

YOUNG PEOPLE



**“Study to show thyself approved unto God”
2 Timothy 2:15**

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY LESSONS

Africa Coordinated Curriculum for Bible Study

THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

SYP23P

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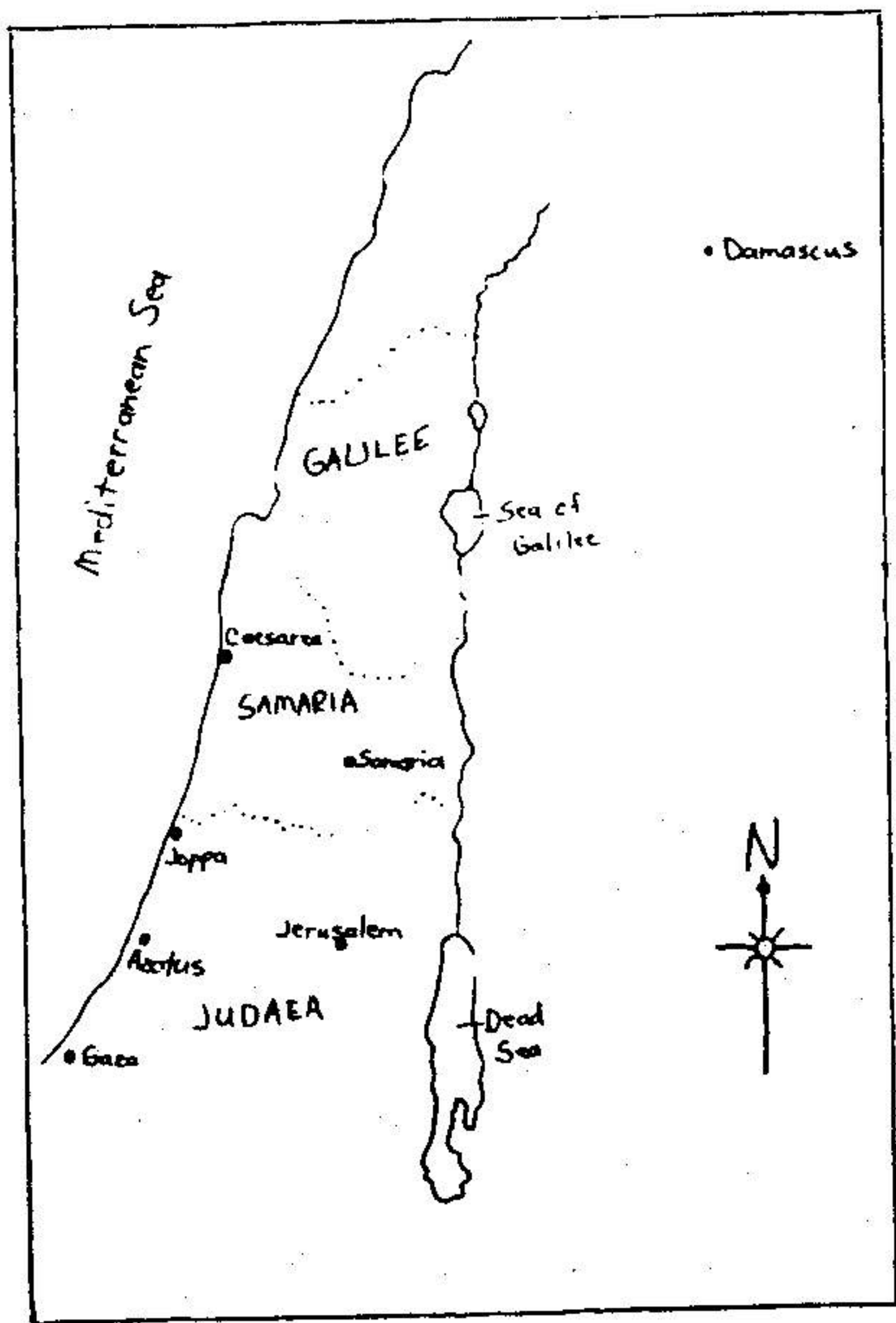
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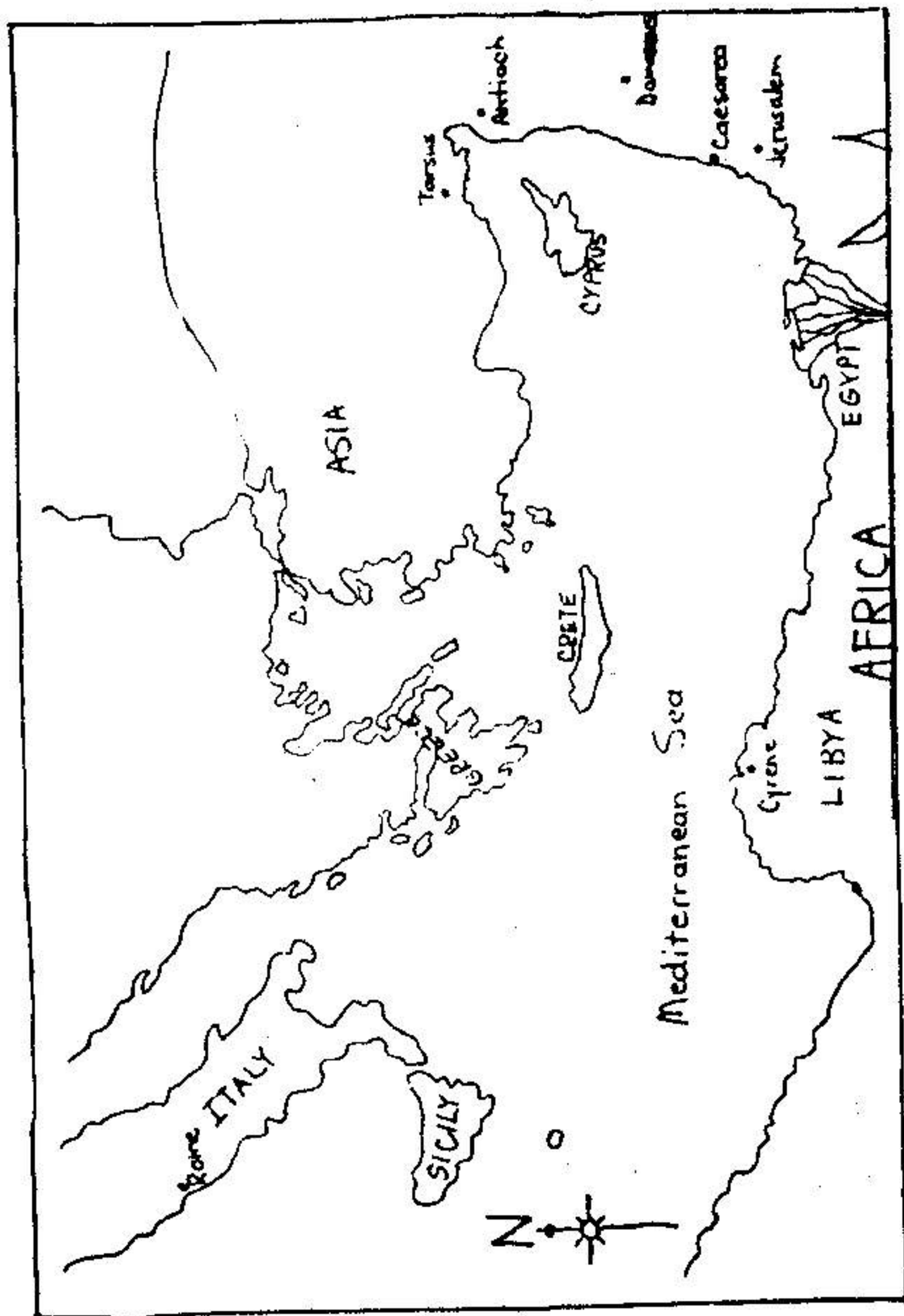
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THE CHURCH RECEIVING

AIM: I will learn the importance of the Holy Spirit.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 1-2

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 2:1-11

MEMORY VERSE:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Martin had wanted a car for as long as he could remember. He had a very good job in the city and was saving his money. He also borrowed a lot of cash from his friends. Finally, he had enough money to buy a car. He knew just the one he wanted. It was a small sedan painted red with a powerful engine.

