

W M U 1976 - Q# 3

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W.M.U. PROGRAMMES

July, August, September
~~OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER~~

1976

THEME: TEACHING OF JESUS

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W.M.U. PROGRAMMES

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PROGRAMME ONE

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Theme For Today: KNOWING GOD

Memory Verse:

"And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

John 17:3

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Have you ever asked yourself, "Who am I? Why am I on this earth?" People all through the ages have asked these questions. The psalmist asked in Psalm 8:4: "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?"

In Genesis 1:26a we read, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...'" What does this mean, to be created in the image of God? There are three things that make us like God. He gave us a mind, feelings, and a will. With these qualities we can think, we can feel, and we can choose.

When God gave man these three qualities, he was making a creature whom he could love. He wanted someone to love. Also he wanted someone to love him. He had to give us a will so that we could choose to love him. It would not have been real love if we were made like a machine. We must choose to respond to God with our minds and our feelings.

PART ONE:

We know that the first man and woman turned away from God. They disobeyed him. They chose not to follow God. God did not force them to love him. He never forces any of us to love him.

But the heart of God must have been very, very sad. He wanted man and woman to love him. Because man chose his own way, God's Spirit could not live in him and have fellowship with him. God's Spirit left the heart of man then. Man dies spiritually, as God has said would happen if man disobeyed him.

(Read Ephesians 2:1.)

What would God do now? He had a wonderful plan. He would send his own Son to pay the price for the sins of man. Then whoever chose to accept the gift of this pardon would choose to accept God's love. His sins would be washed away. He would be clean.

God's Spirit would come to live in his heart. He would be spiritually alive. He would have a life in him which would never end.

PART TWO:

Because God made man to love and to be loved, man knows that he is more than a physical body. He knows that there is a being greater than man. There is a longing in him to know this being. (Read Philippians 3:10.)

Many people do not know what this longing within their hearts is. They only know that they cannot find peace. They try many things but still find no peace. They may try to find peace by drinking beer, gambling, and doing other things.

How can we know God? We have already read about God's wonderful plan to bring man back to himself. We can listen to God's Spirit speaking to our hearts. He tells us of the guilt in our hearts because of our sins. He tells us that, because he loves us, he has made a way for us to escape the penalty of our sins.

When we accept his Son as our Saviour, we are responding to the great love of God. When we accept his forgiveness for our sins, then his Spirit can come to live in our hearts. When this happens, we have eternal life. What is eternal life? Our memory verse tells us that it is to know God and his Son, Jesus.

PART THREE:

How can we know God? "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe"

(1 Corinthians 1:21). Paul tells us that we cannot know God through our own wisdom. His plan is to save those who believe in Jesus, the Son of God, and trust him as Saviour and Lord.

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:20). Here we see that the Son of God has given us understanding to know him. It is his love which is reaching out to us to make us know him. What a wonderful God he is!

How can we be sure that we know him? "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). God is love. Therefore, if one knows God, he must have love in his heart.

Paul knew God is a wonderful way. He said, "I know who I have believed..." (2 Timothy 1:12b).

FART FOUR:

When we know such a wonderful God, we want others to know him, too. How can we do this? Here is what one Christian woman says:

"The faithful witness of a Christian is as fine as what salt does for all the earth. Jesus compared salt with the witness of the Christian in Matthew 5:13. All people want to use salt in their cooking so that it will be good to eat.

Also all people want the salt of the faithful Christian witness so that they can see Jesus in us. Then they can know him as their Saviour. They learn of him from our lives. We cannot have a faithful witness for Jesus every day unless we learn of him."

Notice that this Christian says that others can know God by seeing him in our lives.

PART FIVE:

When can you say that you know a person? We know him when we have seen him and talked with him. But do we know him very well if we have only seen him once? Do we know him well if we only see him once in a while? No, we must spend time with someone to really know him.

It is the same with knowing God. We must spend time with him if we are to really know what he is like. We want to be with those we love. We want to talk to them. We want to hear the things they tell us. Because we love God, we want to spend time with him. "Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth!" (Psalms 46:10).

When we know and love God we want to read his Word, the Bible, every day. We want to ask him to speak to our hearts as we read. We want to talk to him about the things that are in our minds. As we do so, his Spirit will work in our hearts. Then others will notice that our lives are different. They will see Jesus in us.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

It is wonderful to know God. The Bible also tells us that he knows those who are his. (Read John 10:14 and II Timothy 2:19.)

May we help others to know our wonderful Lord this next week.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME TWO

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Theme For Today: PRAYER

Memory Verse:

"And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

Luke 11:9,10

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Last week we studied about coming to know our wonderful Lord. Have you been thinking this week about the truths we talked about last week? Have you told them to your children at your family prayer time?

When we accept Jesus and have our sins forgiven, we come to know God. When we know him, we want to talk with him. We want to spend time with him.

(Repeat the memory verse.) Jesus promises that if we seek, we will find. And we know that God always keeps his promises. Let us read Psalm 63:1. The writer says that he seeks God, that his soul thirsts for God. In Psalm 119:10 we read, "With my whole heart I seek thee." That is what we are doing when we pray. We are seeking God.

PART ONE:

When do you have your own prayer time by yourself? The writer of the psalms suggests a good time. (Read Psalm 90:14.) Surely we need to start the day with God. Before we talk with others we need to first talk with the Lord. We need to be conscious of him when we wake up.

Before we start the work of the day, we must first ask God to take over and direct us. His Spirit will take over.

when we ask him to direct our thoughts, our words, and our deeds for the day. If we do not ask him, he will not help us in this way. He never forces the will that he has given to us. We must choose his way. Then he will bless us in a wonderful way.

(Read Psalm 9:10.) The writer of the Psalms speaks of those who know the Lord, as we discussed last week. He says that God has not forsaken those who seek him.

PART TWO:

Perhaps you have asked yourself the question, 'How do I pray?' Is praying just asking God for the things that we want? No, prayer is much more than that. Prayer is communicating with God.

Many people have found that the four steps which follow are very helpful in their praying.

