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CHRISTIANITY BRINGS CHANGES



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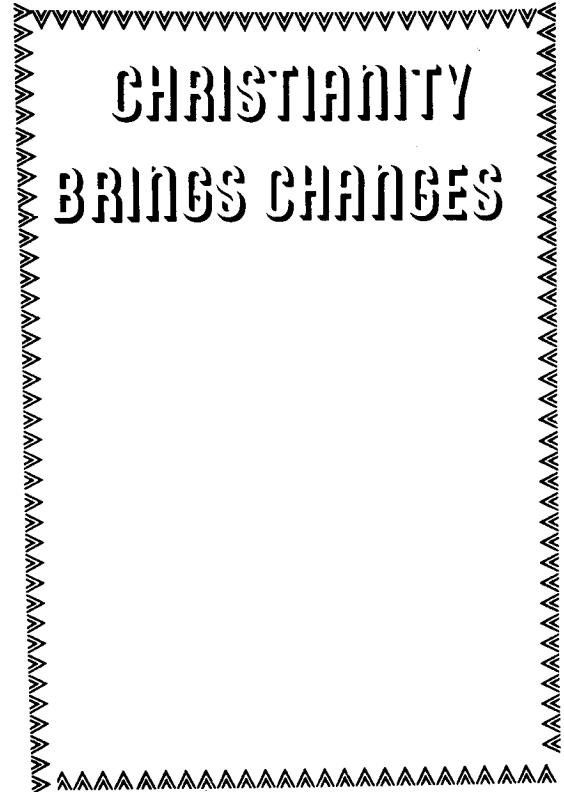
Finally the suffering Christian will share in the glory of Christ. This is a cause of rejoicing!

LEADER:

Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:1-12 are for Christians. People who have not yet believed cannot understand these things.

Some Christians may not yet have this joy in their lives. Begin where you are! Jesus said, "If any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God" (John 7:17). God will help us to understand if we truly want to know his will.

PRAYER:



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PART 5: WHY IS PERSECUTION A JOY?

People are not often persecuted unless they are successful in their witness. Some terrorists in one Africa country saw that the Christian people would not join them in killing other people. They saw that the Christians had influence on other people and prevented their joining the terrorists. They persecuted some Christians and killed others to prevent their powerful influence from spreading. The persecuted people had the joy of knowing they were successful.

Persecution is a joy because **it gives the** Christian an opportunity to be loyal. He can prove that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

It is a joy for the Christian to know he is following in the footsteps of the saints, "For so men persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:12).

Persecution is a joy because the Christian shares in the suffering of Jesus. "But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:13). Paul said he was happy to suffer so that "in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Colossians 1:24). Jesus suffered to bring us life through his name. It will take the suffering of many Christians to take that message to the whole world.

on the floor of their house and made her sleep there. Why? Whenever he looked at her and saw how good she was, it reminded him of how bad he was. This made him so angry that he punished her.

Many Christian young people are ridiculed by their companions because they refuse to drink and use drugs. They are persecuted because they are different.

Some Christians in Africa have been persecuted because they refuse to hate people of other nations who live among them. Because the love of Jesus is in their hearts, they refused to hate and kill those who ruled over them. Their family and friends and leaders of their tribe may consider these Christians as traitors. They have persecuted the Christians who show love instead of hatred.

PART 4: WHAT CAN A CHRISTIAN DO? READ 1 PETER 3:12-18

A Christian has two weapons to use against persecution. One is the weapon of the good life. A Christian must be a good citizen and a good servant. His life must be so good that people will be ashamed to accuse them.

The other weapon is the Christian answer, the Christian testimony. A Christian must know the teachings of Jesus and be ready to give an answer. "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you..." (1 Peter 3:15).

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PROGRAMME 1

THEME FOR THE UNIT: COMMUNITY MISSION PROJECTS

THEME FOR TODAY: HELPERS AT CHURCH

DEVOTIONAL: Read Matthew 9:35-38

This is a story about Jesus. He looked at people around him, and knew that they had many troubles. Jesus healed the sick. He healed sick spirits. He did all of this because he loved people.

Jesus called his disciples to be workers. He wanted the disciple to tell the people that God loved them and wanted to help make their lives better. Jesus always said that the people were like a great harvest. The disciples must gather the harvest. But there were only a few of them. Jesus told them to pray and ask God to call more workers.

Those disciples became the first church. Their work as church members was still to harvest people. Today we are the church. And Jesus has given us the same work. Let us join hands and work together as Christian sisters. Let us harvest the many lost people who live around us. And let us pray the God of the harvest to send more workers.

INTRODUCTION:

One of our purposes in the Baptist Women of Zambia is to help in our churches. There are many ways we can plan projects to help the work of the church today. Let us look at some of these.

Many Christians were tortured and killed. They were fed to the lions or hanged on crosses. They were burned to death or thrown into the sea.

They had refused to worship Caesar which made the leaders of the nation think they were traitors. They broke the customs of the people. They separated themselves from the sinful deeds of the people of that day. Their goodness silently rebuked the sin of the people around them. People do not like to be shown the bad things in their lives. So they tried to remove the Christians from this earth. Then they could continue in their sin.

PART 3: WHY ARE CHRISTIANS PERSECUTED TODAY?

Christians are persecuted today for the same reasons as in the time of the Bible.

Some women of the Maasai tribe in Kenya believed in Jesus. Their husbands were not Christians. The women were beaten by their husbands because they refused to take part in some of the old customs. These customs are contrary to the teaching of the Bible. The Maasai who were not Christian said, "They are breaking our customs."

Many Uganda Christians died; others were persecuted under the rule of Amin. They chose persecution rather than denying Jesus Christ. Their good lives were a rebuke to Amin and his men.

A Christian woman was persecuted every time her husband got drunk. He poured water

heard about the Lord's Supper and they said, "The Christians eat people and drink their blood!"

Christianity caused homes to break. This was really true. If a wife believed and her husband did not, it brought many problems. Sometimes he punished her. Sometimes he sent her away.

The big reason of the persecution was that the Christians refused to worship Caesar as God. Caesar was leader of the Roman Empire. He ruled many countries. Everyone had to say "Caesar is Lord!" This was required by law. Only the Jews were not required to do this. If a person refused to say, "Caesar is Lord," the people and the government said, "He is a traitor." They said, "He is an enemy of the nation." The government could imprison him and punish him.

PART 2: HOW WERE THEY PERSECUTED?

Because of their belief in Jesus, the lives of the Christians were different from the people around them. Their goodness made the lives of the other people look very bad. So other people did not like them. People spoke evil of them and abused them. (See 1 Peter 2:12.)

Sometimes they destroyed the Christians' property. "...You joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one" (Hebrews 10:34).

