sacrifices, so it does not exclude all killing. Again, the Ten Commandments forbade the worship of other gods, but they failed to tell what true worship of God would be. The Ten Commandments are a framework around which more specific directions are given later. Explanation of each of the Ten Commandments is given in the student's book.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "When a man and woman vow (promise) to love, cherish and honour each other as long as they live, they have made a covenant. They have accepted the marriage covenant. It is an agreement. Each has agreed to be faithful to the other. It is a covenant that endures until one of them dies.

"Our lesson today concerns the covenant between God and man."

Interpretation

Ask the students to open their Bibles to Exodus 19:3-6. Read these verses to the students.

Say: "The Israelites had been travelling for about three months when they arrived at Mount Sinai. This had been their goal when they set out from Egypt because it was at this same mountain that God had called out to Moses from a burning bush. This call from God had sent Moses to Egypt to bring the people out. Exodus 3:12 tells us that God said to Moses. '...But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.' So God had fulfilled his promise to Moses when he allowed him to lead the people back to Mount Sinai. Then it was time for Moses to serve God upon the mountain. The service would take the form of being a go-between for God and the Israelites in the establishment of the covenant.

"The covenant was very long and very detailed. A very important part of it was the Ten Commandments. These were written on stone tablets and brought down

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christians must obey God to keep their covenant with him.

TEACHING AIM: I want my Christian students to realize that they must live in obedience to God if they want to live in peace and harmony. I want my students who are not yet Christians to know that they can enter into a covenant with God.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Read Exodus 19:3-6. Moses had led the children of Israel from Egypt and into the wilderness. God had promised them the land of Canaan.

Before they could enter the land of Canaan, however, they had to be moulded into a nation. Until this time, they had been a tribe, descendants of Abraham. Now God was ready to make a nation of them. They needed to be united. They needed to be obedient. They needed to worship Jehovah God, the one true and living God.

God knew that as a nation and as people, they would need laws to govern them. They would need laws to live by. God decided to make a covenant with them.

In any covenant there are terms agreed upon by both parties. This time both the Israelites and God agreed on the terms. In Exodus 19:5, God stated the terms of the agreement.

(a) If you obey my voice, and (b) keep my covenant, then (c) you will be my own possession among all the people, (d) and you shall be a kingdom of priests, and (e) you shall be a holy nation.

Obedience to God was man's part of the covenant. Special blessings, protection, material wealth and a nation set apart to preserve the knowledge and worship of God were to be their reward for obedience.

The Israelites were to be taught, by direct revelation, about the character and worship of the true God. They, then, were to teach all nations about God. This showed that God still loved all the world, not just the Israelites alone. The Israelites were to show the world this love.

In Exodus 20:1-17 God gave the people the Ten Commandments after they agreed to the covenant. "...All that the Lord has spoken we will do." Exodus 19:8 God wrote the laws upon stone and gave them to Moses. (Exodus 32:15-16)

CHAPTER 6

GOD'S GLORY IN CREATION

AIM: This lesson will help me trust God more with my daily concerns and problems.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 104

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Psalm 104:24-34

MEMORY VERSE: "O Lord, how manifold are they works! In wisdom has thou made them all; the earth is full of thy creatures." Psalm 104:24

This week we begin a study of important Old Testament teachings. These teachings will help us to meet problems of today with greater faith. They show God's concern for all people. When we know God is concerned about us, we can love him even more and trust him even more.

The writer of Psalm 104 praised God when he looked around him and saw all the things God had created. Everything has a purpose. The writer realized that God's power created everything, and it keeps the world going.

God's power is still keeping the world - the universe-going properly. His power is still creating beautiful things. He is still providing everything for men to enjoy. We should praise God for his great creation, just as the psalmist did.

GOD CREATED ALL THINGS

In Psalm 104, the singer is praising God because of creation. He knew God was powerful and wise because he made all the world. He looked at the seas and all the animals that lived in the seas. The sea creatures were too many to be counted.

God created Leviathan, a huge fish, and controls him. (Read verse 26 again.) Some translations of the Bible say God made Leviathan for his own pleasure. It makes God happy to see his creations happy.