The first step of prayer is to realise this:

JESUS IS HERE. (Read Psalm 40:16 and Psalm 105:2-5.)

We can bow our heads in silence and think of Jesus. We then feel his presence. We know that he is really with us. As we think of him and know that he is with us, our hearts want to greet him. We greet anyone whom we love. It is the same when we think of God's loving presence.

What does God want to say to us? We think in our minds of the things he is saying to us. He is saying: "My child, I love you. My child, I accept you, just as you are. I care about you. My child, I forgive you, because I love you."

PART THREE:

The second step of prayer is this: THANK YOU, LORD

(Read Philippians 4:4-6.)

James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17). We know that this is true. Even the air we breathe comes from God. The strength we have with which to work comes from him.

Perhaps the first thing we will want to say is this: "Thank you, Lord, for loving me." Then we can name many other things for which we are thankful.

We can thank God that we are free to read the Bible. Countries with a Communist government do not let the people read the Bible because they say that there is no God. If people have a Bible, they must keep it hidden. Mothers are not allowed to teach their children Bible stories.

PART FOUR:

The third step of prayer is this: HELP ME, LORD. (Read I John 1:9 and James 5:16.) As we come into the presence of our righteous God, we become conscious of the sin in our life. We know that our Father loves us and accepts us, and wants to forgive us for anything that stands in the way of fellowship with him. Therefore, we want to ask him to show us the sin in our lives. Then we must confess it. He then gives us great peace in our hearts. We must never confess another's sin but only our own.

One W.M.U. woman wrote this:

"The time of prayer is the time we talk to God. Therefore, we should not neglect prayer in our homes. Prayer should be daily, even as the house is swept daily. There is no woman who will refuse to sweep her house every day so that it will look nice. So we sweep the houses of our hearts by our prayers, confessing the sins by which we sin against God so that he will hear and forgive us. Let us give time for prayer so that we stay with our sins forgiven in our lives. Let us give time for prayer if we are in trouble or if we have great joy."

PART FIVE:

The fourth step of prayer is this: HELP MY BROTHER.

(Read Mark 11:22-25.)

When we know the Lord, we want to talk to him about our loved ones and friends. We want to pray for the lost. We want to ask God to help our friends solve their problems. His love reaches out to others through us as we pray. (Read I Timothy 2:1 and Ephesians 6:18.)

Here is the story of a new Christian woman who prayed for another:

"Then after she repented, her husband refused to let her go to the church and to the meetings of the church. When she went to a meeting, the husband followed her into the forest and beat her in front of other people. But the woman continued to go to the meetings. She would not let her heart rest from praying for her husband. God did answer her prayers. Now today her husband is a Christian, and others in the family are also Christians."

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Let us remember these four steps as we pray: JESUS IS HERE;
THANK YOU, LORD; HELP ME, LORD; and HELP MY BROTHER.

PRAYER

[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible, appearing to be a prayer or a continuation of the story.]

PROGRAMME THREE

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Theme For Today: PRAYING TOGETHER

Memory Verse:

"Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Matthew 18:19,20

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Last week we talked about the four steps of prayer. Have you used these steps in your praying this week?

Our Father wants to talk to us alone each day, with no one else present. But He also wants us to get together with others of his children to talk with him. Our memory verse today tells us this. It tells us that he is real in the prayer group as the people that you can see there.

When we pray together we can use the four steps of prayer which we learned last week. In fact, the woman who first wrote down these steps has used them very much with prayer groups.

Let us revise the steps of prayer: JESUS IS HERE;
THANK YOU, LORD; HELP ME, LORD; and HELP MY BROTHER.

PART ONE:

These steps may be used in groups that pray together. This is called "conversational prayer." It is just like when a group talks together with each other. But this time, everyone is talking together to Jesus, who is present with them. Each person can speak as many times as they want to.

In this way of praying each person just speaks to the Lord on whatever subject someone brings up in his prayer.

If it is in the thanksgiving time, then different ones speak up and thank God for different things. If it is the time for petition, then different ones will agree with the petition that someone else makes. This is what our memory verse tells us to do.

PART TWO:

In this way of praying, we must not be afraid of silences. This may be the time when the Holy Spirit is speaking to our hearts. Then, when someone prays about a matter, we find that this same thought has been in our hearts. This is God's Spirit leading our prayer.

If we are left to ourselves, we do not know how to pray. God himself leads us. God has met this helplessness by giving us the Holy Spirit to pray for us and in us. He tells us this in Romans 8:26,27. "Like wise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

In prayer we must first commit ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Through him our prayers will have a value we cannot imagine.

In every prayer the Triune God takes a part. God the Father hears. It is in the name of God the Son we pray. God the Holy Spirit prays for us and in us.

PART THREE:

Most of us have found that we do not always get what we have asked for, even when we ask for something for another person. Why is this? To get the answer we must remember that we are the children of the Heavenly Father.

Let us think of our own children. Do we always give our children the things for which they ask? Do we always allow them to do all the things they want to do? We know that too many sweets eaten at one time will make them sick. Therefore, we refuse to let them eat too much. We know that some things are harmful to them. Therefore, we refuse to give them these things. We do this because we love them.

It is the same with our Heavenly Father. We cannot see into the future as he does. He knows many things that we do not know. Therefore, he answers our prayers in the way that will be the best for us.

Sometimes we keep asking God for something which is not the best for us. It seems that God sometimes punishes us by giving us the things we ask for. Then we learn our lesson. Have you ever punished your child like this just to teach him what is best?

PART FOUR:

If our prayer concerns another person, let us remember that God does not force anyone to follow him. He will hear our prayers for his Spirit to reach out to a lost person and touch his heart.

If we continue to pray, he will continue to do this. Then perhaps the lost person will respond to the love of God. We must also pray regularly for our Christian family and friends. We must pray that God's Spirit will help them in their problems and decisions.

We must not doubt God when we pray. (Read Hebrews 11:6.) Here we are told that we must believe that God rewards those who seek him. We must believe this with all our hearts. In prayer we are truly seeking God. The rewards that God gives us may not be the ones for which we asked. But we know that he will give us the very best when we leave the choice with him.