He was so proud as he drove it to work for the first time. However, after a week Martin's happiness vanished. He had not realized how much petrol costs. The money from his job must be used to buy food and to pay back the money he had borrowed. It would be months before he could afford to buy any petrol. Now the shiny red car only looked beautiful. It could not be used. Even the best car has no power without petrol.

In the same way, a Christian needs the Holy Spirit to give him power. In this lesson we will learn about the coming of the Holy Spirit and how he works.

Interpretation

Jesus had died and risen from the grave. He spent forty days on earth after his resurrection. This was before he ascended back to his Father. He commanded the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. While they waited, they prayed.

The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost

was the celebration of two things. It helped the people remember when God gave Moses the law, the ten commandments. It was also the time of the harvest. It was a good time for the Holy Spirit to come. He is the one who shows us God's truth of law (John 14:26). He also makes possible a spiritual harvest of souls.

Two symbols were given when the Holy Spirit came. There were flames of fire and a strong wind. The spirit was not actually seen or heard. These were only symbols. They only heard a sound like the "rush of a mighty wind." The Spirit was not fire, and he did not come in fire. The fire was a symbol that the Spirit had come.

The final sign of the Spirit's power came as they began to speak in other tongues or languages. These were real, actual languages. They were new to the speakers. But they were understood by people there from other countries.

The purpose of these tongues was to give evidence of the Spirit's presence. It was a sign to the Jews. (Read Isaiah 28:11 and 1 Corinthians 14:21,22).

The sound like a rushing wind brought the people together. They were amazed because each one could hear in his own language. But the tongues or the hearing in their own languages alone did not save anyone. This was God's way of getting the attention of the people. Then Peter stood to preach to them. As God spoke through Peter about three thousand people believed and were saved.

Application For My Life

The disciples had waited fifty days since Christ died and ten days since he ascended. Why should Jesus make them wait so long? Perhaps it was so that they would understand that they had no power without the Holy Spirit. They could not witness or work for God without help. Within themselves they were weak and powerless.

This is also true of us. We cannot do the work of God without the Holy Spirit helping us. He gives us the power we need.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to live in all believers. Since that time he never withdraws himself from a believer. There is no possibility that the Holy Spirit will go away from us today. Once we are saved he lives with us forever. We may hurt

him, ignore him, refuse his guidance or reject his wisdom. But he will never leave us.

This same Holy Spirit continues the work which Christ began. Jesus said that in order for the Holy Spirit to come, he had to return to his Father. Jesus could not be in two places at the same time. But the Holy Spirit can be everywhere at all times. We know this because he lives in all Christians today.

The believers who were gathered on that day were joined together as the Church. They were like one body with Christ as their Head. This was the birthday of the Church. Today the Church is very old. But more believers are added every day.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we receive the Holy Spirit into our lives forever. Therefore, we also receive his power. This does not mean we will never be afraid or fall. We are still human. But this power helps us to do what God asks us to do.

For example, one thing we are all told to do is witness. Although we are afraid, the Holy Spirit gives us the strength we need. Without him we could never do it. Acts 1:8 says, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses..."*

Things To Do

1. Make a list of ways the Holy Spirit works today. Tick the ways he has worked in your own life.

How the Holy Spirit Works	In My Life

2. Why did the disciples not witness before they received the Holy Spirit? _____

3. Ask God to give you an opportunity to witness to someone this week. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to work through you and to speak to that person.

4. The disciples prayed for days. Peter preached for minutes. And three thousand people were saved. How long should you pray before you witness? _____

Lesson 2

THE CHURCH UNITING

AIM: I will learn the importance of fellowship.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 2

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 2:42-47

MEMORY VERSE:

"And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46).

Introduction

What do you know about football? How many players does it take to make a team? How many good players are needed to have a winning team?

Suppose the best football player in the world was a part of a team that was not very interested in the game. Do you think such a team would ever win? That one good player could play very well, but he could not win the game by himself. It takes a whole team working together to win a football game.

Each Christian is different, but we are all part of the body of Christ. Our Scripture today teaches us how each member needs and depends on the other members. We also learn that it is the Holy Spirit himself who brings unity among believers.

Interpretation

All who believed met together. They were united. They worshipped and praised God together. They prayed and ate together. They had fellowship with each other.

They had remained in Jerusalem for many days. The food they had brought with them had been eaten. The Christians living in Jerusalem saw the needs of the visitors. Some of them sold their property and distributed the money to those that needed it. Much money was required to feed 3,000 people.

The Christians shared their food. They ate in the homes of those who were rich and those who were poor. They shared whatever they had. Their fellowship was shown by the fact that

they met together constantly and shared everything with each other.

When Christians enjoy being together we say they have fellowship with each other. The word, fellowship, comes from the Greek word, *koinonia*, which means "that which is in common." Those who are in fellowship share everything, good and bad.

We can see that the early believers did not just share their possessions with their friends. They shared with strangers, most of whom had come from many different places. (Read Acts 2:9-11). The people were different in many ways from the Jerusalem Christians, but they were brothers in Christ.

We must understand that this was not communism. The people shared because they wanted to share. In communism the people are forced to share. In addition to that, we must remember that this sharing was to meet a need, not to make everyone equal.

Fellowship among men is meaningful only if it comes from fellowship with God. We learn in verse 46 that these people met daily in the temple for public worship and witness.

Jesus gave his disciples the Lord's supper at the end of the Passover meal. We have a special time of fellowship with other believers around the Lord's table today because of our relationship with Christ.

Application For My Life

The people in the early church welcomed all those who came. As people believed in Jesus Christ, they became a part of his body, the church. Romans 15:7 tells us, *"Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."*

As members of the church today we also should accept all people. A person's colour or tribe should not affect how we treat him. Neither should the amount of money he has. We should welcome everyone -- black or white, rich or poor, relative or stranger -- into the fellowship of our church.

But do we always do this? If a wealthy man visits in our church we often hurry to greet him and make him feel welcome. We want to be his friend. But are we that interested in being friends with the poor man who visits the same day?

The church is meant to be a sharing fellowship. Faith in

Jesus Christ breaks down barriers. It overcomes differences. (Look back in Acts 2:9,10). Notice how many different places people came from, and yet they felt unity and fellowship.)