PART 1: TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD IN OUR TOWN

God's Word can only be preached and bring a harvest if we pray for God's power to be present in our lives. Before we preach, we must pray!

1. Each time you meet in your Women's Meeting, you should pray for your church.
2. Agree for all of your women to pray at home every day at a given time.
3. Form a special prayer group that will pray for a specific thing. When God answers that prayer, choose something else for which to pray.
4. Plan for your Women's Meeting to give a worship service in a market, prison, or a similar place.
5. Visit a lost woman and witness to her.

PART 2: TO CARE FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD

People like to be in places that are cared for properly. This is also true of the church where they go. We can do many things to help make our church attractive. This will help people want to come.

1. Make a plan to clean your church every week, inside and outside.
2. Plant flowers outside the church.
3. Put flowers in the church on Sunday. Use a bottle or pot filled with small rocks to make the flowers stand. Fill the pot with water to keep the flowers fresh.
4. Watch for broken things and ask the men to

have them repaired.

5. Teach the children to respect God's house by being quiet during worship and by helping to keep the church clean.

PART 3: TO TEACH THE BIBLE TO CHURCH MEMBERS

Teaching church members about the Bible gives them spiritual food. This is not only the work of the pastor and deacons, but of us also.

1. Help to find a teacher for a class that does not have one.
2. Bring new Christians to Bible study classes at your church.
3. Begin a new Sunday School class for children if your church does not have one. Or ask your pastor to help begin a weekday Bible study.
4. Make a personal study of a book of the Bible.

PART 4: CARING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD'S CHURCH

God is our Father. We are his children. This means that we are a family. We must care for one another and help one another just as if we were an earthly family. When we fail to do this, it is a bad witness to our community, for we show that we do not have the love of God in us.

1. Ask one of your women to be the "eyes and ears" of your Women's Meeting. She should bring news of the church members to the group.

made to idols. Then the people ate the food. The Christians would not share in these sacrifices and feasts. People said, "Christians are rude. They will not come to our feasts. They separate themselves from other people. They hide in the dark and have meetings!"

If a slave became a Christian, the other Christians called him "brother." A Christian girl from a good family might even marry a slave who had become a Christian. This was illegal to the Romans. It was shocking to other people. They said, "The Christians break our customs!"

There were almost no good jobs for a Christian. If he worked as a mason, he might have to build a pagan temple. If he worked as a tailor, he had to make robes for priests in the heathen religion. If he worked as a teacher, he had to teach stories of the false gods. Many Christians could not find jobs that were good for a Christian. The people said, "The Christians are lazy!"

Another reason for the persecution is that most of the Christians were Jews. Most of the Jews did not believe in Jesus Christ. Sometimes they were the ones who led the persecution against the Christians.

The Christians had no idols. The people could not understand a religion with no figures. They said, "The Christians do not believe in God!"

People told lies about Christians. They

PROGRAMME 11

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE BEATITUDES

THEME FOR TODAY: THE BLISS OF SUFFERING FOR JESUS

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: 1 Peter 4:13-16

MEMORY VERSE: *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*
Matthew 5:10

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Do you like to be persecuted? Of course not! Neither did the people who lived in Jesus' day. They found it very strange for Jesus to say that the person who suffered may be happy. How can you be happy when you suffer? Today we will learn about the happiness of suffering for Jesus.

PART 1: WHY JESUS' FOLLOWERS WERE PERSECUTED

Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). There is no easy way to follow Jesus. All his life Jesus knew that he would suffer on the cross. He told his followers that they must expect suffering.

After Jesus returned to his father the Christians were persecuted for many reasons. At this time the Romans ruled the countries where Christians lived. The Christians were different from other people. If the Christians went to a feast, usually sacrifices were

2. If you have money in your purse, use some of it to express feelings of sadness or happiness to the members who have had sadness or joy.
3. Plan to have a Christian "family feast" for all of your local church family to share together at Christmas or Easter. Use some of your money to help buy the food, or have each woman bring a little from home.

PART 5: HELP NEW CHURCHES TO BE BORN

It is difficult to think of a family which has no children. Your church should be like a mother which bears many children. Women can help.

1. Look around you for a place that has no church where the Gospel is preached. Make plans to go there and begin a worship service.
2. Give a Bible to a new group of Christians who do not have one.
3. Make plans to help a new church to build a building. Help carry the sand and water, make tea for the workers, or help in some other way.
4. Help begin a new Women's Meeting. Go to visit the group every week for two months. Teach them how to conduct a meeting, visit the lost, and elect officers.

PART 6: HELP YOUR CHURCH CARE FOR GUESTS

1. Cook the food for a meeting at your church for the guests.

2. Invite a small church to visit yours at Christmas. Prepare for their food and a place to sleep.

PRAYER:

Pray that God will help us to be faithful workers in our church.

PROGRAMME 2

THEME FOR THE UNIT: COMMUNITY MISSIONS PROJECTS

THEME FOR TODAY: WITNESSING TO THE LOST

DEVOTIONAL: Read Mark 1:16-20

This story tells us how Jesus called Andrew and Simon. Perhaps we have heard it often and do not realize its full meaning. Simon and Andrew were fishermen. When they sold the fish they caught each day, they had money to buy food for their families, buy clothes, and to pay their taxes to the Roman Government.

What did Jesus ask them to do? He asked these two men who had families to leave the fishing business and follow him over the dusty roads. They were not promised any wages. They would be preaching and teaching God's Word. How could Jesus ask such a thing!

But Jesus did ask. And these two men answered yes. We never hear of them as having needs that were not provided. They believed

nations make war.

The peacemaker tries to work to break down the barriers that separate people. Then they can have right relationships within themselves, with God, and with their fellowman.

During an evangelistic crusade many people believed in Jesus. One woman who believed said, "Through this crusade I found Jesus Christ, and he made me able to forgive the man who murdered my father. When a person has the right relationship with Jesus Christ, she can forgive and make peace with other people.

The peacemakers will be called the sons of God. Have you ever looked at a child and said, "He is just like his father?" The peacemakers are like their father, God, because they forgive and bring people to a right relationship with themselves, with other people, and with God.

LEADER:

Our God can help us to become meek, merciful and pure in heart. He can make us be peacemakers. Does it seem difficult? Commit yourself to God. He will make you like he planned for you to be. You will find happiness in growing to be like him.

PRAYER:

There are people today, too, who only think of "cleaning the outside." They go to church; they give money; they read the Bible. If you see them, you think they are Christians. But it may be that their thoughts and desires are filthy. Until that person's heart is pure, he is will not be clean nor happy.

The reward for the pure in heart is that they shall see God. A person cannot see God if there is any sin in his life. Only those who have nothing between their souls and the Saviour can see God.