PART FIVE:

One of our W.M.U. women gave this testimony about family prayer time:

"This has been the most exciting time for our family to feel the spirit of togetherness spiritually. It is the most wonderful occasion for the family.

With us, singing has been a real part of our prayer time as a family unit. We have found the message from hymns and the Bible passage very helpful to our lives. Family prayer time provides a golden opportunity to discuss every day problems facing our young Christians and the world at large.

Family prayer time will unify a family because that is the time you bring your whole family to the Lord. You let the Lord speak to them. Surely you will discuss things frankly with members of your family. You can make them realise through talking to them that they need to be saved from their sins.

It is at a family prayer time that you can teach your children how to pray, particularly if they have never prayed before. The Lord speaks to every member differently and blesses each one differently. Again family prayer time has proved to be a time for the cultivation of our talents. Try it, and you will be amazed.

The organisational part of it is not so difficult as it might seem to be. Give every member a task to do. It might be issuing hymns, Bibles, etc. Again, it might be being responsible for singing. Little tasks like that flavour a family prayer time. Our children are eager to have such opportunity made available."

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Let us read and study again the truths we have learned about prayer when we are at home. Let us share them with our families.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME FOUR

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Theme For Today: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Memory Verse:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:3

PROGRAMME LEADER:

In the past weeks we have talked about how wonderful it is to know God. When we know him, we want to spend time with him. We want to pray alone each day. We also want to have family worship each day. We want to pray with other Christian friends.

Today we are studying about another teaching of Jesus. As we read the gospels, we find that Jesus often mentioned the kingdom of God. Have you wondered what he meant by this? John the Baptist warned the people to repent because the kingdom of God was near. What did he mean by this?

PART ONE:

When we think of a kingdom, we know that there must be a king. The king has control over all those who live in his kingdom. Therefore, the kingdom of God means that God is the king over all those who belong to him.

There were many people during the time of Jesus who thought that he came to set up an earthly kingdom. They wanted him to conquer the Roman armies who had taken their land. But Jesus said, "My kingship is not of this world..." (John 18:36).

How does a person become a part of God's kingdom? Jesus said, "...Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3b). Do you remember that three weeks ago we studied that man is dead spiritually because of

his sins? "And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked..."

(Ephesians 2:1,2a). When a person accepts Jesus' payment for his sins, then he is cleansed. God's Spirit can come and live in his heart. In this way he is born as God's child and belongs to the kingdom of God.

PART TWO:

An important teaching of Jesus is found in our memory verse. What does it mean? Jesus was saying that we must know that we are spiritually poor in ourselves before we can become a part of the kingdom of heaven.

We must come to know that we cannot do anything to save ourselves. We do not have any spiritual riches in ourselves. We cannot use money or power, or good works to get into the kingdom of God. When we know this truth in our heart, then we can let God's power rule in our lives. It is only God who can save us from the penalty of our sins so that we are born into the kingdom of God.

When there is a kingdom, we know that the king has power. He rules over the people. Therefore, when we are a part of the kingdom of God, he should rule over our lives.

PART THREE:

But do Christians always let their King rule over their lives? Do you let him control your life every day?

Our memory verse applies to Christians, too. We must realise that we have no spiritual riches to live a happy life each day. We must ask God's Spirit to control our lives. We want him to be the king who rules our hearts. He can save us from the power of sin each day. (Read Romans 6:6,7. Discuss this.)

But very often Christians try to live each day without the power of God. We must realise how powerful Satan is to

trap us in temptations. Satan is more powerful than we are. Therefore, we cannot lead victorious lives each day without the strength of God.

We must learn the same lesson that Paul learned. "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:19). He learned that there was no good in him, even after he became God's child. The only good in any of us is God's Spirit which lives in his children.

PART FOUR:

Do you think that many Christians realise that they are spiritually poor in themselves? Do they ask God for his strength and power to fill them each day? Do you do this?

One W.M.U. woman wrote this:

"One of our members was a drunkard and her life burdened the church. She stopped attending, and did not even come to the W.M.U. meetings. She would spend much of her time at the bar. But when the Lord talked to her she confessed her sins. Today she is very happy with her husband although he is not a Christian. She is happy that she has seen the Lord's power. She now witnesses to her husband."

When this woman listened to God, his power could work to overcome temptations.

PART FIVE:

(Read Matthew 13:44.) In the times of Jesus there were no banks. The people buried their treasures in the fields. When the man found a buried treasure, he sold all he had to buy the field with the treasure. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like that. When we see how wonderful the rule of God is in our lives, we will be happy to give up our selfish ways.

One W.M.U. leader wrote the following about a family who let God's rule come into their lives:

"There was a home where people had backslidden very much. The children did not like things of the Lord. They did not obey anybody. One night the parents prayed the whole night. The following day all of the house felt the power of God at work. Parents confessed the sin of neglecting their children. Children confessed the sin of disobedience. The Spirit of God filled them at that very time. Today there is happiness in that home and in their church."

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Let us take the truths that we have learned to our homes. Let us think about them. Let us ask God to make them real in our own lives.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME FIVE

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Theme For Today: LIGHT

Memory Verse:

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

PROGRAMME LEADER:

As we have studied the teachings of Jesus, we have learned how wonderful it is to know God. It is wonderful to spend time with him in prayer and to let him rule in our hearts. Today we are going to study about light. Jesus spoke of light. We also find that light is spoken of throughout the Bible.

First, we must know what darkness is before we can appreciate light. There was darkness over all the world in the beginning (Genesis 1:2). Then God said, "Let there be light."

Light is a wonderful thing. We know that plants will not grow if they do not have light. Light helps us to see so that we can do our work.

PART ONE:

Sometimes children are afraid of the darkness. They do not know what is near to them in the darkness. Sometimes adults are afraid of darkness, too. They know that people hide in the darkness to rob and do other bad things.

The sin in a person's heart makes him feel that he is in darkness. (Read Proverbs 4:19.) We all know what the darkness of sin is like.