Faith in Christ gives Christians something in common and creates fellowship. No member should suffer without love and support from other members. None should experience joy or sorrow without others sharing it with him. No member should be hungry when others have plenty.

We need to understand that sharing a friend's sorrow can do much to comfort him. A little girl came home after being with a friend and said to her mother, "Mary is very sad because her baby brother died, but I helped her feel better."

The mother asked what she had done, and the little girl replied, "I cried with her."

The church, as a fellowship in Christian love, has something the world does not have. It is something which shows God's power to save from sin and gives new life in Christ. It is a love that joins very different kinds of people together into the family of God. This is not something that is done by the members. It is the work of the Holy Spirit who brings unity among believers.

Things To Do

1. What is the difference between Christian fellowship and fellowship among non-Christians or worldly fellowship? _____

2. Think of the fellowship you have had this past week. Was it mostly Christian or worldly fellowship? _____

3. Why is Christian fellowship important? _____

4. Plan to fellowship with a Christian friend this week. Write your plans here. When? _____ With whom? _____
Doing what? _____
5. How can Christians who come from many countries and many tribes share in true fellowship? _____

Lesson 3

THE CHURCH WORSHIPPING

AIM: I will learn how to worship God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 2

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 2:41-47

MEMORY VERSE:

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Once a pastor was visiting a church member who had not been attending the worship services. As they were talking they sat near an open fire. Slowly the pastor pulled one of the hot, fiery, red coals out of the fire to remain alone.

For a few minutes the coal remained red and burning. Then slowly it began to go dim. Finally it had lost all of the warmth and glow that it had previously had.

The member quickly understood that this was a picture of a Christian who failed to meet with other Christians for worship. He might be able to continue to share his faith for a short while. Eventually though, the warmth and glow go out of his life. We need the fellowship and strength we get from being with others who believe as we do.

Interpretation

Worship means giving honour, respect and reverence to God. It is not only what we do, but also our attitude. When we worship we show God that we love him. In worship we should show the highest possible respect to God. We worship him because he is our Creator.

In verse 41 we learn that those who believed were baptized. This was a symbol to show that the person had died to his old life of sin. He was not raised out of the water and into a new life with Christ. It was, then an outward sign of what Christ had

done inside their hearts.

We learn in verse 42 that they did not just meet together. They studied the apostles' teachings. They worshipped the Lord by reading the Word of God. They joined together in eating the Lord's Supper. They prayed together.

The people praised God in their worship too. They may have sung songs or played music. Praise is a very important part of worship. (Read Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 to find other times that singing was used to express praise to God.)

As the early Christians met together they strengthened each other. When one had doubts or concerns another was able to help him. Hebrews 10:24,25 says, *"...let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."*

The people met in the temple day by day to worship. They also worshipped together in their homes. Their worship united their hearts.

It appears that from the beginning the Christians met in homes regularly for private meetings. They did this especially on the Lord's Day. Worshipping in "house churches" continues all through the book of Acts.

We learn in verse 43 that godly fear came upon everyone. The apostles were able to do many wonders and signs. This was because of their relationship with God. He opened the way for his power to flow through them.

Applications For My Life

Many people go to church today. But does this mean they all worship God? Sometimes people sing the songs without thinking about what the words mean. They don't listen to the preacher or talk to God during the prayer time.

Going to church and worshipping are two different things. It is important for us to go to church, but we must also be sure to worship when we are there.

Earlier in this lesson we learnt that worship means giving honour and glory to God. We can do this in many ways. We can praise him with our music. We can thank him in our prayers. We can learn more about him by reading his Word and listening to the teaching of other Christians.

Church is a good place to worship God. However, we can worship him in almost any place. As long as we are thinking

about God and giving honour to him, we are worshipping. This could be on a bus, in a hotel or at church.

Worshipping together is an important part of Christian fellowship. We are commanded to worship God in private. (Read Matthew 6:6). We are also commanded to worship him with other believers. (Hebrews 10:24,25). This is one reason we go to church every week.

We are strengthened when we meet with other Christians for worship. As each one shares what God has taught him, everyone is helped. Many times God uses other people to teach us something. In the same way God uses us to teach others.

What do you think of when you hear the word, church? Many people think a church is a building. Actually it is a group of believers. The people are the church, not the building.

In our lesson today we read about the early Christians meeting in their homes for worship. This is still done in many places around the world today. It is very good way to start a new church. We need to remember that we don't need to have a building to have a church. It is the people that make a church.

Things To Do

1. Why can we not worship as well alone? _____
2. List several different ways to worship God.

3. How can you worship God better? _____

4. The early Christians used their homes to meet together and worship God. How can you use your home to worship? _____

Lesson 4

THE CHURCH REMEMBERING

AIM: I will learn the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

MEMORY VERSE:

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Everyone likes holidays. They give us a chance to be with our families and friends. But why do we celebrate most holidays? Usually a holiday marks the date that something important happened. We celebrate that day each year to help us remember the important event.

In a way the Lord's Supper is like most holidays. We do it to remember something special. That something special is Jesus and his life here on earth.

In this lesson we will talk about the Lord's Supper. We will discuss why it is important and what it means to us today.

Interpretation

In 1 Corinthians 11:28 we read, *"Let a man examine himself..."* We can never be worthy to take the Lord's Supper. Paul was not suggesting that when he wrote to the Corinthian people. He just wanted them to understand that this was something serious. It was not a holiday feast. It was a holiday feast. It was a holy service. We should examine our lives and our relationship with God. Then, in an attitude of prayer, we come to his table. Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-34.

Jesus said in 1 Corinthians 11:24, *"Do this in remembrance*

of me." What should we remember about Jesus? We remember his humble birth and first visit to the temple. We also remember his baptism and his great love and kindness. We could never forget how he left his heavenly home to come to earth. He lived among men and then died for our sins.

But when Jesus gave the Lord's Supper he gave special instructions about what we should remember. In verse 24 we are told that the bread is to remind us of the body of Jesus. As the bread is broken, we remember that Jesus' body was broken for our sins.

In verse 25 we are taught that the cup should remind us of Jesus' blood. It was poured out on the cross as he died to pay for our sins. It was for each one of us that he died on that cross.

The bread does not actually become Jesus' body. In the same way the drink does not actually become his blood. We only use the bread and drink to help us remember Jesus' body and blood. Surely when we remember Christ's death we also remember his resurrection. That is what gives us our hope. Because of this we too will live with him forever if we accept him as our Saviour.

The early Christians also remembered that Jesus was coming again. This supper made them think of their friends who were not saved. They wanted everyone to be ready to live with Jesus forever when he returned. All of us have a responsibility to tell those people about Jesus and his death for our sins.

Application For My Life

The Lord's Supper was given to the church. Since we are the church, this supper is for us. But we learnt earlier that we must examine ourselves before coming to the Lord's table.

What exactly does that mean? It means we need to ask ourselves a few questions and answer honestly. Here are the kinds of questions we can ask: Is my relationship with God good right now? Am I spending time in prayer every day? What about my relationship with other people? Do I treat others like I would like to be treated?

While examining ourselves it is also good to talk to God. We ask him to show us any sins that we haven't seen. We can ask for his forgiveness. We can ask him to help us do better.