PART 4: HAPPY ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Jesus said the peacemakers are happy. There are people who love peace, but they never do anything to make peace. The real peacemaker will be willing to face difficulty in order to bring peace.

A woman who is a member of a Baptist church has a husband who drinks heavily. He has not treated her fairly many times. But instead of hating him she has forgiven him time and again. She has shown love and respect for him. She has made peace. Because of this she is a happy person, and her husband respects and honours her.

Quarreling, fighting, and war seem to go on forever. Children quarrel. Husband and wife fight. Neighbours quarrel. Tribes and

Jesus. Their faith was enough. Their reward was the love and concern of their Father in Heaven. This is available to us also. But we too must answer God's call in faith.

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus called Simon and Andrew to be fishermen of people. We too have been called, first to receive salvation, and then to bring others to Jesus. Where are we supposed to witness? To every person we know. But how? Let us see.

PART 1: IN OUR TOWN

We can witness in our town. Some members of Women's Meetings visit a chosen place each month. It may be a market. It may be a prison for women. It may be a hospital. It can be any place where there are people to listen. If your group would like to do this, here are some suggestions.

1. Meet at the church for prayer that God's power will be in you all.
2. Decide who will lead the short worship time, who will lead the songs, prepare tracts to give to the people, and make sure all is ready.
3. A simple worship is enough. Here is a plan that some people use. Song, Prayer, Bible reading and testimony, Song, Prayer, Give tracts.

There are other projects that you might like to do.

1. Get Bibles and tracts and plan to sell

them in the market once a month.

2. On a public holiday, set up a booth to sell Bibles at the fairgrounds.
3. Learn some new songs well enough to sing them for worship time.

PART 2: IN A HOME

Not all of our witnessing will be done in a large crowd. Some of it must be done in the homes of those women we want to witness to about Jesus. A small group of women, or even one woman can go to the home of a lost woman to witness. However, this will be forgotten in your Women's Meeting if you do not plan well. Choose one week of every month to visit in homes. Always remember to pray for God's guidance before you go.

1. After meeting at the church and praying, divide the women two by two to visit lost women. Tell about your visit the next week.
2. Order tracts about how to be saved so that you can leave one at the home.
3. Prepare ahead of time what you will say. Greet the person in a friendly way. Explain why you have come. Show that you really believe what you are saying. Some people like to mark verses to read in their Bible. Here is a list which you might use.

Romans 3:23
Romans 6:23
John 3:16
Luke 13:3
Acts 16:31

1 John 1:9
Romans 10:13
II Corinthians 6:2

Mercy is love in action. It is showing kindness that is not required by law. A heart of mercy causes a Christian to see and understand the suffering of one whom others are passing by. Mercy brings a Christian to understand a person's failures and forgive him.

The reward for those who show mercy is the mercy of God. God understands; he forgives; he saves.

PART 3: THE HAPPINESS OF THE PURE IN HEART

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Much maize in Africa is not stored properly. It is not dried completely before storage. Therefore a mould can develop in the grain. The mould cannot always be seen. The grain looks good, but it is not. The mould is poisonous to people and animals. It has caused the death of animals who have eaten the **grain**. It may cause the death of humans. The **grain** appears to be good, but it is not pure. It has mould in it.

The "pure in heart" are completely clean. Their sins have been washed away. They do not have impure things mixed into their hearts.

The people in Jesus' day thought that purity meant following the laws of ceremonial cleanliness. Jesus said they were only washing the outside of the cup (Luke 11:39). He told them to clean the inside, the heart, and then everything would be clean.

earth at peace with himself and others. He has the power to overcome difficulties because his life is controlled by God.

PART 2: THE HAPPINESS OF THE MERCIFUL

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Jesus told a story of a servant who owed his master a huge debt. The master wanted to sell him and his family as slaves to pay the debt. When the man pled for mercy, the master forgave him. The servant immediately went out and found another servant who owned him a very small debt. He demanded payment and had the man thrown into prison when he failed to pay. He showed no mercy.

God has always shown mercy to his people. We see it when he delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, when he saved Lot from Sodom and when he directed Joseph's life. It is his mercy that saves us. "He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy..." (Titus 3:5).

Mercy was not known in the pagan world. If twins were born, they were shown no mercy. Either one or both were killed. If a person were crippled or blind, people laughed at him. If a person ever did something wrong, it was not forgiven. He was punished or he ran away in disgrace. In some tribes marks were cut all over a girl's body. It did not matter if it hurt, nor if the cut places became infected and swollen. No one had mercy on her. Many of these things still happen.

Have prayer that the lost person will understand the scripture. Then ask her if she has any questions. Do not be led away from your main purpose by a question that is not important. You may want to give your own testimony. Ask the lost one to lead in prayer that God will forgive his sins and come to live in his heart. If the person refuses, it is better to leave and ask if you may leave a tract and if you may come again, or send your pastor.

PART 3: IN YOUR OWN HOME

Women spend many hours every day in their own homes. There is much work to be done. The house must be cleaned and the food prepared. The way in which we do these jobs can have a good testimony to our neighbours. But we must make our home a place where we want to honour God. We must make people feel that we love them. Then they will be better able to understand the love of God. When guests who are lost come to our home, we should be ready to witness.

1. Share with a lost guest something God has done for you.
2. Tell a guest or even your family about the sermon of last Sunday or about a good School lesson that was a blessing to your life.
3. Begin a family worship in your home. Sing and pray. Tell a Bible story.
4. Begin a habit of thanking God for your food before you eat.
5. Invite neighbours to your home to hear a

gospel radio program.

6. Many family times such as weddings, births, or funerals, are a time to witness.

CONCLUSION:

You may have read these projects and felt that you cannot do even one in your Women's Meeting. When God called Simon and Andrew, he never said that they would have an easy work. Nor will we. And it is very true that we will always be spiritual babies unless we try to learn new ways to serve God. When someone comes who is lost, and we are afraid to say anything, let us remember how Jesus died for us. We will not be worthy of him, unless we tell of his great love with joy and gladness. If we serve him, blessings will come to us.

when he drove the money-changers from the temple.

Have you ever seen an angry elephant? He trumpets and crashes through the fields. He tramples the crops and knocks over trees. How destructive he is! How strong he is! Still in India they harness the elephants so that they will work. They carry loads. They pull and push heavy objects. Indian elephants are not so large as African elephants. Even so they are very big and very strong. Why does one elephant destroy things, but the other elephant does useful work? The reason is if that one is disciplined; the other is not.

Being meek is being disciplined. It is being controlled. Rather than speaking quickly and loudly in anger, the meek person controls his temper. Rather than always pushing himself ahead so that he is first and gets the best things, he controls himself and recognizes the rights of other people.