Why do people stay in the darkness of sins? 2 Corinthians 4:4 gives us the answer. (Read this verse.) Who is the god of this world mentioned in this verse? It is Satan. He is the one who blinds the minds of the unbelievers in order to keep them in darkness.

Do we realise how powerful the god of this world is? He can speak to our minds. This is why we must ask God to control our thoughts. Only God can throw out the wrong thoughts of Satan. Sometimes we want to think the wrong thoughts that Satan puts into our minds. We want to be selfish. We want to be jealous of another person. Then these wrong thoughts come out in bad talk. Bad talk becomes bad deeds. Do you see how Satan traps us? The only way to fight him is to ask God to rule in our lives as we studied last week.

PART TWO:

God had an answer to the darkness of sin. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined" (Isaiah 9:2). The prophets knew of the coming light John tells us the message in John 1:4,5. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Notice in these verses that the darkness has not overcome the light. The darkness means sin and Satan's rule. He cannot overcome Jesus, the light, if we give control of our lives to our King.

"I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (John 12:46). (Repeat the verse for today.) These are wonderful promises.

Once the writer of these programmes met the husband of a friend. His face seemed to have a dark cloud over it. He frowned and did not seem to be happy. Some months later I saw this same man again. He seemed to be a different person. His face was bright and happy. He was smiling. He was interested in other people.

What had happened to him? When I asked his wife, she said, "Oh, we had a revival in our church. He repented and became a Christian. His life has changed since then."

PART THREE:

We know that Jesus is the Light of the World. But also he said, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14a). (Read also I Thessalonians 5:5.) If we are the sons of light, how should we live? Jesus tells us, "Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness" (Luke 11:35). (Read Ephesians 5:8,9.)

But do God's children always live as children of light? Are our lives clean and pure so that we are glad for people to see them? Or do we have some parts of our lives that we want to keep hidden?

Why do we sometimes want to keep hidden some of the things we have said, or some things we do? "For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God" (John 3:20,21).

PART FOUR:

It is sad that sometimes the deeds of Christians belong to the darkness rather than to the light.

A.W.M.U. woman tells this story:

"I shall never forget the troubled look worn by the husband of one of the W.M.U. members. He said, "My wife has run away!" I remembered his wife very well. She was keen, active, faithful, and a strong believer of the Christian faith. I knew that she had been granted leave by her husband to go mourn for a deceased brother for three months.

She returned on a Sunday. Next Sunday she did not come for worship. What had happened? The in-laws told the husband frankly that his wife stayed but for a short time. While on leave she arrived at odd hours at her home with the man she had once divorced and left him with two children. She had left a family of five children to recapture the two children."

"Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:14,15). Here we are told that we are to shine as lights in a sinful world. Lost people must see Jesus in us before they will come to him.

PART FIVE:

"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:5-7). We cannot claim to have fellowship with God if we walk in darkness.

(Read 1 John 2:9-11. Discuss these verses.)

The following story shows W.M.U. women walking in the light as they show concern for the sick:

"One work of the W.M.U. in our church is to pray for the sick in the hospital. We begin by deciding on a time when we women can meet together and go to the hospital. We decide who will pray and who will read the Bible. When we have met and agreed on what we will do, we go together to the hospital to pray with the sick people and to read the Bible."

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We must examine our lives each day to see that we are walking in the light. We must remember that we cannot walk in the light in our own strength, we must turn our lives over to Jesus each day. (Read Psalm 27:1.)

PRAYER

PROGRAMME SIX

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHING OF JESUS

Theme For Today: THE PERIL OF THE EMPTY SOUL

Memory Verse:

"And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God!"

Ephesians 3:19

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We have been studying some teachings of Jesus. He has taught us that it is wonderful to know God. It is wonderful to spend time with him in prayer and to let him rule in our lives. We have learned that we are to walk in the light as he is in the light.

Today we will study the truths found in the story Jesus told in Luke 11:24-26.

This is a sad story. An unclean spirit was expelled from a man. When it returned to the man, it found his soul swept clean, but empty. So the spirit went and collected seven other spirits worse than itself. Then they came back and entered the man. Let us think about the meaning of this story.

PART ONE:

We learn from this story that a man's soul cannot be left empty. When a person becomes a Christian, he wants to stop his evil thoughts and evil habits. He wants to leave the old ways. His soul is then left clean. But it must not be left empty.

The empty soul is the soul in peril. It is not enough to say that we must not do this thing, and we must not do that thing. We must think good thoughts. We must make good habits. We must do good things. Then these

take the place of the old things. There is no room for the old bad spirits, such as greed and selfishness, to come back into the life.

Someone has said that when you pull up a weed, two will grow in its place. We should plant a flower or vegetable in its place. Then these good plants crowd out the worthless weeds.

PART TWO:

One W.M.U. woman wrote the following:

"Many women are travelling two paths. They have not surrendered their whole hearts to God. When they are taken with a long illness, they decide to return to the ways of the world and go to have the cause divined. At the end they say God does not have strength over the spirits.

Others, when they repent, they are conquered in their lives by drinking beer and smoking tobacco or participating in the spirit worship. Some think they cannot have a good job and also go to church and W.M.U. They do not know that their spirits need food also, just as the body needs meat and food to grow. If we do not worship together in the meetings of the church, our spirits cannot grow. They will be weak because they do not take the food of the soul."

This woman is right. We must spend time reading the Bible, praying, and worshipping with other Christians. Then our souls will not be empty. They will be filled with good thoughts. These will grow into good deeds. The bad things will be crowded out.

PART THREE:

It is not enough to drive out the evil. The good must enter. (Read Ephesians 5:18.) A person will be filled with something. If he is filled with good habits, then the bad habits are crowded out.

If the bad is removed and a person does not put in good habits, then he is idle. There is a saying, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." This is true.

Often we are troubled with wrong thoughts. If we repeat to ourselves, "I must not think about that," we just fix our thoughts on it more and more. The cure is to banish the evil thought by thinking a good thought. We never become good only by refusing to do bad things. We become good by filling life with lovely things.