After examining our lives we are ready to think about the sacrifice Jesus made for us. We can remember his life and thank

God for it. We can remember his death and know how unworthy we are of such love. The Lord's Supper is a time for us to seriously think about God and what he means to us. It is important that only believers eat this supper. It would have no meaning to those who are not Christians. This means children should not be allowed to take the Lord's Supper. First they must understand that Jesus died for their sins and accept him as their Saviour.

Taking the Lord's Supper does not save anyone. It is done by people who have already been saved. It is a good way for us to worship God.

How often should we take the Lord's Supper? The Bible does not tell us how often. Different churches do it at different times. It is not important how often we do it. It is important that when we take the Lord's Supper we do it to remember Jesus.

Paul said that when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we are re-telling the story of the Lord's death until he returns. The Lord's Supper then becomes a way of witnessing for him.

Things To Do

Practice examining yourself by answering these questions:

1. The last time you prayed, did God seem close by or far away? _____
2. How much time do you spend in prayer each day? _____

3. When was the last time you received a message from God? _____
What was that message? _____
4. Are you angry with someone right now? _____
5. Is there someone you need to forgive? _____
6. Have you treated someone badly and not apologized to them? _____ Go to that person now and ask for forgiveness.

Lesson 5

THE CHURCH MINISTERING

AIM: I will learn how the early Christians helped those in need.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:1-11

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 3:1-11

MEMORY VERSE:

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Do you believe in miracles? How would you react if someone told you about a miracle in his life? Suppose he says he used to be blind in one eye. When he became a Christian he prayed to be healed. God answered him right away and healed the bad eye. Would you believe him? Does it make a difference if he is a good friend or a stranger?

Many people believe miracles used to happen a long time ago but not anymore. They think the time for miracles is gone.

It is true we have learnt much about medicine, and this brings healing many times. But what about when a person is healed, and the doctors do not know why? Is that not a miracle? Maybe God just does his miracles in a different way now.

Today we will study about the first healing miracle in the book of Acts. This is also the beginning of God's work through the church.

Interpretation

Peter and John usually went to worship in the temple. These two men and others had been through the Pentecost experience. This however was not meant to happen every day. It happened only once. The normal life for the believer is in common places and among people who are in need. Therefore the apostles were continuing to do as they had been trained. They were going to

the temple for prayers.

It was the custom for beggars to sit outside the door of the temple. This was because those going to worship God were more generous than others. In the temple there was a staircase going up to the first terrace which was for the women. The second terrace was for men. At the entrance of the second terrace was the gate called Beautiful.

As Peter and John came to the temple, they saw a beggar sitting at the Beautiful Gate. He had to be carried there each day by friends. Because he was a cripple from birth, he could not go into the temple to worship. (Read Leviticus 21:17,18).

When the beggar saw Peter and John, he asked them for money. Peter said to the lame man, "Look at us." He wanted the man's attention. The beggar did as he was told expecting to be given some money.

Then Peter explained that he did not have any money, but he had something that was much more valuable. He said, "In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk."

Peter took the beggar by the hand and helped him to stand up. Immediately the man's feet and ankles were made strong. This man who had never walked in his life was filled with joy. He walked and leaped and praised God. Now for the first time in his life, he was able to go into the temple.

The people who saw this man walking and praising God knew he was the beggar who sat at the Beautiful Gate. They were very surprised and wondered what had happened to him. A crowd began to gather around to see the lame man walking. This gave Peter an opportunity to preach about Jesus to the people in the temple.

Application For My Life

Today we know many people who are crippled and who must beg for money because they cannot work. Many of these people do not have enough to eat or a place to live. The church must be concerned with the needs of people, both physical and spiritual. There are ways in which we should give help to people who need physical help. However, the best way we can help is to tell them of God's love for them. Today more people are crippled spiritually because of their sins than those who are crippled physically.

The main gift of the church to the world is not "Silver and

gold." The church's gift new life through Jesus Christ. Everyone who has received this gift in his own life has the responsibility to share it with others.

Some people think God only works miracles for Christians. It is true many Christians are healed because they pray and ask God to heal them. But God does miracles for non-Christians, too. Sometimes a person becomes a Christian because of something God has done for him.

So we see that God continues to work miracles in the lives of people today. It is even a miracle when someone is healed of his sins and becomes a child of God. Have you allowed him to work that miracle in your life?

In today's lesson many people were helped because of just one miracle. The lame man was helped to walk. Then people gathered around to see what had happened. This gave Peter the opportunity to tell them about Jesus. Because of the miracle Peter was able to help many know about Jesus.

Is this not how we should use miracles today? Let us pretend that you are very sick and God heals you. You can use your healing to tell people about God. When you go back to work or school, tell people why you were away. Then tell that you asked God to help you, and he did!

Things To Do

1. How was Peter able to heal a crippled man? _____

2. Why does God do miracles today? _____

3. Would beggars today get money if they sat at the door of the church which you attend? _____
4. What gift can your church offer the crippled world today? _____

5. Think of the last time God did something special for you.
What was it? _____

Tell someone who is not a Christian about it. Who did you tell?
_____ When did you tell them? _____
What did they say? _____

Lesson 6

THE CHURCH PRAYING

AIM: I will learn how the early Christians prayed.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:1-4:31

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 4:23-31

MEMORY VERSE:

"And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

As Ruth opened her eyes she saw that she was lying in a pool of blood. Her head hurt terribly, and she could feel warm blood running down her face. "I am going to die," she thought. Nearby she could hear someone moaning.

The last thing she remembered thinking was that the bus driver was driving much too fast. The accident must have happened while she was resting.

She was not a Christian, but she cried to God. "Please help me," she begged.

Is this how you pray? Do you wait until there is an emergency before you ask God for his help? Do you think God wants us to pray only on times like these? Does he like being ignored most of the time? If your answer to any of these questions is "yes," this lesson should make you think again.

Interpretation

Peter and John healed a man at the gate of the temple. This was the first miracle performed by the apostles. The religious leaders were very annoyed because they were teaching and saying that Jesus had risen from the dead. So, Peter and John were arrested.

The next day all of the leaders of the religious court

questioned the apostles. Peter took the opportunity and preached about Jesus. The religious leaders threatened Peter and John and told them not to preach in the name of Jesus. The two apostles replied in Acts 4:19. What do you think of their answer?

Peter and John returned to the group of believers to report what had happened to them. When the friends of Peter and John heard this, they went to God in prayer. They knew that God is the ruler over all things. He is interested in us and wants to help. If we let him he will plan our whole lives.

Now let us see how the early Christians prayed. They had been threatened and told not to preach in the name of Jesus. But when they prayed they did not ask that these threats would stop. They did not ask that they might escape. They asked God to give them boldness to speak even in the presence of danger. Instead of wanting protection, the apostles wanted to have courage to speak clearly the message of God.

As they prayed, God heard and answered. The house shook and the believers were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They were granted the request which they had made. They spoke with boldness the word of God. God is faithful to give us all we need to do his work.

On the Day of Pentecost, believers were baptized into the church, the body of Christ. They were also filled with the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter we see that, once again, "they were filled with the Holy Spirit." They were not baptized again. They were filled again. He is always available to us. To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be controlled by him.