GOD CARES FOR ALL HIS CREATION

Read Psalm 104:27-30. God's creations depend upon him for everything. God provides food and shelter for the animals and birds he created. He provides air to breathe, food to eat and water to drink.

God created man with a brain able to think, eyes able to see, ears able to hear, hands able to work. God gave man good health and enough strength to work. God provides all that man needs.

If God did not take care of his creations, they would die. God made fish to live in water. A fish which is taken from the water will die very quickly.

God gives life and he takes life. God gives food and health to all living creatures (verse 30).

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS CREATION

The writer continues to praise God in verses 31 and 34. As he continued to see God's creations all around him, he began to praise and worship God.

God looked at his creation. *"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good..."* Genesis 1:31

The writer wanted to praise God. He did praise God, both in songs and in worship. He thought about God. He thought how much God loved his creation.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

If God takes care of animals, bird and flowers, surely he takes care of us. Man is God's greatest creation. Man was created in God's image. God gave him rule over all creation. God loves and cares for man. He wants man to love and worship him. How much do you love God?

We can praise God for his beautiful world. We can thank him for his love and concern for us. We can thank him for providing for us every day. We can sing praises to God. We can worship him.

Before you go to sleep tonight, thank God again for the food you ate today. Thank him for your health. Thank him for your children. Thank God for your pastor and church. Thank him for all the blessings he has given you. Praise and worship God each day.

This week try to pray at least one prayer of praise to God. In the prayer, just praise God. Thank him for who he is. Think of things he has done for you. Do not ask God for anything in this prayer. Just praise and thank him.

Perhaps the first time you do this, your prayer will be very short. As you continue to pray like this, your list of things to praise God for will grow longer. As it grows longer you will become more joyful in your praise. Praising God is one way we say we love him. Practice praise.

The eighth commandment (20:15) points to many people today. It says, "You shall not steal." No one has the right to take what belongs to someone else.

The ninth commandment (20:16) tells us not to lie. We should always tell the truth. We should never say things about someone else that are not true.

The tenth commandment (20:17) tells us not to covet. Covet means to desire to have something so much that we can think of nothing else. We are especially warned not to covet the property of other people.

The Ten Commandments were given to help men live at peace with God and at peace with other men.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Today people lie, cheat, steal and deceive others to get what they want. If we are really God's children, we cannot live like this. We must live responsible lives.

Are you obeying God? Are you keeping his commandments? When man keeps the covenant, he makes Christ Lord of his life. Is Christ the Lord of your life?

the covenant was the Ten Commandments.

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD

The first commandment (Exodus 20:3) said the Israelites were to put no other god before God. He is the only true God. He was to have first place in the lives of the people.

The second commandment (20:4) said the Israelites were forbidden to make idols to worship. Other people would make idols and worship them, but the Israelites must not. When people make an idol of God, they worship the idol instead of God.

The third commandment (20:7) told the Hebrews not to use God's name in a careless way. Men were to use that precious name only with reverence and respect.

The fourth commandment (20:8) set aside a day to worship God. God began this day of rest. When he finished creating all things in six days, he rested on the seventh day. Read Genesis 2:3. The seventh day was first called sabbath in Exodus 16:23. It was to be a day of rest.

Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Therefore, today most Christians worship on the first day of the week, Sunday, to remember what Christ did for them.

These four laws related to man's responsibilities to God. But man has other responsibilities also. These relate to other people.

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO MAN

The fifth commandment (20:12) tells God's people to honour their fathers and their mothers. God gives life through parents. We are to honour them. When we fail to honour our parents, we break God's law.

The sixth commandment (20:13) forbids killing. Only God can give life. Only God has the right to take a person's life.

The seventh commandment (20:14) forbids adultery. God intended sex to be between a man and his wife only. All sex outside marriage breaks this law of God.

Some people today say times have changed and so they can ignore this law. But God's laws never change. His Word is the same yesterday, today and forever. Sex outside marriage breaks this law of God.

God used his great wisdom and power to create all things. He saw that everything he had created was good. God cares for all his creations. He provides for them all.