PART FOUR:

A.W.M.U. leader tells this story about a backslidden woman:

"One day two W.N.U. women visited another woman of their W.M.U. who did not come to the Thursday meetings. They began to ask her why she did not come to the meetings or to church on Sundays. This woman began to give her answers that she had been sick for all those past days. The two women tried to help her and read to her from Jeremiah 3:19.

But this woman had the knowledge of making beer and selling it. When she sold the beer, she put the money she received in an envelope and kept it in the granary. When she put her money in the granary, rats came and ate the paper money that amounted to \$26.00. The woman did not know what she would do. She took all the little pieces of paper money that were left and went running to the store. There the storekeeper refused to exchange the money for her because all the numbers on the money had been eaten by the rats. This woman came to the church and confessed her sin." (Read Proverbs 22:8.)

PART FIVE:

A few years ago a man came to church most of the time. But his life was not filled with the things of God. He began to sew clothes on Sunday afternoon to find some extra money. He began to miss church services to sew all day Sunday. Soon he began to drink beer. Then he began to see

other women besides his wife. Then he got a divorce from his wife.

We see how the evil temptations come and succeed when we are not filled and controlled by the Spirit of God.

(Repeat the memory verse and tell what you think it means.)

(Read Matthew 25:31-40 at home. Explain to the members how you think the service mentioned in this reading will keep out the evil spirits of greed, selfishness, pride, lust, etc.)

(Read I Corinthians 15:58,)

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We are Christian mothers. Let us read about the woman of God in Proverbs 31:27.

We know that there is only one way to live a happy life. That is by spending time each day with our Heavenly Father. We must ask him to control our thoughts for the day. We must ask him to control our words and our deeds. Then we will be filled with peace and joy. We will be filled with the fullness of God. When we ask him to do this, he will do so.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME SEVEN

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Theme For Today: HAPPINESS

Memory Verse:

"But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'"

Luke 11:28

PROGRAMME LEADER:

(Name the teachings of Jesus we have studied this quarter.)
We do not want to be empty and idle as the man about whom we studied last week. Instead, we want to be filled with all the fullness of God.

Today we are going to think about happiness. We all want to be happy. What makes us happy? If we have more and more money to buy more things, will this make us happy? Many people think so. But many rich people are very unhappy in their hearts.

We will see what God's Word says about happiness today.

PART ONE:

Psalm 144:15b tells us, "...Happy the people whose God is the Lord!" This verse tells us what we have studied in our first programme this quarter: that to know the Lord our God is the most wonderful thing that can happen to us. It brings real happiness into our hearts. He is the one to whom we look for help. (Read Psalm 146:5.)

"For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). This verse tells us that the kingdom of God brings joy and peace. When we are in God's kingdom and let him rule our lives, we know true happiness. Have you experienced this? "These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15.11).

PART TWO:

Let us see what Jesus is teaching us in our memory verse. He says that we will be happy when we hear the Word of God and keep it. When we know and love someone, we talk to him and he talks to us. We listen to what he is saying.

The same is true in our relationship with God. We listen to what he says to us through his Word, the Bible. We listen to him as we pray to him each day. When we pray, we do not do all the talking. Do you remember that when we pray, we should not be afraid of times of silence? We must stop and let God speak to us sometimes.

Jesus tells us that the happy people are those who hear what he has to say, and then they obey. (Read Psalm 119:10.)

Do you think the girl in the following story obeyed God? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

"One of those in our town who received the Lord during the revival was one who was our first girl to obtain the Queen's Step. She did not even listen to what people were telling her about the Lord. She followed her boy friend wherever he went because he was a guitarist. But when the Lord spoke to her heart she confessed her sins. How she is one of the happiest people in the Lord, so she says."

PART THREE:

Do you remember the scripture in Matthew 25 about doing good deeds to Jesus whenever we do them for other people? Do you think the W.M.U. group in the following story was obeying the teachings of Jesus in that scripture?

"One woman was a believer who had been baptised in our church, but her husband was not yet a believer. Her husband had been out of work for half a year. Now we W.M.U. women felt sorry for one of our members in her trouble. We gathered

mealie meal and kept some money that we had to give to her so that we could help her during these months when her husband had no work. God answered our prayers and soon the man found work.

This man is now coming to our church because of the help that was given by us women in the W.M.U. He has been strengthened greatly by coming to the church. We believe that God helps when you ask him to help."

PART FOUR:

(Read Ephesians 4:32.) Do you think the woman in the following story was obeying what God said in this verse?

"One woman was short-tempered. Whenever she got home all the children would keep quiet and be unhappy. When her husband asked her anything or answered any question, she would feel like hitting him. The Lord talked to her. Today there is happiness in their home."

One of the easiest ways that we sin is by things we speak. "So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!...But no human being can tame the tongue - a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:5,8). In verse 8 we are told that no human being can tame the tongue. Only God can do that. He will control our tongue when we ask him to do so.

Notice in the story that the Lord reproved this woman for her sin. (Read Job 5:17.) When she listened to God, then happiness came to the home.

PART FIVE:

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). It seems strange to think that one could be happy when he is persecuted, doesn't it? But this is what Jesus said. We find this same truth in other places. (Read James 1:2,3 and Romans 5:3,4.) We are told that our trials and testing produce endurance and thus our lives are enriched.

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy" (1 Peter 1:6-8).

We are told that trials prove whether our faith is genuine. Have you known anyone to fall away from God and the church when he had a hard trial? If we trust God, he will see us through each test of life. He will make our faith stronger.

There are many kinds of trials. One is illness. Another is getting along with a difficult person. You may name other trials. When these hard things come in life, we must ask God, "What do you have to teach me through this experience?"

PROGRAMME LEADER:

There is a command which Jesus gave at the end of his ministry. It is found in John 15:17, "This I command you, to love one another." Do we really love our fellow-Christians? It is hard to love some people. There are some people who are unlovely. There are people who seem to do things to hurt us. But God does not ask us what kind of people they are. He just says that we are to love them. But how can we do this when it is so difficult?