Application For My Life

In today's lesson we see that the early believers prayed at a time of both joy and need. They praised God for the release of Peter and John. They also needed the courage to witness in spite of persecution.

Today we pray for the same reasons. When the Lord helps us with a problem or gives us direction, we thank him. Sometimes a whole prayer is just thanking and praising God.

Other times we have special needs or know friends with needs. At these times we go to God asking for his help. The Bible tells us to take our requests to God in prayer (Philippians 4:6). Nothing is too small to pray about.

However, just because we ask God for something does not mean we will get it. God always answers, but sometimes his answer is no. If something would be bad for us or hurt someone else, our request is usually denied.

We also cannot expect God to give us something when our motives are bad (James 4:3). For example, let us say Joseph prays for his football team to win the big game. He knows the other team would have to lose, but he prays for that anyway. God does not often answer yes to selfish prayers. A better prayer is for Joseph to ask that his team does their best.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "*You shall be my witness.*" That was a promise. Therefore, we can depend on God to help us witness. He knows that we are weak and fearful. He is just waiting for us to ask for his help. He will give us the strength we need and the right words to say. Do you need courage to witness for Christ? Ask for God's help today.

We can be filled with the Holy Spirit just like the early Christians were. How do we know when we are filled with the Spirit? Any time we pray for God's power and then do something we could not have done ourselves, we are filled with his Spirit. Maybe it is saying just the right words to a non-Christian friend. Maybe it is leading a Bible study.

Things To Do

1. What would be your prayer if you were told not to talk about Jesus anymore? _____
2. Why was Peter so fearless and bold in this chapter? _____

3. Where does our fear of timidity come from? (See 2 Timothy 1:7). _____
4. What is the opposite of fear? _____
5. Do you need to ask God for courage to witness to others?
_____ If so, ask him now.

Lesson 7

THE CHURCH GIVING

AIM: I will learn why we should give to church.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 3-5:11

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 4:32-37

MEMORY VERSE:

"Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Samuel always brings a little money to put in the offering at Church. If he did not, everyone would see that he was not giving. Then he would be embarrassed.

Catherine enjoys putting her money in the offering. When people see how much she gives, she feels very special. People always admire someone who gives so much money.

Michael does not have a lot of money. But every week he puts a tenth of his money in the offering. He knows that God can use even the small amount he is able to give.

John always puts a little money in the offering. He spends the rest at the many stores in town. He cannot waste too much at church. There are many other important things to do with that money.

Which one of these young people is the most like you? Do you give because of what people will think? Is that more important than what God thinks?

Interpretation

If we have the right relationship with God we will have the right attitude about giving and sharing. The lives of the early believers had been changed because of their relationship to Jesus

Christ. This affected their relationship with each other. The way they used their possessions was just a sign of the spiritual fellowship in the church.

Verse 34 tells us that the people gave freely to one another. They did not feel that what they possessed belonged to themselves alone. Their relationship was such that if one suffered, they all suffered.

When these people became Christians, they joined the family of God. So they decided to live as one large family. All food and money was shared among the family members. Distribution was made as any had needs, not as they had wants.

There were no rules or regulations. No one was forced to give or become part of the family. Everything was voluntary. This is different from communism because the people chose to live this way.

Of all those who sold land and brought their money, only Barnabas is mentioned. Perhaps this is because he had the right attitude.

His name was Joseph until the apostles gave him the name of Barnabas. Do you know the meaning of the name Barnabas? In verse 36 we learn that it means Son of encouragement. He encouraged others by his actions. He was a good example for others to follow.

Money was brought to the leaders of the church. It was put into a common fund. Individuals did not look around to find someone in need and give the money directly to them.

Can you think of reasons this would have been bad? What would have been the relationship between the giver and the receiver?

The church distributed the money as the needs arose. This way God would receive the glory and not the individual. The needs of all the people were met, and God received the honour. It was right that he should receive the honour and glory. It was God who has given the possessions in the beginning.

Application For My Life

God has given us all that we have. We are responsible to him for the way we use our possessions. In Malachi 3:8-10 we are told to bring our tithes to the storehouse (to God through the church). This tithe is a tenth of all we have. If we do not do this, then we are robbing God. This tenth is already his. So we

cannot give him a gift until we have already given that tenth.

Many people use most of their money on themselves. Then they give the little bit that is left to God. Sometimes they are not even happy about giving that small amount.

But God wants us to give at least a tithe and to do it cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). We must have faith to believe that God will take care of us. Look again at Malachi 3:10. We are told to give our tithe to God and see what blessings he will bring to us. If we are faithful to give, he will be faithful to provide for our needs.

God does not need our money. But we need to give it. By giving a tenth of what we have, we are building faith. It is very easy to say we have faith. It is very hard to show our faith by our actions. Each time we give that tithe to God, we are learning to trust him more.

Now we know that we need to give. But why should we give to the Church? Think again about those early Christians. They gave to the church so God would get the glory. When someone received help, they would thank God rather than the person with the money. The same is true today. If we give money to someone in need, they usually thank us. Since all we have is really God's they should be thanking him.

So you can see that our churches have a big responsibility to use our money wisely. Each church has people nearby with needs. The church should know about these needs and be ready to help when needed.

Things To Do

1. Think about how much money you have to use each week. How much is a tithe or a tenth of that amount? _____
Can you trust God enough to give him a tithe each week? _____

2. How much would you be willing to give if you knew that no one would know who gave the gift? _____

3. Think of someone you know who constantly encourages those around him. Write his or her name here. _____
Does this person encourage people by words, actions or both? _____

4. How could you be more like Barnabas? _____

Plan something to do this week to encourage someone. Write your plan here. _____

Lesson 8

THE CHURCH SUFFERING

AIM: I will learn how to react to persecution and suffering.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 5:12-42

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 5:12-42

MEMORY VERSE:

"But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men'" (Acts 5:29).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Grace was from a different tribe than all the other students at her school. No one wanted to be her friend. Some of the boys said bad things and threw rocks at her. The girls just stopped talking and walked away when she tried to come near. But Grace continued to go to school and study hard.

Finally someone asked her how she was able to continue. Grace just said, "If they all hate me, that is their problem." Then she told how she prayed for them every day. Her parents had told her to pray for people like that. Anyone with that much hate needs a lot of prayer.

If you were Grace, what would you do? Could you pray for students who hate you? Could you forgive them?

Interpretation

Peter and John had been told by the Jewish leaders that they must not speak in the name of Jesus any more. But these apostles said they must obey God, not men. So they continued to do as God led them. Many miracles, healings and wonders were done through them, especially through Peter. More than ever before, people were believing and being added to the numbers of Christians.

The high priest and other religious leaders began to be jealous. They saw that their authority had been set aside for a new authority. They were losing their power with the people. So

they arrested the apostles and put them in prison.

During the night, the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors. He told the apostles to "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). They obeyed. They were men of great courage.

Early in the morning the high priest sent for the prisoners. The doors were still locked. The guards were still at their posts. But there were no prisoners inside. No wonder they were surprised!

Then someone said that the prisoners were in the temple teaching the people. They were doing exactly what they had been told not to do.

The apostles were then brought before the Jewish court. Once again Peter said, *"We must obey God rather than men."* Then he preached that God had raised Jesus from the dead and put him in a place of honour at his right hand.