Being meek is not being weak so that a person lets others step on him or push him down. The person is not a coward. He is strong, but gentle. The meek person will stand firmly for the right thing. His life is controlled by God, not by his own desires.

The meek are promised that they will inherit the land. Those who entered the Promised Land were those who trusted God. They went there to have peace and God gave them the power to conquer the land. For the Christian today God gives the promised life. With this life the meek person can live on

PROGRAMME 10

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE BEATITUDES

THEME FOR TODAY: THE BLISS OF LIVING THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: 1 Peter 2:1-3

MEMORY VERSE: *"Blessed are the merciful, for they
shall obtain mercy."
Matthew 5:7*

PROGRAMME LEADER:

The Christian life is a happy life? Why, then do some Christians not seem to be happy? Perhaps they are not yet mature in their faith. When a new Christian is born, he must grow up. "Like newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2).

A person is born again when he believes in Jesus. He is saved. He is a Christian. But he still must grow very much if he is to be like Jesus. The Christian who does not grow is not happy. A Christian grows by trying to make his life like Jesus' life. Today we will learn about the happiness of living the Christian life.

PART 1: THE HAPPINESS OF THE DISCIPLINED SELF

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). What kind of person is the meek person? Is it a person who is weak? Is it a person who never loses his temper? The Bible says Jesus was meek, but he was not weak! And he became very angry

PROGRAMME 3

THEME FOR THE MONTH: COMMUNITY MISSIONS
PROJECTS

THEME FOR TODAY: SHOWING GOD'S LOVE TO OTHERS

SCRIPTURE: Read Matthew 23:1-12

Jesus said these words. It is a terrible thing to think that we as Christian women might be guilty of these sins. Do we tell others that their acts are bad, and then we do these very same things ourselves? Do we think people should give us the seat of honour at feasts?

Jesus tells us plainly that honour is to be given only to God. He is our Father and leader. Then Jesus says a surprising thing! "The greatest among you must be your servant." The next words gave a warning. "And whoever makes himself great will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be made great."

There was once a Women's Group which worked hard to raise money. But they did not do their work to honour God or to do his work. They did it to hear the praise of men. They wanted to announce how much money they had when the Women's Association Meeting met again. If we want the praise of men, that is easy to get. If we want the praise of God, we must work for him with hearts filled with love for him and his people.

What is the purpose of your Women's Meeting?

INTRODUCTION:

The main message of the Bible is that God is love. He sent Jesus to a sinful earth to save mankind. Jesus had compassion on the people he saw. He healed the lame and made the blind to see. He wanted to bring peace to the hearts of men. We Christians are followers of Jesus. We want to do as he did. This means that we must show God's love to those around us. A lost person may need to see God's love for him through us. A fellow Christian may need to see God's love for him through us. There are many kinds of need that we can help to fill with our love.

PART 1: CHRISTIANS WHO GO AWAY FROM GOD

A big problem that exists in the life of Christians is that we begin to follow Jesus from afar. Satan is always looking for ways to make us fall away. He does not want us to serve God. Sometimes he uses a quarrel with another Christian. Sometimes he uses the death of a loved one or the loss of work. When this happens; we need our fellow Christians to come and take our hand and pull us back to a close walk with God. Your Women's Meeting can help show God's love to one who has this problem.

1. Look at your old roll books. Make a list of women who no longer attend meetings. Pray for each one. Maybe she has moved to another town. If she still lives near, go and visit and encourage her to come back. Talk with her about any problems she has not been able to solve in her Christian

"All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6). We need God's righteousness which comes by trusting in Jesus, "For our sake he made him to be sin who know no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He promises to fill those who desire this righteousness. They will be "filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:27).

LEADER:

Jesus' words still seem strange today. Can you be happy if you are poor or hungry? Can you be happy even when you have sorrow in your life. Trust in Jesus! He will help you to find true happiness.

PRAYER:

PART 3: HAPPY ARE THE HUNGRY AND THIRSTY

Suppose you are visiting in a friend's home. Because you are a guest, they cook food for you. The food they bring you is not the food you like best, but you must eat because they have prepared it for you. You eat and eat. They bring more food. You continue eating. Finally you are completely full! You cannot eat any more. But your hostess brings one more kind of food. It is the best food of all! But you are no longer hungry. Even if it is the best, you do not want it.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6).

Righteousness is like the best food. But some people do not want it. They have filled their lives with so many other things that they are not hungry for righteousness. They already have enough without God's righteousness. They are satisfied. They do not need what God has to offer them.

A starving man will give his last ngwee for a small amount of food. A thirsty man will give all he has for water.

The rich young ruler refused eternal life. His life was already so full that he had no hunger and thirst for the life Jesus offered. He refused to give up any of the things he enjoyed. He was not really hungry for eternal life.

Our own righteousness will not satisfy.

life.

2. If you find that one of your members has moved to a nearby place, check to see if there is a church there. If not, ask the woman if her home could be used to start a worship group. Plan regular visits.
3. If a woman stays away from her church because she must care for a sick person, arrange for the women of your Women's Meeting to take turns sitting with the sick one. Then the woman can have the blessing of worship again.
4. If she is hindered by a non-Christian husband, have the pastor visit him.

PART 2: WHEN SICKNESS COMES

People who are very ill in their bodies are often sick in their spirits also. They need to feel God's love in a special way. Those who are lost can be shown God's love in the actions of Christian who care for them. Those who are Christians can feel that they are truly a part of God's family when their fellow church members come to visit.

If the person is sick at home, we should go to see if help is needed.

1. Look for ways to help in the home. There is water to be carried, food prepared, the house to be cleaned, wood to be gathered, and many other things. Make a plan so that you can share with this work.
2. Take pencil and paper and write a letter for the sick one if he needs one written. See that the letter is put in the post.

3. If the person is old and has no one to care for him, plan to go as often as needed to care for him. Take food and clothes if needed.
4. Visit a mother and her new baby. Pray for the home. Take a small gift.
5. Arrange transport for a very sick person who has no money to be taken to the hospital, or to see a doctor.

When the person is sick and in the hospital we can also do things to help.

1. Take a small group to visit, pray, and read a scripture. Do not forget to go again if the person must stay for a long time.
2. Take a small gift of food or a drink if hospital rules allow.
3. Plan to help in the home of a person who has left home with no one to do her work there. Take turns cooking for the family.

PART 3: TRY TO PREVENT SICKNESS

Your Women's Meeting can be of service to all your community or village if you help provide ways for people to learn to prevent illness.