God cares for, loves and provides for his highest creation, man. God cares for man.

Man should praise God, love God and worship God for all that he has done for him.

FOR THE TEACHER

CENTRAL TRUTH: God cares for us more than any one else.

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to begin to praise God more in their daily lives. Through this praise I want them to realize that God cares for them more than anyone else does.

TEACHING AIDS: Paper and pencil for each student.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

All of Psalm 104 praises God for his creation. It is much like the creation story in Genesis. You will enjoy comparing the two Scriptures.

Psalm 104:24-34 are the verses in this lesson. In verse 24, the psalmist was overwhelmed with all that God had created. He had just named many of God's creations. Then he said God's works of creation are many. He praised God for the wisdom he (God) had in creating so many creatures.

Verse 25 tells about the sea and its great size. It holds both large and small animals. One, Leviathan, is so large the psalmist can scarcely imagine its size. The sea, though, is big enough for Leviathan to play and frolic in. Even the ships, large as they are, can ride upon the sea's water.

Verses 27 through 30 tell how dependent all God's creations are upon him. They all look to God for their food. If God turns his face from these creatures, they are afraid. He decides when they will die and when more creatures will be created or born. Even the face of the ground is renewed from time to time.

Verse 31 praises God and glorifies him. The psalmist appealed to God to find joy in the things he has created.

Verse 32 gives us a glimpse of the power of God who is able to touch a mountain and make it tremble and smoke. Even the earth trembles at the touch of God.

Verses 33 and 34 show that the psalmist was overcome with all that he had seen. He promised God that he would sing to him as long as he lived. He asked God to look on his meditation with pleasure. He rejoiced in the Lord, and he invited God to rejoice in him.

CHAPTER 8

GOD AND MAN IN COVENANT

AIM: I will learn that I have been chosen by God to be holy, just and obedient to him.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Exodus 19, 20, 32, 34

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Exodus 19:3-6; 20:1-17

MEMORY VERSE: "Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.'" Exodus 24:7

A covenant was made between God and man. "Covenant" means an agreement or promise between two or more people. The covenant God made was with Israel. God promised to care for them. They promised to obey God. Turn back to chapter 3 of this book and revise the teachings there about God's covenant with man.

Our lesson today tells what God wanted the Israelites to do.

GOD SPOKE TO MOSES

Read Exodus 19:3-6 and Exodus 20:1-17. Moses had persuaded Pharaoh to let the children of Israel return to Canaan. Moses led them out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

When they reached Mount Sinai, Moses went up to the mountain to speak to God. God gave Moses a message to give to the children of Israel.

God reminded the people and Moses how he had taken care of them. When they were slaves, they prayed for release from captivity. God answered their prayer. He promised to take care of them. He kept his promise when he led them out of Egypt.

Then God told them about the covenant he would like to make with them. Read Exodus 19:5-6 again. The children of Israel were to be greatly honoured. God would choose them to be his people if they agreed to obey God. They would be a "kingdom of priests." Their work would be to tell the world about God.

The covenant had to be made with all the people. It was not for just a few of the Israelites. All of them had to agree. So God made a covenant with all the Israelites. The whole nation agreed to obey God. The most important part of

very honest love from those children.”

Ask: “Who will explain verse 3 to us?” Allow one or two students to tell what the verse means.

Say: “Verses 5-8 ask a very important question. What is that question?”

Say: “The psalmist compares man to the rest of creation, and he compares him to God. He is puzzled that God could love man so much that he would allow him to rule over all the rest of creation. Do you ever ask that question of God? ‘Why do you love me so?’ I think we all do. How can God love someone who continuously fails him, who wants to do right, but does wrong? We will never understand that love until we know the mind of God when we begin to share eternity with him.”

Say: “Verse 9 closes the psalm with another emotional message of praise to God.”

Application

Ask: “What value does this lesson have for you?” Give your students enough time to talk about this. Encourage them to express themselves fully about the greatness, glory, majesty, power that God has. Help them to see what their relationship to God is.