We can ask God's love to flow out through our hearts and reach other people. When we ask God to make us willing to love others, then God will work. He will melt our hearts and fill them with love for others. Then this love will reach other hearts. Try it and you will find happiness.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME EIGHT

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Theme For Today: HUMILITY

Memory Verse:

"For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 14:11

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Last week we learned that the way to true happiness is to obey God. Have we been sharing these truths with our families?

Today we shall study about something that Jesus emphasised very much. We read of this quality all through the Bible. (Read Proverbs 16:19 and Proverbs 29:23.) Can you tell from these verses what quality we are talking about? Yes, we are studying about humility.

Why is humility so important? Proverbs 15:33b tells us, "Humility goes before honour."

PART ONE:

Pride in a person's heart is a sin against God. Why is this so? Why does pride separate a person from God? Surely all of us have the right to look after ourselves and be proud of our homes and the things we have. After all, we worked for them.

Such thoughts exalt ourselves. They do not honour God and recognise that he gives all that we have. (Read James 1:17.) Pride puts ourselves before God. We put self on the throne of our hearts. We break the first commandment (Exodus 20:3). We must not put any person or anything above God. (Read Luke 14:26.)

God will punish pride. "The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the pride of men shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day" (Isaiah 2:11).

God will reward the humble. "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you" (James 4:10). It is wonderful for the divine God to dwell with man.

PART TWO:

How does pride show itself in our lives? Jesus told a story in Luke 14:7-11 of a marriage feast. It was the custom for guests of honor to sit nearest the bridegroom. Jesus said it was better to sit in the lowest place and be asked to move higher than to choose the best place and be asked to move lower.

Jesus' disciples argued about who was the greatest. (Read Luke 9:46-48.) Do most people today want to be "Number One"? What was Jesus' teaching to them concerning greatness? Jesus taught that the person who was the least would be greatest. He said we must be like children.

PART THREE:

Jesus described the religious leaders of his time in Matthew 23:1-12. You must do the things they say he told them even though they do not do them. Do not follow their ways. Jesus said they did their good works so that people would see them, but they really placed heavy burdens on other people. Their containers for scripture verses were very large to impress others. They loved the seats of honour and being called important names. Do we sometimes find the same sins in our own lives?

PART FOUR:

Jesus told another story in Luke 18:9-14 about two men who were praying. The Pharisee who went to pray was self-righteous and despised others. But he did not really go to pray. He went to tell God how good he was. No doubt he did all the things he said he did. But the question is not, "Am I as good as

my fellow men?" but "Am I as good as God?" When we look at ourselves in the sight of god, there is no room for pride.

The tax-collector knew that he was a sinner. He asked God to have mercy on him.

This story teaches us that no man who is proud can truly pray. Someone has said that the gate of heaven is so low that none can enter it except upon his knees.

No man can truly pray who despises his fellow men.

True prayer comes from setting our lives beside the life of God, and not that of other men.

PART FIVE:

In order to come to know God and be saved, each person must humble himself by confessing his sins. When he realises that he has no power to save himself, then God can work.

The following story shows this:

"There is a W.M.U. leader who has grown-up girls. Unfortunately they are all disobedient. They are so disobedient that every morning when their mother gets up to make fire, they remain sleeping until late. They do not even respect their own father.

Whenever the youngest of these children was told by her mother to go to church, she would speak rudely to her mother and throw the Bible away. She eloped with a boy who was also a disgrace to the community. This became a very big burden to the whole church.

The church together with the parents prayed for them. The Lord spoke to the youngest girl, and she gave her life to the Lord. She stood before the church and confessed all her sins and wept. The one who comes before the youngest also accepted the Lord and confessed her sins. She told of her drinking, adultery, and disobedience to parents. God saved her."

"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a
broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"

(Psalm 51:17).

PART SIX:

Jesus spoke about humility. He also lived it. "And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). He was obedient to his Heavenly Father. We learned last week that obedience to God brings happiness.

We are to follow Jesus' example. "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3). We are not to do things because of selfishness or because we think ourselves so great. We are not to think ourselves better than others.

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). This message is given to God's own people. Let us notice the steps to God's blessings. First, we must humble ourselves. We must realise that in ourselves we are nothing.

Next, we are to pray. We are to seek God's power and wisdom and not our own. We are to seek his face. God will not force us to come to him. We must want to love and obey him. But he has said that when we seek, we will find.

Then we are to turn from our wicked ways. Then sin in the life of a Christian robs him of God's blessings. But even a Christian cannot conquer sin in his life in his own strength. God has already given us the victory over the penalty of our sins. Now he will give us the victory over the power of our sins when we humble ourselves, pray, seek his face, and turn from our wicked ways. (Read Romans 6:6.)

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Satan tempts us very much concerning pride. It may be that we are proud of our homes or the money we make. We may be proud of the clothes we wear, or of our children. We may be proud of the work we do. It may even be that we are proud of our service for God. If Satan traps us to be selfish and to have pride, then he cheats us of God's blessings.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME NINE

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Theme For Today: RICHES

Memory Verse:

"And he said to them, 'Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions'"

Luke 12:15

PROGRAMME LEADER:

(Ask different members to tell the group which teaching of Jesus has meant the most to them this quarter.)

In the teaching of Jesus that we will study today we see that Jesus knew man's heart. We find this subject throughout the Bible. God truly knows the inmost thoughts of man. He knew that man would seek after riches.

"He who trusts in his riches will wither, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf" (Proverbs 11:28). "He who is greedy for unjust gain makes trouble for his household, but he who hates bribes will live" (Proverbs 15:27). These verses tell us the result of being greedy for riches and trusting in them. Such people will bring trouble to their household.

PART ONE:

Is it wrong to have nice things? Is a nice house a good thing to have? We want our children to have good clothes. What is wrong with having things to make life more comfortable?

There is nothing wrong with these things in themselves. Such things do make life more pleasant. In fact, God gives us all the wonderful things in the world to enjoy. He not only made the food for us to eat, but he also made it taste good so that we would enjoy eating it.