1. Arrange for a class in nutrition to be taught by a competent person.
2. Study a book together about ways to make your homes healthier places.
3. Our governments are interested in helping us to make our homes better. Visit your local health office or development office. Ask what help is available to your village.

He is a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven.

PART 2: HAPPY ARE THE SORROWFUL

In the distance you can hear the drumbeats and loud wails. It continues all night long and the next night. Maybe for a whole week. Someone has died. The people are mourning. Will they find comfort? Does a person find real comfort from the many days of loud mourning? Or is he just very tired at the end of the time?

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). What was his meaning? Here are three ideas.

1. Luke says, "Blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh" (Luke 6:21). Christians may suffer now, but they will later receive their reward.
2. Blessings are for those who sorrow for the sin and suffering of this world. Whenever Jesus saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion for them. Jesus chose to give up his home in heaven and suffer on earth for others.
3. Happy are those who mourn and are brokenhearted because of their sin. Paul said, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). This repentance opens the door for forgiveness of sin and the joy that follows.

Those who sorrow with others or for their own sin have the promise that they will be comforted.

PART 1: HAPPY ARE THE POOR

"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

People are moving into the cities of Africa today. People come to the city even if they have no job and no money. Where do they stay? They stay with a kinsman until he drives them out. Then they build houses of cartons and sticks and plastic sheets. They flatten large tins to make a roof. They search each day for food to stay alive. Sometimes it comes from dustbins. Sometimes the children are sent to beg. Sometimes the mother sells her body. They constantly fight rats who want their food. One day the City Council sends bulldozers to knock down all the illegal housing. Then they are left with nothing. These are the poor people. They have nothing. They know they have nothing. They are helpless. They cannot help themselves.

Jesus said, "Happy are the poor in spirit." Who are the poor in spirit? They are the people who have nothing of value in their hearts and lives. They know they have nothing. They are helpless. They cannot help themselves. The only thing they can do is to turn to God. Because they know they have nothing spiritually, they must trust God completely to help them.

The person who surrenders everything to God is promised the kingdom of heaven. This is the same as the kingdom of God. The person who has trusted God completely recognizes God as his King. God is the master of his life.

Arrange for someone to come and meet with people. Make the guest teacher welcome. Encourage the people to come.

4. Use some of your money to give a gift of powdered milk or a few cups to your local kindergarten or school. Healthy children can learn better.
5. Dig a fish pond and buy fish to put in it. This will help your women to have more meat to feed their families.

PART 4: A SPECIAL FRIEND

Church members have a special friend. It is their pastor. When we have bad news or illness, or death, we expect the pastor to come and help us to find peace in our hearts. He often helps to arrange for help that is needed. Many times we repay his kindness with neglect! If you live in the city and your pastor cannot have a farm, he may have real problems. We have not all learned to follow God's plan of bringing the tithe. Sometimes there is not enough money to take care of all the needs of the church. There are some things you as members of the Women's Meeting can do.

1. Plan to bring small gifts of food for your pastor the third week of each month. Even a small amount can help when there are many to share.
2. Remember to say a word of thanks when the pastor gives help.
3. If your pastor likes to study and prepare good spiritual food, ask if there is a book he would like to have. Buy it and give it

as a gift. All of you will receive a blessing through his sermon!

4. Plan a work day to make some improvement on the pastor's house.

CONCLUSION:

There is no end to the number of things that Christian women can do if they look at the world with love in their hearts. A man once wrote a book which became famous. When the people in the book had a decision to make, they asked themselves, "What would Jesus do?" We should do this too.

PROGRAMME 4

THEME FOR THE UNIT: COMMUNITY MISSION PROJECTS

THEME FOR TODAY: LEADERS FOR TOMORROW

SCRIPTURE: Read Luke 13:6-9

This short story tells us about a fruit tree. The owner of the garden had expected a harvest for a period of three years. But the tree had no fruit at all. The owner told the gardener to cut down the useless tree. The two finally agreed that the gardener should care for the tree for one more year. Then if it still had no fruit they would cut it down.

Let us look at the meaning of this story. Surely it does not tell us only of a tree. Let us say that the owner of the garden is God.

PROGRAMME 9

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE BEAUTITUDES

THEME FOR TODAY: HAPPINESS IN OUR GREAT NEED

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Psalm 34:6

MEMORY VERSE: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*
Matthew 5:3

PROGRAMME LEADER:

What is your favorite Bible passage? Maybe it is the Beautitudes. Many people love these verses found in Matthew 5:1-12. These verses tell the essence of the Christian faith. Jesus wanted his followers to hear this teaching. He called them together. Then he sat to teach. In those days a teacher sat when he wanted to explain something really important.

The people must have been surprised at Jesus' words. His statements were the opposite of what the world considered to be true. These are statements of the happiness of the Christian now.

The statements can be divided into three parts. We shall study today about the happiness of the Christian as he gets help for his needs: poverty, hunger and sorrow. Next week we shall study about the happiness of living the Christian life in meekness, mercy, purity, and peace. The following week we will learn of the happiness of suffering for Jesus Christ.

One way to grow in these ways is to read the Bible, which is the word of God. It explains to us how to live the Christian life. Many men and women who did not have the opportunity to go to school when they were children have gone to schools for adults, or they have found someone to give of his time to teach them to read. They have wanted to be able to read God's word for themselves so that they could grow up in every way in Christ.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Getting the knowledge of God is important to the life of a Christian. Let us all try to grow in the knowledge of Christ and help others grow as well. If you can read, help someone else learn how. If you cannot read, try to find a school or someone who can teach you.

PRAYER SUGGESTION:

Let us pray that God will show us how to put him first in our lives. Pray that we will be able to recognize which things should be of importance to a Christian.

The gardener is the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to help Christians to grow and bear fruit. We ourselves are the tree. Are we barren like the tree in the story?

What fruit does God expect from us? He wants us to love him. He wants us to help our brothers who have needs. He wants us to bring others to believe in him. These are the fruits we should give to him. We must listen to the Holy Spirit when he tries to guide us to grow as Christians. If we do not, a blessing will never be ours. We will be forgotten in God's garden. He will look to others to give him fruit.

INTRODUCTION:

Who will be the next pastor of your church? Perhaps it will be the little six year old boy with no teeth in front who cannot sit still on the front row. Who will be the leader of your Women's Meeting after ten years? Will it be your own daughter? Or maybe God wants to call a child whose parents are not Christians and do not bring him to hear the word of God. What can we do to help him?

Throughout the whole world, young people today are asking questions about the ways of their fathers. Satan is calling them to follow the ways of the world. Jesus is calling them to follow him and walk in the ways of love. What will they choose? If we do not show them that we really care about them and their problems, they will choose the ways of Satan.