Say: “At times man begins to think that he is greater than he really is. In Europe and in America new discoveries are going on all the time. These discoveries sometimes help mankind. Sometimes they harm mankind. Can you name some good or bad discoveries?” The students may name discoveries in medicine, in food processing, in synthetic materials, in weapons, etc. Help them to tell if these are good or bad.

Then say, “Everything that man has discovered had already been put there by God. Man only found it. Yet, many men and women who find these things think they are as great as God. They are not. We must often read this psalm and ask ourselves, ‘Who am I that God cares for me?’”

Close the meeting praying for the students to have special times this week for praising God.”

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: “Today we begin a study of Old Testament teachings. These lessons will help us to be aware that God loves us and is concerned about us. He knows about all the things that happen to us. He knows when we are troubled. He knows when we are experiencing great joy. He likes to hear us talk to him. He enjoys hearing praise for the work he has done.

“To begin our lesson today, I want us to make lists of praise words and phrases from the Psalms. So many people do not know how to pray praise prayers. Their efforts to talk to God are filled with requests. They have never prayed a prayer of praise or thanksgiving. The reason for this failure might be that they do not know how to praise God. They do not know the words to use in praising God. We will look in Psalms and find the words we can use to praise God.”

Use as long as necessary for the students to do this activity. If nothing else is taught today, it will be quite enough if your students learn how to praise God.

You may want to write the list on the chalkboard or have a student take a list home, even if you must write the list for him or her.

Your list will probably include all the the following. It is very, important, however, that your students find these words and phrases themselves in their Bible. After they find one, they may want to tell where it is located, so the others may read it, too.

1. “I will extol thee...” Psalm 30:1
2. “I will give thanks to thee for ever.” Psalm 30:12
3. “I will rejoice and be glad...” Psalm 31:7
4. “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice...” Psalm 32:11
5. “Sing praises to the Lord...” Psalm 9:11
6. “I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart...” Psalm 9:1
7. “I will worship...” Psalm 5:7
8. “...those who love thy name may exult in thee.” Psalm 5:11
9. “It is good to give thanks to the Lord...” Psalm 92:1
10. “...to sing praises to thy name” Psalm 92:1
11. “To declare they steadfast love in the morning...” Psalm 92:2
12. “...I sing for joy.” Psalm 92:4
13. “O give thanks to the Lord...” Psalm 105:1
14. “Glory in his holy name...” Psalm 105:3
15. “I love the Lord...” Psalm 116:1

Help your students to see that they can use these words in praising God. A sample praise prayer might be: “Blessed Lord, I love you because you first loved me. I sing for joy when I think that you knew me even before I was born. I give thanks to you, my Lord, because you have kept me safe from danger. I declare my steadfast love to you in the morning when I arise to face a new day. I glorify

you because you have created this beautiful world in which I live. I extol you because you know where I am at all times."

Once your students begin to understand the words that can be used to praise God, they will begin to practise praise. Tell them to keep their lists in their Bibles. Then when they pray they may use their lists to praise God until they are able to do so without the lists.

Say: "The God we worship is a wonderful God. Our lesson is about the creation of the world."

Interpretation

Have your students open their Bibles to Psalm 104:24-34. Have these verses read.

Ask: "What do we read in these verses that tell us that God loves us and is concerned about us?" Let the students discuss these verses. Lead them to see that although God created all of the universe, he is interested in every part of his creation. Tell them that man was God's greatest creation. Ask one student to read Psalm 8.

Say: "In all of God's plans he meant man to rule over all the other creation. Since this is true, he must love mankind very much. If he loves us so much he is concerned about all of our lives. If we lose our jobs, God is concerned. If we are sick, he is interested. If we are lonely, he cares. Nothing is too small for us to talk to God about. Certainly, God who created all of creation has the power to help us with any problem that we might have. If he possesses all power, and he does, then he is never helpless in the face of an earthly problem. We need to trust God for everything."

APPLICATION

Ask the students to put their lists where they can see them. Tell them that you are going to pray "sentence prayers." These prayers are to be one sentence long. They are to be praise sentences. Ask each person to look at their lists for a few minutes, and think of what they want to praise God for. Then have them bow their heads. You begin the prayer, praying a one sentence praise to God. Then allow them to pray, you may need to insert several praise sentences of our own. Give enough time for each to pray. Remember that if they are successful in praising God with you in the class, they will be much more likely to praise God when they are alone.