But the trouble comes in our attitude towards our possessions. God warns us: "Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and

the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth'" (Deuteronomy 8:17). Before we know it, we begin to take the credit for providing our own blessings. Pride thus creeps into our lives, as we studied last week.

God further warns: "You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth..." (Deuteronomy 8:18a). Can you remember the verse from last week which tells us the same idea?

PART TWO:

A man came to Jesus and asked how he might get eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments. The man said he did keep them. Then Jesus told him to sell his possessions and give to the poor. The man refused because he was very rich. (You may read this story in Matthew 19:16-26). Here we see one of the great dangers of riches. They can keep one from entering the kingdom of God. Does this mean that each of us must give away all that she has in order to be saved? No, it does not mean this.

Jesus saw into this young man's heart. He saw that the young man loved his riches more than he loved God. In order to be a disciple of Jesus and to be God's child, we must choose him above any person or any thing. There is no other way to show God that we choose to love him. (Read Luke 9:25.)

God tells us, "...If riches increase, set not your heart on them" (Psalm 62:10b).

PART THREE:

"Lest, when you have eaten and are full, and build goodly houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Deuteronomy 8:12-14). God warns people not to forget him when they have good houses,

many cattle, and much money. When people get these things today they are tempted to depend on their money in the bank to help them. They do not honour God. Then when sickness and the heartaches of life come, they find that they need God.

Jesus told of another man who was so rich that he planned to build bigger barns in which to store his things. He thought he would have many years to enjoy his riches. Jesus said he was foolish because he would die that night. (This story is found in Luke 12:16-21.)

This man acted as if life is only physical. Therefore, he had no riches in the spiritual life.

A preacher visited an old man. He had a big house with many rooms. He had three cars. But he was very sad. His wife was in the hospital. He said that he had spent all of his life making money. Now he realised that his life was empty. He said, "I do not even have any happy memories."

PART FOUR:

(Read I Timothy 6:7-10. Discuss these verses.) This is a very plain teaching, isn't it? We see the truth of it in people today. Has Satan tempted us to put possessions before God?

(Read Mark 4:19.) If the seed of God's word is choked in our lives, it cannot bear fruit for him. We are told that it can be choked by the cares and desires of this world and the delight in riches. Do we see this truth in this story?

"A Christian woman was not faithful to her Christianity. She had a great greed for money. She had a friend who was not a Christian woman. She was always going to this woman, asking her to make beer so that she could sell it. This non-Christian friend would cook the beer and sell it. The money earned would be given to the Christian woman.

One day the W.M.U. women visited the home of the friend who was not a Christian. These Christian women began to talk with the woman, telling her the way to be saved. They invited

her to their church, and to their W.M.U. meeting. The woman answered that she did not think there was such a thing as Christianity because it was always Christian people who were always asking her to cook beer to be sold. These women were very troubled in their hearts and began to pray for the woman who was lost together with the woman who was an unfaithful Christian."

PART FIVE:

If we have many possessions, we may be tempted to be proud of them. But we do not have to have many possessions to have the wrong attitude toward them. We may have only a few things, but we put this before God.

(Read Matthew 6:19-21.) We are told to build up riches where they will last forever. In Palestine, wealth was often put into expensive clothes. If moths got to them, it left them ruined. We all know that we can lose our goods when someone steals them.

But there is a place where our riches will be perfectly safe. (Discuss ways in which we can put treasures in heaven.)

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Let us think again of our memory verse. (Quote it.) We know that our possessions are not the most important things in our lives. God's presence, love, and peace are our most precious treasures. We must put him first.

But God wants us to enjoy the things that he has given us. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33).

PRAYER

PROGRAMME TEN

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHINGS OF JESUS

These For Today: STEWARDSHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Memory Verse:

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Mark 12:30, 31

PROGRAMME LEADER:

A steward is one who has been entrusted with the property of another. He does not own what has been left in his charge. But he is responsible for the way in which he takes care of it. The owner will some day return. Then the steward must give an account of what he has done.

The Christian is a steward of the grace of God. He has received God's gift of salvation through the death of Jesus on the cross.

In receiving Jesus into our hearts we surrender our life to him. Therefore, we become stewards of God. God entrusts to us eternal life through his Son Jesus. We must give an account of how we live our life. We need to study about the stewardship of the Christian life.

PART ONE:

In thinking about our stewardship of the Christian life, we must first consider this in relation to Jesus Christ. We should seek to know him better each day.

Read the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:10,11. Paul speaks of knowing Jesus through personal communion. He wanted to know more about him as Saviour and Lord. Then he would experience power in his life. This was the same power that resurrected Jesus from the grave.

Also he wanted to be able to share in the sufferings of Jesus in order to become more like him in his death. This death is a death to sin. When we are willing to die to sin in our lives, the power of God may resurrect us to a new life in Christ.

We learn more about Jesus as we study the Word of God. This study should be done daily. (Read 2 Timothy 2:15)

When we make Jesus Lord of our life, we honour and obey him. (Read I Corinthians 6:19, 20.) To give him first place in our life will help us witness to others about him.

PART TWO:

The Christian has a stewardship in relation to the church. The church is a group of baptised believers. Christ gave himself for the church. He bought the church with his own blood. He serves as head of the church. (Read Colossians 1:18, 19.) God chose to make him first, above all others.

When Christ is acknowledged as head of the church, we will want to be faithful to the church here on earth. The church should serve as a light that will direct the unbelievers to know Jesus.

It should also help to strengthen the believers as they fellowship with one another in the love of Jesus. We as stewards of the wonderful grace of God are required to be faithful. (Read I Corinthians 4:2.)

Faithfulness to the church will involve our accepting responsibilities for the work. (Read 2 Timothy 2:2.) Jesus commanded his disciples to carry on the work of the church (Matthew 28:19, 20).

PART THREE:

What is the Christian's relation to his family? What does the scripture say about how the Christian should treat the members of his own family? (Read Ephesians 5:22, 25 and 6:1)

Be considerate of one another. This should be normal in our relationships in the home because we know Jesus. The home is mentioned in the Bible even before the church.