PART 1: SHOW LOVE AT HOME

God has planned for each of his creatures to be cared for and have their needs provided. God planned for parents to care for their children. They are to provide food, clothes, protection from harm, and a feeling of security because they are loved and wanted. If we love our children, then they can understand when we teach them of God's love. Our homes are very important in teaching our children to follow Jesus.

1. Begin a family worship in your home. Read or tell a Bible story, sing, and pray for each member of the family. Many people prefer to worship when it is time for their morning or evening food. That is when they are all together.
2. Give your child his own Bible or help him find ways to earn money so that he can buy his own. Remind him to read it every day.
3. Go with your children to church. Prepare their food and clothes early so they will not be late. Teach them to respect God's house by sitting still during the worship time.
4. Plan your time so that you have time to talk alone with each of your children. Make each one know that you care especially for him.
5. Help your child welcome his friends and give them a Christian testimony by way of the actions they see in your home.
6. If you cannot send your child to school, make some other opportunity for him to

their ruler, but he knew this was not the will of God. God's purpose in sending Jesus to earth was for him to become the saviour of all men, not the ruler of only the people of that time. Jesus knew he must do the will of God.

After Jesus had been crucified and ascended to heaven, Peter and the other apostles preached to many people in Jerusalem. The religious leaders of the Jews had them arrested. They ordered them not to teach any more about Jesus. But the disciples continued to do so. Again, the apostles were brought before the leaders, who charged them with not obeying their orders. Peter said, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Peter knew that he must answer to God in the day of judgment, not men. This had now become the most important thing in his life.

PART 4: GROWING TO BE LIKE JESUS

Many people are content with living their lives as they have always done. They want no changes to enter. It is easier to go on as they are accustomed to doing rather than grow or change. Paul said in Ephesians 4:15, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."

Just as our bodies do not always stay as the body of a baby, so we must not let our minds and spirits stay as babies in the Christian life. We must learn more of the will of God. We must learn to be more like Christ. We must learn to let the Holy Spirit lead us.

Jesus said about some of the Pharisees. Their religion was important to them, but they wanted everyone to know how religious they were. If they fasted, they looked sad and hungry, so that everyone would see that they were fasting and think how good and religious they were. Many times when they gave to the beggars, they would order a trumpet to be sounded so that all could see them give. They prayed publicly so that all could see. It was important to them that they be seen and recognized for being religious.

Jesus did not say it is wrong to fast or to give to beggars or to pray before other people. But he did say that if we do these things only to be seen by other people, we will not receive a reward from God the Father. The only reward we will receive will be the words of praise of those who see us.

When we become Christians, it will be more important to us what God thinks of us than what other people think of us. We will serve others, not for their thanks, but because we want to serve the Lord. We will share what we have with others, not so that we may be praised, but so that praise may be given to God.

PART 3: PLEASING GOD, NOT MAN

The most important thing in the lives of Christians should be pleasing God, not men. When Jesus had fed the crowd of five thousand, they wanted to make him king. They thought that he could always feed them and they would never be hungry again. Jesus could have been

learn to read so he can read the Bible for himself.

PART 2: TEACH CHILDREN AT CHURCH

Your church is supposed to tell all people about Jesus, even little ones. Children should feel that church is a good place to go. They must feel that adults want them to be there. They should be made to feel that God himself wants them to be there. If we do this, the children will grow up feeling that the church is theirs also. They will be willing to help lead in days to come.

1. Begin a Sunday School class for children if your church does not have one. Order books for the teacher and picture stories for the children. Crayons with which to color their pictures are good to have, but are not necessary.
2. Begin a Follower's or Little Helpers in your church. Here boys and girls will learn how to lead their own meetings. It is very good training.
3. Ask your missionary or national leader to help you learn about how to plan a camp for your boys and then later for your girls. It may last for one day, or even for a week. This would be a special time for Christian fellowship and Bible study. Many boys and girls have come to trust Jesus during a camp like this.

PART 3: IN THE CITY

Parents of the city spend many hours at their work each day. There is no one to help

them care for their children. These children grow up and never know what it means to have an adult who is there at all times to help them. City adults often have too many problems themselves to spend time with their children. A Christian group who can help these children will have a good opportunity to show God's love.

1. Ask your government health officer what would be required to use the rooms of your church that are not used during the week to begin a nursery. Mothers who work and do not have family near often need a safe, clean place to leave a small child. If you have women who might be interested in this work, make a plan, and make it a group project.
2. Find a field near where you live. Clean away the trash and broken bottles. Have the grass cut, and fix a place where children can play away from busy streets. If you have money, buy a ball and let the children take turns caring for it.
3. Begin a choir at your church for older children.
4. Some children learn more slowly than others. If you have women who read well, arrange for them to give extra help to a child who needs help. Ask your school teacher about this project. The teacher might be able to suggest other ways to help the school.
5. During school holidays, plan for a class on Christian marriage for older boys and girls. Ask your pastor to help with this.

"Jesus said to him, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'" We are told that the young man went away full of sorrow, for he was very rich.

This young man was interested in eternal life. He was a good man; that is, he kept the commandments. However, he realized this was not enough; he wanted to do something more. When he heard what Jesus had to say, how do you think he felt? His desire for eternal life was not as strong as his desire to keep the wealth that he had and get more. He was not willing to give up everything and follow Jesus.

In other lessons we have talked about putting off the old way of life and putting on the new. Our new lives in Christ must be more concerned with giving or sharing than with getting more for ourselves. In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul says we have been saved by grace through faith because of a gift of God. Our salvation is not from something we ourselves have done, but from the work of Christ Jesus. We cannot receive salvation through good works, like the rich young man wanted to do. However, after we are saved, our purpose should be to do the good works that God has already prepared for us. (Ask the women to name some of the good works that Christians should do.)

PART 2: SERVING GOD, NOT MAN

We can read in Matthew, Chapter Six, what

PROGRAMME 8

THEME FOR THE UNIT: CHRISTIANITY BRINGS
CHANGES

THEME FOR TODAY: NEW THINGS OF IMPORTANCE

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Matthew 19:16-26

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

PROGRAMME LEADER:

What is important in your life? For some people, education is the most important thing. For other people, money is of first importance. Still other people want power. They want to control other people. What do these things mean? If things like this are more important to you than anything else, listen to what Jesus had to say.

PART 1: GIVING, NOT GETTING

In the story in Matthew 19:16-26, a young man came to Jesus asking what good deed he could do to receive eternal life. Jesus replied that he should keep the commandments. Then the young man asked which commandments. Jesus replied by listing those which have to do with our relationship to other people; that is, "You shall not kill," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," and so on. The young man said that he had obeyed these commandments; what more should he do?