Conclude the prayer with this sentence: "We worship you, God, because you always hear us when we pray. Amen."

Challenge the students to praise God this week.

for man.

Verse 9 closes the hymn as the congregation again praises God in all the earth.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask the students if any of them were able to praise God through the week as you did the last time you met. Encourage them to tell not only about their successes, but also about their failures in using their lists to praise God.

Say: "We need to learn to praise God. Once we learn how wonderful God is, we will be more faithful to him in living a victorious Christian life. Let us stop now and praise him. Use your lists. If you were not here to get a list, look on with someone else." Again, as the teacher, you begin this praise prayer. Then allow the students to praise God. They should be able to praise better this week. Encourage them to continue to have time during the week to pray to God, praising him and not asking him for anything.

Say: "Our lesson today is from Psalm 8. Remember that we read this psalm last week as we were learning about praising God. There was a suggestion at the end of your lesson for today to go outside at night to see God's creations in the sky. Did anyone do this?" Let them tell about the experience they had. If no one went, you tell them what it was like when you went out. Encourage them to do this activity on the first clear night you have. It may be necessary to have someone read the section "What This Means to Me" to refresh the memories of the students.

Interpretation

Show the picture or the item you have brought with you. Say: "God has created a beautiful, wonderful, useful world. He made everything good. Sin has brought some bad things into the world. Man has not taken care of the world as God planned. Much of the earth is in danger because of man's failure to care for it. God planned a beautiful perfect world. The psalmist was amazed at the beauty and perfection that he saw." Ask someone to read Psalm 8.

Say: "This psalm was probably sung during a night service during the Feast of Tabernacles which was a Jewish holiday. It came at the time of their new year. The Feast of Tabernacles was a celebration of the renewal of creation. As the congregation gathered together, this psalm was begun by all of them singing together. They praised God as the one having greatest majesty in all the earth.

"Verse 2 tells that even babies and small children know how to praise God. Remember when Jesus entered Jerusalem at the beginning of the Passover week? Little children joined in praising him and in shouting "Hosana." Once, when Jesus must have been very tired the disciples tried to prevent the children from bothering him. Jesus restrained them, recognizing that he was receiving

CENTRAL TRUTH Although God is holy and majestic, he loves man and wants him to come to him.

TEACHING AIM: I would like my students to get a fresh vision of the majesty of God and the insignificance of man.

TEACHING AIDS: If you can do so, bring a picture of a night scene where the stars and moon are clearly visible. Or bring a flower, a leaf, some ripe vegetables or fruit.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Psalm 8 is an often quoted psalm, both in ancient times and in modern times. Job 7:17 asks, "What is man, that thou dost make so much of him?" Psalm 144:3 asks, "O Lord, what is man that thou dost regard him, or the son of man that thou dost think of him?" Matthew 21:16 says, "...And Jesus said to them, 'Yes, have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise?' " Hebrews 2:6-7 says, "...What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou carest for him? Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour."

Psalm 8:1 begins with praise to God. His name is majestic in all the earth. His name here means the Lord God himself. His glory, however, is far more reaching than the earth alone. It goes even higher than the heavens.

Verse 2 gives credit to children and babies who in their innocence are wise to recognize God and the beauty he has made. From their praise, a strong structure has been built up to prevent the enemy to approach God. Another meaning for this verse is that children also praise creation, which is itself the wall against God's enemy.

In verse 3 the psalmist is amazed at the careful work of God's fingers in creating the heavens. The stars and the moon are more beautiful than he had remembered. Perhaps he had been busy about his life and had failed to really look at the sky at night to enjoy the beauty there.