The court became very angry and wanted to kill the apostles. They probably would have done so except that Gamaliel stood to speak. He said they should let the apostles go. If these men were led by God, nothing could stop them. If they were not led by God, they would fail by themselves.

The court took this advice. They beat the men and told them not to speak in the name of Jesus any more. The apostles went away rejoicing because they had been able to suffer for the name of Jesus. They continued to preach every day in the temple and in the homes. Their message was that Jesus was Christ.

Application For My Life

As long as we are living for Christ, Satan will try to hurt us. He does not want people to show God's love or help each other. He does not like churches that try to follow God's word. So we can expect some trouble from him.

Satan attacks people in different ways. Sometimes he causes illness or depression. Sometimes he makes many good things happen. Then the person is so happy he does not think he needs God. Satan seems to know what to do to take us far away from God. Satan attacks churches in different ways too. He tries to make church members fight with each other. He makes us think everyone must believe everything exactly like we do. Then we fight with each other. He makes us think that everyone must

believe everything exactly like we do. Then we fight with each person who believes differently. He also causes some members to be jealous of others. This destroys the love we need within the church.

Because of Satan's work in the world, people and churches are sometimes persecuted. In today's lesson, Peter and the apostles were arrested and beaten. Many of us will never be persecuted in that way. But if you were, how would you react?

Let us see how Jesus responded to those who persecuted him. Luke 23:34 says Jesus prayed for them. He asked God to forgive them. This is a very hard example to follow. But God wants us to pray for and forgive our persecutors.

In today's lesson, the apostles rejoiced because of their persecution. This is another example that would be very difficult to follow. However, this joy, is the response God wants us to have. James 1:2 tells us to be happy when such troubles come our way.

Christians still face much persecution today in communist countries. In other places the persecution is more hidden. It might be an employer who will not hire you unless you agree to work on Sundays. It could be the anger of someone you try to tell about Jesus. It could even be a family who will not accept you if you are a Christian. In each of these cases God expects us to rejoice and pray for those who are persecuting us.

Things To Do

1. Is your Christianity causing you to suffer in any way? _____

If you answered yes, in what way are you suffering? _____

If you answered no, are you sure you are living for Christ? _____

2. The next time you are persecuted, what will you do? _____

3. Can you honestly say you obey God rather than Men?
What has God told you to do recently? _____

Have you obeyed him? _____

4. Is Gamaliel's advice suitable today? _____

In what way? _____

Lesson 9

THE CHURCH WORKING

AIM: I will learn how a church can work effectively.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 6:1-7

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 6:1-7

MEMORY VERSE:

"Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty" (Acts 6:3).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Three sisters wanted to fix a meal for their family. They did not plan how to do it. They just started working. Each one began to cut vegetables. Soon there were many vegetables but no fire to cook them. So they all began to make a fire. Then they saw that there was no water to use to cook the vegetables. They had to stop what they were doing and go get water. After a very long time, the meal was finally ready to eat.

These girls should have organized themselves. One girl could cut up the vegetables. Another could get the fire ready. The third girl could go get water. Then the meal would have been quick and easy to prepare.

In the same way a church needs to organize to get their work done. In this chapter we will learn how the first church was organized.

Interpretation

As soon as the church was born, it began to grow very fast. Soon problems arose because of the great number of people who need to be served. There seems to have been a common fund for the needy. The complaint was that everyone was not being helped in an equal way. Some of the widows were not getting their portions.

The twelve apostles called a meeting of all the believers to

decide what to do. They could not spend all their time helping with the physical needs of the people. They needed time to study and preach the word of God. They did not mean that the serving of food was not important. It was not too small a job for them to do. But they had been called by God to preach. They wanted everyone to know that God's call must be first in their lives.

The apostles asked the believers in the church to choose seven men. These seven could serve food and care for the physical needs of the people. The apostles did not choose the men. The people did. They were to be men from the group and with a good reputation. They must be good witnesses and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

After the church had chosen the seven men, they were brought before the apostles. They prayed for them and laid their hands on them. This was done to show that they were being set apart for a special job. (Read Numbers 27:18-23). The act gave them authority. It was also a visible sign of the approval of the church.

Now the apostles were able to give all of their time to the preaching. "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem..." (Acts 6:7).

In addition to the serving of food, we learn that these seven men were witnesses. Stephen was full of grace and power. He did great wonders and miracles among the people. We can learn in Acts 8 that Philip also preached.

Application For My Life

What is the main job of the church in the world? For what purpose was the church created? Why do we still have churches today?

The Christian's responsibility in the world is to represent Jesus Christ. We are to present him as the Saviour of the world. Since the church is made up of many Christians, its responsibility is the same. It is to witness about Jesus Christ.

The Church must have more and more leaders who can help with the work of the church so it can grow. It is necessary that these leaders be able to work together with the preacher. Their work is not less important. It is just different. Every part of the work of the church is important.

It is very difficult for one person to do every job. We

cannot expect our pastor to do all the work of the church. We each have different talents. God wants to use all of us.

It is important for many people to help with the work of the church. Then many people are helped to grow closer to God. When we do a job God wants us to do, he helps us and teaches us. It is better for many to receive this blessing.

God is a God of order and organization. Through the Holy Spirit all things can be done in an orderly way. Jesus did not tell the church how they should organize. He just told people to join together to make a church. Those people had the abilities they needed to organize themselves. Then they could take care of the needs of their people.

In our churches today we should organize according to the needs we have. If there are many small children, it would be good to have two or three children's teachers. A large choir might need a choir leader. Someone could be in charge of contacting visitors or sick people. We should ask the Holy Spirit to lead us in this.

All organizations of the church should remember that their main purpose is to guide and lead men to Christ. They are not in competition with each other. They are to help one another. We are one body under one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Things To Do

1. What are the jobs that need to be done in your church?
Make a list. Tick the ones you could do.

Jobs	I could do these

2. Pray about what you have written above. God will lead you.
Tell God right now that you are willing to do anything he asks.

Lesson 10

THE CHURCH WITNESSING

AIM: I will learn how to witness.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 8:1-40

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 8:26-40

MEMORY VERSE:

"Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with his scripture he told him the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Stephen worked as a guard for a store. Late one night he heard a loud noise nearby. He walked around the corner just in time to see two men with guns. They had broken the door of another store and were going inside. Stephen knew that store did not have a guard. He hid and waited very quietly. Soon he saw the two men leave the store carrying big boxes.

The next morning Stephen went to tell the store owner what he had seen. The owner was so glad there was a witness of the crime. Because of Stephen, the police should be able to find the thieves.

The Bible tells us to be witnesses. Because of what we know about Jesus, others can come to know it too. It is only because of what Christians have "seen" that the world can know the truth.

Interpretation

Jesus had said, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The believers were faithful to witness wherever they went.

They had preached in Jerusalem and Judea but not in Samaria. The Jews did not like the Samaritans. But Philip was a faithful witness. He went to Samaria and preached about Christ.

Now we will see how Philip became a witness to "the end of the earth." While he was still in Samaria, an angel appeared. He

told Philip to "go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This was a desert road. It probably did not have much traffic. But Philip obeyed.

A chariot came down the desert road. An Ethiopian was riding in it. The man was a minister of the queen of Ethiopia. He had great authority. He was in charge of all the queen's money. This might be the first African to become a Christian.