6. Your Women's Meeting could plan a teaparty and ask the girls of the church to be your guests. Have a short worship time and then serve tea. This would be good especially when the girls have a program about their Forward Steps.
7. Encourage your Women's Meeting members to look for ways they can be a friend to children who need someone to talk to about the problems of their lives.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He blessed the children. Let us follow him. Ask God to lead your Women's Meeting to choose a project that will be a blessing to your children.

PROGRAMME 5

THEME FOR THE UNIT: CHRISTIANITY BRINGS
CHANGES

THEME FOR TODAY: CHANGES WITHIN A PERSON

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Ephesians 4:22-24

MEMORY VERSE: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation; the old has
passed away, behold, the new has
come."*

2 Corinthians 5:17

PROGRAMME LEADER:

When Jesus came into the world, he showed mankind a new way of life. The Jewish people had been accustomed to following the laws that Moses had given them from God. They even made more laws to add to them. They had followed these laws for many hundreds of years.

When Jesus came, he taught about things that people had not considered. He revealed God to them in a new way. Jesus said that he had come to make the teachings of Moses come true (Matthew 5:17). When people began to listen to Jesus and accept his teachings, they began to do things differently. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

PART 1: A NEW CREATION

How do we become a new creation? We are born with a certain body. We will have this body until we die. But does the body stay the

and family for his sake would receive a hundredfold in the life to come and also eternal life.

How joyous it is, however, when accepting Christ brings families and friends together in Christ. The new friends we find and the new brothers and sisters in Christ make us a part of a greater family. We share the inheritance of eternal life and the glory of Jesus Christ himself.

PRAYER SUGGESTION:

Thank God for the fellowship we can have with fellow Christians and with Christ himself because of his death on the cross. Pray for your lost family members and friends.

There was once a Christian woman who was married to a non-Christian man. For many years she prayed for her husband to become a Christian. The pastor of the church would go and witness to the man. Friends would try to witness to him. But always he refused to hear. Every year the church would have a revival meeting. Sometimes the man would attend the meeting, but he never answered the call of the Lord. Finally, after about fifteen years, a new pastor came to the church. He met this man and tried to talk with him about Jesus, but the man would not listen. After a year had passed, the church had a meeting again. During this meeting many lost people who had been prayed for for many years were saved. One night this man came to church during this meeting. The Spirit of the Lord spoke to him and at last he answered. He accepted Christ as his Saviour. How happy was the wife, who had prayed for so many years. At last her family was united in Christ.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

When we become Christians, relationships will change. Non-Christian friends will seem different to us. We will no longer want to do the things with them that we once did. We should remember to pray for them and witness to them, but we will no longer sin with them.

Sometimes people are separated from their families when they accept Christ. Especially some members of other religions do not want their families to become Christians. If one does accept Christ, many times the family forces that one to leave home. But Jesus said in Matthew 19:29 that everyone who left home

same? No. Look at a small baby. Then look at a little child. Then look at a boy or girl about twelve years of age. Look at a grown person. Then look at an old person. We can see how a person's body changes during his lifetime.

Other changes are more difficult to see, but we know they are there. We can see when a baby begins to walk and talk. We know that changes are taking place inside them. Their minds begin to be able to think.

There is also a spirit within a person. This is what Paul speaks of in saying that when a person comes to be in Christ, he is a new creation. The body remains the same, but there is a change in the spirit.

PART 2: THE OLD NATURE

What is within a person before he believes in Christ? In Ephesians 4:22, Paul tells us to "put away your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts." That which is in a person before accepting Christ is evil; it is corrupt. It is that which causes sin. It is that which separates us from God because God is holy.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, they obeyed that which was in them that was corrupt. They chose to listen to Satan rather than to obey God. Because of this sin, mankind was separated from God. In the condition of separation, man obeys his old nature. He does things such as lying, stealing,

deceiving others, even murder. These are all signs that he is not obeying God. But when we become Christians, we are to put off all these things. These are things that belonged to our old lives without Christ.

PART 3: THE NEW NATURE

What is the new nature? Paul says, "And put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). The new nature, then, is made after the likeness of God. What did God say when he decided to create man? He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26a). We are meant to be like God. But because of sin, we lost this likeness. Now, when we believe in Christ as Saviour and accept him as God's son, we are to again put on the likeness of God.

And what will we be like if we have the likeness of God? We will be righteous, as God is righteous. We will be right in the eyes of God. When God looks at us, he will no longer see our old nature, with its sin and corruption. He will see our righteousness because we are hidden in Christ (Colossians 3:3). Christ covers up our sin with his blood that was spilled on the cross.

We will also be holy. God said, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:45). We cannot be holy if we keep our old nature, for it is corrupt. When we put on the new nature, other people will be able to see the likeness of God within us.

who had rejected Christ no longer wanted to allow worship in their village. One day, the first man who had accepted Christ sent his wife from town back to the village. She arrived to find their house had fallen down and no one would give her or her children a place to sleep. The believers were forced to leave that village and members of that family.

Jesus said, "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). We must be willing to leave behind family and old friends for the sake of Jesus.

PART 3: UNITED IN JESUS CHRIST

Even though some of us may lose some of our friends and be separated from our families because of accepting Christ, others may find that receiving Christ joins families and friends together.

If we read the book of Philemon in the New Testament, we find the story of a slave who ran away from his master. The master, Philemon, was a Christian, having accepted Christ as a result of the witness of the apostle Paul. Somewhere the slave also met Paul. Paul witnessed to the slave, Onesimus, who accepted Christ as Saviour. Paul wrote a letter to Philemon and sent it by Onesimus, the slave. In this letter he asked Philemon to receive Onesimus back into his household, not only as a slave, but also as a Christian brother. The master and slave were reunited as brothers in Christ.

usually their friends are not Christians either.

Becoming a Christian should change our lives. Jesus commanded Christians to love all people. We can see the difference in the life of the apostle Paul. Before he met Jesus, he spent much time arresting Christians and putting them in prison. He hated those who followed Christ. But after he received Christ, he was changed. He loved those whom before he had hated. Not only did he love his fellow Christians, but he also loved his enemies and tried to tell them of the love of Jesus.

Jesus gave us the best example to follow. He came into the world to die for those who were still sinners (Romans 5:8). We should follow his example by loving others, even our enemies.

PART 2: LOSING OLD FRIENDS

Jesus said that the people of the world hated him and would hate his followers also. Sometimes we find that when we become his followers, we lose our old friends. Our ways are no longer the same as theirs. Sometimes even our families who are not Christians turn against us.