Verses 4-8 show that the psalmist has suddenly remembered himself as he stood there alone with God and God's creation. He recognized how small and helpless he was beside God's glory. In a small voice, he asked, "Why do you care about sinful man? Why do you value him so highly? You have put the rule of the earth into his hands. You have a relationship with man that you do not have with any other part of your creation. You have made him just a little lower than you are yourself, God." The question remains unanswered even now. Only when we begin to share God's glory in eternity will we be able to understand God's love

MAN LOOKS AT GOD'S CREATION

AIM: Studying this lesson will help me to see who I am in relation to who God is.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Genesis 26-31; Psalm 8

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Psalm 8

MEMORY VERSE: "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth." Psalm 8:9

A man born in the northern plains of Kenya had lived all of his forty-five years in the flat, dry land. This was all he knew of the world.

One day he received a letter from his son who was at school in Nyeri, Kenya. He had been ill and wanted to see his father. The man prepared for the trip. He left his home in the late afternoon. His trip took him the rest of the day and all night.

As the next day began to dawn, the bus was entering Nyeri town. Looking around, the man was shocked at what he saw. Tall trees clung to the sides of tall hills. Tea and coffee shambas were on each side of the road. In the distance, the man could see Mount Kenya, a sight that stunned him. Nothing could be that big or that beautiful!

Climbing from the bus, the man stumbled, blinded by his own tears. Never in his life had he imagined anything like this. He had read of mountains, trees and rivers, but seeing them was quite another thing.

If God could create such beauty, the man thought, then he should be praised every day by every man on earth.

OUR GREAT GOD

Read Psalm 8. This is one of the greatest of all the Psalms. It is a psalm of the night. It reveals God in all his glory in nature.

The hymn opens with a cry of reverence to God who created the world. God's glory is greater than the heavens. Nothing is as great as God! No person is as great as God!

From the mouths of babies and small children God receives praise. Their cries of praise build a wall against God's enemies. This calls to mind that God often uses the weak and helpless of the world to succeed in his purposes.

A little girl who was only three years old told her father, "God made the pretty flowers." Her father was not a Christian. He thought to himself, "My little girl knows more about God than I do." He soon became a Christian because he wanted to know God better.

MAN'S PLACE IN GOD'S WORLD

The psalmist was looking up into the night sky. He was completely amazed at the beauty he saw there. In Genesis 2:7-19 creation was said to have been done by God's hand. Here, the writer of Psalm 8 says the heavens are the work of God's fingers. This gives the idea of an artist at work, taking time over the beautiful things he was making

Seeing such majesty in the heavens and understanding that the Creator of such majesty must himself be far greater than his creation, the singer suddenly became aware of himself. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?" Psalm 8:4 He was saying, "Who am I that God should care for me so much?"

Yet we learn from reading his Word that God made the sun, moon and stars. He made the trees, flowers and all plants. He made the animals and all things. And he made them all for our use and for our pleasure. God made man his last and highest creation. We should never stop praising him for his goodness and his love.

The question of the psalmist is important for us today. Who are we that God would love us so much?

God made man inferior only to himself. "Inferior" means lower in quality, lower in social position, lower in importance or quality. Inferior means not worth much, not as good as something else.

When God created man, he created him less than God. Man is not as good as God. Man is not as great as God. Yet, God gave man a place of honour. God gave man dominion (rule) over all the other creations. God loves man very much.

MAN'S USE OF GOD'S WORLD

God gave man the power to rule over all the things he had created. God said he could use all the things he had made. But he must use them in a wise and good way. Man is responsible to God for how he uses God's creations.

The writer of Psalm 8 praises God again in verse 9. God deserves praise.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Choose a night this week and go outside. Find a place where you can see the full sky. Lie down so your face is toward the stars. As you lie there, think about the greatness of God who could create all the beauty you see before you. Think about his majesty, his glory, his power. Praise God as you lie there. Then, begin to think about yourself, alone under the night sky. Think as the psalmist did of how small you are and how great God is. Does such a thought bring you to amazement that such a God loves you. Perhaps you will praise him again when you think that he loved you so much he sent his Son to die for your sins.

God made all things, and they were good. Man is the greatest of God's creations. God has given man the job of ruling over God's other creations wisely.

Man must obey God. Man must carry out the responsibilities God has given him in a just and wise manner.

Have you accepted the responsibility God has given you to take care of his creation? Are you using his creations wisely?