In the home the husband is regarded as the head of the household. The wife is to acknowledge this and be subject to her husband. The husband should rule with love and respect, for each member of the family. He should assume responsibility as the leader in the home. He should love his wife as Christ loved the church.

Children are to obey their parents. But first the parents must be worthy of their love and respect if they expect their obedience. Where there is love for the children, there will be discipline and spiritual instruction.

PART FOUR:

One W.M.U. woman has written this about the homes for which we are stewards:

"We know that our homes were given to us by God. We should thank God for our homes, for our husbands. We were given by God our children. These are gifts that come from God, and we should thank him. There are many who have also wanted homes, but somehow God did not give them this that they wanted. They became old without having a home and children. Those of us who have homes should realise we are very fortunate. We should therefore keep our homes well indeed as the woman we read about in Proverbs 31:10, 11, 28, 29. This woman really kept her home. Let us keep our homes, knowing that they are a gift given us by God.

PART FIVE:

What should be the Christians' attitude toward others? The Word of God teaches us that we are responsible as a witness for Christ.

First of all, we are to show love. Christ's own example is to be followed. "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). Showing love to others will identify us as disciples of Jesus (John 13:35).

We should pray for one another. A Christian's sincere interest in someone else will be reflected in the prayers he offers to God on his behalf. Paul's example is a challenge to each of us. (Read Ephesians 1:15, 16.)

Our concern for others should include both physical and spiritual needs. The early Christian church appointed its first deacons in order that they might minister to the needs of those in the community. Our ministry to others would not be complete if we only thought of the physical. We have a Christ to share. God's love is for all people. We must take Jesus to others.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

The things we have studied today are of great importance to each of us as Christians. The Christian life is more than just following a set of rules for our conduct. Jesus wants to live his life through us. Our stewardship includes all that he chooses to do in and through us each day.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME ELEVEN

THEME FOR THE QUARTER: TEACHING OF JESUS

Theme For Today: STEWARDSHIP OF GIVING

Memory Verse:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matter of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."

Matthew 23:23

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Our study today concerns a very important subject, the stewardship of giving. We are always receiving God's blessings in great abundance. But what about our giving back to God? Do you consider this important? What does God expect of his children concerning their giving?

A steward is one who looks after the property of another. We are stewards of God's wonderful grace. All that we have belongs to God. The Bible teaches us that God holds us accountable for the way we handle the things he entrusts to us. The memory verse makes clear what God expects from us.

PART ONE:

What is the tithe that the Bible speaks about? It is one-tenth of all we receive. This includes salary, food, and other benefits that we receive for our labour. We may receive these through working for some employer. We may get them through our own self-employment. These are blessings from God. He expects us to show our love and appreciation by giving a tithe of these back to him.

The tithe is God's financial plan for supporting the work of his church here on earth. Someone has said that tithing is God's plan for teaching obedience to his children.

The amount of the tithe that is given will vary because we do not all receive the same amount. However, the percentage of what we are to give is the same. We are to give one out of every ten. If you make ten dollars, you are to give three dollars.

PART TWO:

Who should give the tithe? Is it just those who feel that they are financially able to return one-tenth of what they have? Can one say, "I am very poor, therefore God does not expect me to tithe"?

These questions are asked many times. Who can answer these? The Bible is God's Word speaking to us. It says we are all commanded to tithe. We receive from God. Therefore, we are expected to return part of what Jesus said in our verse for today that we should not neglect the tithe.

Here is the story of one who followed God's plan of tithing:

"Mai Maria was a Christian woman who did not work for a European to find money, but she thought of a plan of how she could find money to give to her God. Mai Maria thought of the plan of growing vegetables, planting fruit trees, and to get eggs from chickens.

That is how Mai Maria could have her tithe from her fruits, tomatoes, and eggs to give to God. When other people in the church saw how Mai Maria gave her tithe, they also began to sell vegetables, tomatoes, and eggs so that they could tithe. Now all this money is used for the work of God in the church."

PART THREE:

How is the tithe to be spent in our church? The tithe is to be used to do the Lord's work. The church has much work to do. Therefore, the tithe should be used wisely so as to do the important things for the Lord.

The pastor should be supported by the tithes. This was true in the time of the Old Testament. (Read Numbers 18:24; Note: The Levites were the priests.)

We are also taught to support the pastor in the New Testament. "Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:13, 14).

Other important uses for the tithes are buying literature to train the people, helping the needy in the community, and keeping the church building in good repair.

PART FOUR:

The people who lived in the days of the Old Testament accepted God's Word as law. They obeyed the law out of fear of God and his punishment. We have read in the scriptures that it was God's law for the people to tithe. So the people accepted God's Word and were faithful to tithe.

In the New Testament Jesus says, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). Jesus' teachings went beyond the law.

A Christian should not obey the law just to escape punishment. Instead he should live in the spirit of the law because of his love for Jesus. Our giving of the tithe should be done because of our love for Jesus. He has done much for us. We realize that we do very little for him. (Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.)

PART FIVE:

Is it a sin when we do not tithe? Yes, the Bible teaches us that when we know what is right to do and fail to do it, we sin against God. (Read James 4:17.)

We are stealing from God when we fail to tithe. (Read Malachi 3:8,9.) Do you believe that stealing from another is a serious offence? It is most serious when we steal from God.

Maybe you are saying, "God knows that I want to tithe and that some day I will be able." No, God never tells us to delay in doing what is right. God says, "I have given much to you. I am only asking that you be faithful and give in return to me."

Some people give more than a tithe because of their love for Jesus. Our love for him is shown by the way we give. We must first give ourselves. When we truly give ourselves, we realise more and more that all we are and have is because of Jesus.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

This programme has challenged us today. Maybe some of us have not understood these words before. But now we know.

Why not make your decision right now and tell God that you will be a tither? Pray and ask God to forgive you because you have failed before now to tithe.

We can start today doing what we know God wants us to do.

PRAYER