A missionary and a pastor went to a certain village to preach the gospel. They had been invited by a man of the village. This man and others of his family accepted Christ. But many of the village refused. For a time some of the people continued to meet there for worship. But finally there came a time when those

PART 4: CHANGES IN A BELIEVER'S LIFE

Perhaps you have known a person who was not a Christian who later believed in Christ. He may not be able to explain what has happened in his life, but he knows he has changed. He may say that God has changed him. Like the blind man whom Jesus healed, he can say, "Though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25b).

When we have the old nature of sin, we are like a blind man. We cannot see spiritual things and we cannot see the things of God. Only when we receive Christ as Saviour can we put on a new nature. Then we can see things of God and walk in his ways.

After we have put on the new nature, other people will be able to see the difference in us. They will be able to know that we have changed. They can see the likeness of God in us.

LEADER:

When a person believes in Christ and receives him as Saviour, he will no longer want to sin. Perhaps he will become weak and sin sometimes, but he will know it is wrong. Even Paul said that he had to continue to fight against doing wrong. Our old nature wants to come back and take control. We must not give permission for this to happen.

Because we are children of God, we have the power of God through the Holy Spirit. This power can overcome the power of Satan.

Satan is the one who controlled the old nature.

Now we have the new nature, which is controlled by Christ. We can have the nature and the likeness of God.

PRAYER:

Pray that we will let Christ control our lives so that the likeness of God may be seen in us.

PROGRAMME 6

THEME FOR THE UNIT: CHRISTIANITY BRINGS CHANGES

THEME FOR TODAY: THINGS THAT DISAPPEAR

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Colossians 3:1-10

MEMORY VERSE: *"For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."*
Colossians 3:3

PROGRAMME LEADER:

When someone dies, the soul leaves the body. It is no longer part of that body. The body is hidden or buried. It is no longer seen.

Paul told the Colossians that if they had accepted Christ as Saviour, they had died. He meant that they had died to the old life, that is, the life of sin. No longer would they be

PROGRAMME 7

THEME FOR THE UNIT: CHRISTIANITY BRINGS CHANGES

THEME FOR TODAY: CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIP TO OTHERS

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Matthew 5:43-48

MEMORY VERSE: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

John 13:34

PROGRAMME LEADER:

In the Old Testament times, the people were given laws to follow. They were harsh laws, commanding strict punishment for those who did wrong. If someone took something from another or hurt another, the same thing was to be done to him.

But Jesus taught something new. He taught that Christians should not revenge themselves against their enemies or those who did wrong to them. Jesus said they should love their enemies and do good to those who harmed them. These words changed the lives of the new Christians. By obeying this new commandment of Jesus, they were able to spread the good news of God's love throughout the world.

PART 1: LOVING OUR ENEMIES

People like to be with people who agree with them, who like to do the same kinds of things. Before people became Christians,

If non-Christians see people who are supposed to be Christians using such things as charms, they cannot believe that those people are truly Christians. They see that they still trust in witchdoctors, not God.

Once a young woman had a condition which caused her to lose consciousness and bleed. Witchdoctors had given her charms but nothing helped. She decided to try going to churches and went to different ones but was not helped. Finally a pastor of a Baptist Church told her that she must trust in Jesus and leave the problem in his hands. One day after she had accepted Christ, she lost consciousness again. When she awoke, her family was trying to put charms on her. She refused to allow this, saying that now she had accepted Christ and left the old ways behind. Finally she received help for her condition and was cured.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

As we study the Bible, we can see many things we are told to leave behind when Christ comes into our lives. If we continue in the old ways, we do not truly trust Christ.

PRAYER SUGGESTION:

Pray that God will help us to put away from our lives those things which keep us from depending on Christ.

slaves of sin.

He said that now their life was hidden with Christ. If something is hidden, it is not able to be seen. The life of a Christian is hidden with Christ. The old life can no longer be seen. Christ covers or hides the old life with his own life. When God looks at us as Christians, he does not see our sin. It has been covered or hidden by the blood of Christ.

When we become Christians, sinful things should disappear from our lives. They should no longer be seen. Today we will talk about some of the things we leave behind.

PART 1: THINGS OF THE WORLD

Paul told the Colossian people to put to death those things which belonged to the world. (Read Colossians 3:5-9). First, he told them to put away immorality. This can mean any type of sin, anything which goes against accepted principles of right conduct. It is often considered to be especially sins of bodily relationships. Paul also mentions sins which have to do with how we think and feel. The desire to do evil is a sin and is to be put away.

Greed is also a sin and is to be put to death. This can become worshipping wealth or power instead of God. It becomes like a god in the mind.

In Luke 19:1-10 we can read the story of Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector. In those days the tax collectors could cheat the

people by collecting more taxes than the government demanded. They became very rich because of forcing the people to pay more money. Zacchaeus had become rich by doing this. He let his desire for wealth become like a god to him.

One day Jesus passed through the town of Jericho where Zacchaeus lived. Jesus went to the home of Zacchaeus and ate with him. Zacchaeus realized he had done wrong. He wanted to leave behind his sinful life. He said that he would give half of all his property to the poor and repay four times as much as had been gained by cheating. Jesus saw that Zacchaeus was changed. He said, "Today salvation has come to this house." The old ways disappeared from the life of Zacchaeus.

PART 2: BAD CHARACTERISTICS

Other things that the Colossians were told to be rid of were such things as anger, hatred, taking evilly and lying (Colossians 3:7-10). All these things, Paul said, were a part of the old way of life. But now the new nature has nothing to do with the old nature. As Christians we must leave these things behind.

Things such as anger, hatred and lying are harmful to our walk with the Lord. They hinder our spiritual growth. They also keep us from being able to witness to those who are lost. People think Christians are people of love and patience. Truly, we should be. If lost people see us becoming angry, hating other people or telling lies, how can they believe

that we are Christians?

A story is told of a person who told lies about someone else. The person who was lied about lost his job and his friends. His life was very unhappy. One day the liar repented of his sin. He asked, "How can I make this wrong become right?" He was told to fill a large bag with feathers. He did so and returned. "Now, open the bag and pour out the feathers." He obeyed this instruction. Then he was told, "Now go and pick up all the feathers."

"I cannot," he replied. "The wind has blown them all away."

"So it is with lies," was the answer. "Once spoken, they cannot be brought back."

This story should help us see that if, as Christians, we continue sinning, our witness is lost even as the feathers were lost. We must leave our sins behind. They must disappear from our lives.

PART 3: CUSTOMS CONTRARY TO CHRISTIANITY

Perhaps there were customs in our lives before we became Christian that should also be left behind. We used to put our trust in things other than God. When God was giving laws to the Israelites, he told them not to follow the customs of the people who lived in the land which he was giving to them. Those people depended on people like witchdoctors. They relied on charms to keep them well or to protect them. But God told the Israelites not to do those things.