As he rode along he was reading a scroll. It was the custom in that day to read aloud. The Holy Spirit told Philip to go to the man. He asked the man if he understood what he was reading. He did not. So he invited Philip to come and sit with him.

The Ethiopian man was reading Isaiah 53:7-8. He did not know who the writer was talking about. So Philip began to tell about Jesus.

We do not know how long Philip talked with this man. But he must have talked about Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. He must have discussed baptism too. And the Ethiopian must have believed in Jesus. As they came to water the man wanted to be baptized.

Both men went into the water, and Philip baptized him. As they came out of the water, the Spirit took Philip away. The man was not too surprised to be alone again. He was satisfied. He just went on his way rejoicing.

The next time we hear of Philip he was in Azotus (Ashdod). He continued to be a good witness.

Application For My Life

In this chapter we see how the Holy Spirit leads individual people. We are all one body, the church. But we are all individual members of that body. Each of us must follow as the Head directs.

We can learn how to witness by following Philip's example. First we see that he obeyed God. When he heard God's message, he did not argue. He did not give excuses about it and know that is what God wants us to do.

If we ask God to show us people to witness to, he will do it. But we must be serious when we ask. We must also listen for his answer.

When we witness we should do the same things Philip did. He discovered the Ethiopian's need and tried to fill it. This man

knew about the Word of God. His need was to understand what it meant.

We need to meet people's needs when we witness to them. Many people are trying to find happiness. Others are looking for a purpose for their life. The Bible has something to say about all our needs. We should share that when we witness.

Another thing Philip did was use the Word of God to tell about Jesus. This shows people that our words have some authority. They can see where we got our information. They also know where they can look to learn more.

Let us notice here that Philip stayed in Palestine. But the new Christian went back to his country. He could now tell about Jesus in another place. That is how the gospel spreads.

It is also important that the Ethiopian man was baptized only after he had trusted in Jesus. Baptism has no power to save a person. It is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It is also a testimony of the new Christian. He had died to his old life of sin and risen to a new life with Jesus. Baptism shows the world that someone has had a personal experience with Jesus.

Things To Do

1. How do you think Philip knew enough about the book of Isaiah to answer the Ethiopian man's question? _____
2. Do you know the Bible well enough to be able to answer questions about it? _____
3. Think of three people you know who are not Christians. What are their needs? Fill in the chart below with this information.

PERSON	SCRIPTURE	NEED
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Now ask God to help you witness to these people.

Lesson 11

THE CHURCH LISTENING

AIM: I will learn how to listen to God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 7:59-8:3; 9:1-22

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 9:1-22

MEMORY VERSE:

"But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Introduction

Esther did not live at her family's home. She did not see them often. Last week she saw her father in town. He asked Esther why she never came home. Esther knew the real meaning of her father's words. "Please come and visit me," is what he meant. "We are missing you as part of our family."

From the time we are very young we learn to listen and understand what people are saying. We hear the words. We watch the person's face. We listen to the way the words are spoken. All this helps us understand. And the better we know a person, the easier it is to truly understand.

The same is true with God. When we become Christians, we must learn how to understand God's message. We cannot listen to him the same way we listen to other people. But the better we know him, the easier he is to hear and to understand. In this lesson we will discuss listening to God's voice.

Interpretation

Saul strongly opposed Christianity. He was not satisfied to scatter the Christians from Jerusalem. He wanted to follow them and remove them forever. He was sure this was the right thing to do.

It was a long way from Jerusalem to Damascus. It took about a week to walk there. At about noon (Acts 22:6) along the dusty road, a great light shone from heaven. Saul fell to the ground. He heard a voice speaking to him. The voice was in the

Hebrew language. Saul knew that it was the voice of Jesus.

At that moment all Saul's prejudice left him. His anger was gone. The Jesus Saul had thought was dead was alive. The Jesus Saul hated spoke to him in love. Saul never went back to his old life. He made a complete change.

Jesus told him to do only one thing. He was to go to Damascus and wait. When Saul arose from the ground, he could not see. The men he was with led him into the city. The well-known persecutor had become a blind slave of Jesus Christ.

We know very little about Ananias. He was not an apostle. He had no special job. But he was a believer who was used by God.

Ananias knew that Saul was one who persecuted Christians. But he listened to God and obeyed. Ananias entered the house of Judas, where Saul was staying. He laid his hands on Saul and called him "Brother." Then he spoke of the Lord, who Saul had met on the Damascus Road.

Immediately Saul received his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit. God used the hands of an obedient disciple. It was Ananias' hands, but it was the power of the Holy Spirit.

Saul began to preach the message that "Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God." He did this with as much energy as he had persecuted the church.

He was well educated. At this time, though, Saul needed some other training. Verse 23 uses the words "Many days." This might mean the three years that Saul spent alone with God in Arabia. (See Galatians 1:16-18).

Applications For My Life

Many Christians do not listen well. Our prayers should be like talks with a friend. But some of us do all the talking! We forget to take time to just listen. If we did God would give us thoughts and ideas to use in our daily lives.

Sometimes we are not sure if God cares about us. We think it might just be our idea. When this happens, ask God for help. Tell him you are confused. Ask him if he is trying to tell you something. God will make his message clear if you ask him.

God often uses the Bible to speak to us. As we read a verse, it seems to be speaking directly to us. Perhaps it answers a question we have been asking. Or maybe it discusses a problem we have. This is one way God talks to us.

God also speaks to us through other people. Let us say you want to serve God but do not know how. You have prayed about it. Then someone says you are very good with music. Suddenly you know that God has given you your answer. You can serve him by singing in the church or helping with a choir.

There is a good way to know that we have received a message from God. We will feel peaceful about it. He might be asking us to do something new. That can cause us to be afraid. But at the same time it will seem like the right thing to do. He will make us feel good about it even though we are afraid.

When Ananias heard God speak, he was ready to obey., He said, "Here I am Lord." We should be ready to do whatever God says too. He wants to use us. We need to be willing to obey.

When Saul met Christ, his whole life changed. Becoming a Christian makes a change in a person's life. We are never the same after meeting Jesus.

It is good that we prepare ourselves to serve God. We should also use every ability he gives us. When we study the Bible, we grow as Christians. We become the kind of people God can use to teach others. We are preparing to do God's work.

Things To Do

1. When you became a Christian your life had to change. There are probably some things you do not do anymore. There are some new things you do now. List these changes here.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Practice listening to God. Write down the messages you receive in one week. Write the date also.

MESSAGE

DATE

Lesson 12

THE CHURCH REACHING OUT

AIM: I will learn that God loves all people equally.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 9:43-11:18

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 10:1-43

MEMORY VERSE:

"And Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him'" (Acts 10:34,35).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Joshua was accepted into a good school away from home. When he arrived he saw several students from the largest tribe in the country. "I did not know any of them would be here," he thought. Immediately he started thinking what bad people they were. "They only love money," he thought. "I will need to be careful with my things. One of them will probably try to steal from me."

Soon Joshua found where he would be sleeping. One of those "bad" people had the bed next to him. Joshua was very angry. But after a few weeks, the two boys were great friends. Because they lived together, Joshua learnt a lot about the boy. He was kind and easy to talk to. Then Joshua did not believe everyone from that tribe was bad. Often we believe things that are not true. We need God's help to teach us the truth.

Interpretation

Cornelius believed in God but did not know about Jesus. One day an angel came and told him to send for Peter in Joppa. Peter would tell him what he needed to know. So Cornelius sent three men.

The next day Peter had a vision. There was a large sheet coming down from heaven. In the sheet were all kinds of

animals.

The Lord said, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter knew the law about clean and unclean animals (Leviticus 11). So he said, "No, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." The Lord said, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common." The vision appeared three times.

While Peter tried to understand the meaning of the vision, Cornelius' men arrived. They had traveled all night.

The Jews believed that God had no use for Gentiles. This is what Peter had been taught as a child. But he was learning something different now. A strict Jew would never stay with a Gentile. However, in the tanner's house that evening there were the two visitors, the tanner and Peter.

The next day Peter and some friends went to Cornelius. Cornelius had invited his relatives and friends to hear the message from God.

Peter preached about Jesus. His message was that Jesus, the Son of God, was sent by God. He went around healing and doing good. But he had been put to death. Then Jesus arose from the grave. Peter and the other apostles were witnesses of these things.

Peter did not even finish his sermon. The Holy Spirit came to all who heard. This means that the Gentiles had received Christ.

The Jewish believers who had come with Peter were amazed. They heard these Gentiles praising God. The gift of tongues was given to them also.

Peter saw that God had accepted these Gentiles as true believers. He had sent the Holy Spirit to them. So Peter commanded them to be baptized. They asked Peter to stay a few days. They probably wanted him to teach them more about Jesus.

Application For My Life

Peter truly learnt that "God shows no partiality." In every nation anyone who receives Christ is acceptable to him. There is no one race that God loves more. There is not one church that is special. Jesus died for all of us. Because of his death, we can all be made clean.

What Peter had learnt as a child was wrong. He had to forget that. He had to be willing to change and learn from God.

This is very hard to do. We like to do things the same way we have always done them. But sometimes God has something new to teach us. Something we believe might be wrong. We must be willing to learn the lesson God has for us.

Most people have prejudices. Some do not like people that belong to a certain church. Some do not like people from a certain country or tribe. These feelings are wrong. God loves all people. He wants us to love them too.

It is our responsibility to reach out to all people. In today's story the angel did not tell Cornelius how to be saved. God uses men, not angels, to do this. We must be willing to tell anyone we meet about Christ.

Peter probably stayed with the Gentiles for several days after they accepted Christ. New Christians are like small babies. They need someone to take care of them. They need to learn about the Bible and prayer. They need to know that the Holy Spirit will not leave.

It is not good to help someone accept Christ and then leave them alone. Satan will try to make them think they are not really saved. They will have doubts. We need to continue teaching and encouraging them.

Today we have learnt that God is not partial. He loves all of us equally. But what about our churches? Do we treat everyone the same? Are we kind only to the people we like? Do we help those who are not like us?

Things To Do

1. Most people have prejudices. What kind of people do you have trouble loving? _____

Ask God today to help you love them.

2. Are you concerned about all people equally? _____
One way to answer this question is to examine your prayers. Do you spend time praying for all people, or do you forget certain ones? _____ We should pray for everyone, even our enemies.

3. Is there something you learnt as a child that is wrong? _____

If you answered yes, write down what it is. _____

What does God want you to believe instead? _____

If you answered yes, write down what it is. _____

What does God want you to believe instead? _____

Lesson 13

THE CHURCH SENDING

AIM: I will learn how a church sends a missionary.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-5

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Acts 11: 25,26; 13:1-3

MEMORY VERSE:

"While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2).

Introduction

Sometimes in war the leader of an army needs to send a message. He gives that message to a soldier. The soldier will take it to the right place.

Often the enemy is very near. Both armies are protected if they stay where they are. But if one person tries to leave, the enemy army can shoot him.

The messenger depends on the other soldiers for help. They all shoot towards the enemy. The enemy must hide from the bullets. Then the messenger can run past them to safety. That soldier is supported by the other soldiers. Without them he could not go.

A similar thing happens in our churches. God asks someone to take his message to a certain place. That person must be supported by the other Christians in the church. Without their help, he could not go. In this lesson we will see how a church can support someone.

Interpretation

The early believers were scattered because of persecution. But they were faithful to tell the news of Jesus everywhere they went. This news was taken to the Greeks in Antioch. Many of these Greeks became believers. Soon the leaders of Jerusalem heard about it. They sent Barnabas to Antioch.

Barnabas arrived in Antioch and saw that the reports were true. He was glad. God had spoken to the Gentiles. He

encouraged them to be faithful.

It appears that the job of teaching those people was too much for one person to do. So Barnabas decided to get help.

Since Saul was from Tarsus, Barnabas went there to look for him. When he found Saul, he brought him back to Antioch. For years they taught the people in that church.

In the Antioch church there were prophets and teachers. A prophet is a man who receives messages for the church from God. A teacher is a man of understanding who can give that knowledge to others.

As the church was worshipping, a message came to them from the Lord. He may have spoken through one of the prophets. He said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2).

The Holy Spirit had made the choice. It was not the church's decision. The church did not ask who would do the best job. They did not discuss how long the work would continue. The Spirit said, "Barnabas and Saul." He only asked the church to set them apart.

The church agreed to do what God asked. These two were gifted men. After they fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them. This showed that the two men were being sent to do a special job.

Saul and Barnabas accepted the job. The church took the responsibility for their needs.

Application For My Life

Robert Moffat was a Scottish missionary to South Africa. He returned home once to find more helpers. It was a very cold time of the year.

He arrived at the church where he was to speak. But he found that only a small group had come. Most of these were ladies. There was one small boy who had come too. Moffat hardly noticed him.

Moffat felt helpless as he spoke. He knew that these ladies could not leave their families and go to Africa.

He finished the message and left. He thought no one had agreed to help.

But the young boy was very interested. He decided that when he grew up he would be a missionary. He went to school and learnt medicine. Then he spent the rest of his life helping

the unreached tribes of Africa. His name was David Livingstone. This is a true story.

It is not our job to call people to do God's work. God is the only one who can do this. He might use us like he used Moffat. But is it really God who calls. It is our job to send and support those whom God calls.

A missionary is a person who is sent. Barnabas and Saul were men prepared by God for a special work. They had been tested by the Lord himself. The church's job was to send them.

The Holy Spirit is still calling men and women today. He is still asking the church to send these people. The church cannot call a missionary. The Holy Spirit must do that. But the church can be ready to send him.

First the church must allow him to go. It might be the pastor who hears God's call. The members must agree to let him go and find themselves another pastor.

The church must also agree to support him. This means they must pray for him and give the money he needs to live. When a church sends a missionary, it is responsible for all his needs. This is a big job.

We need to be like Barnabas and Saul. They were willing to do what God asked. We might not think we could do a good job. But God knows us better than we know ourselves. And if he calls, he will help us.

Things To Do

1. Are you listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit in your life? _____

2. If God called you to be a missionary, what would you say to him? _____

To what places would you not be willing to go? _____

3. Pastors are also called by God. Would you be willing to be a pastor if God asked you? _____

4. Pray right now. Ask God to make you willing to do anything he wants you to do.