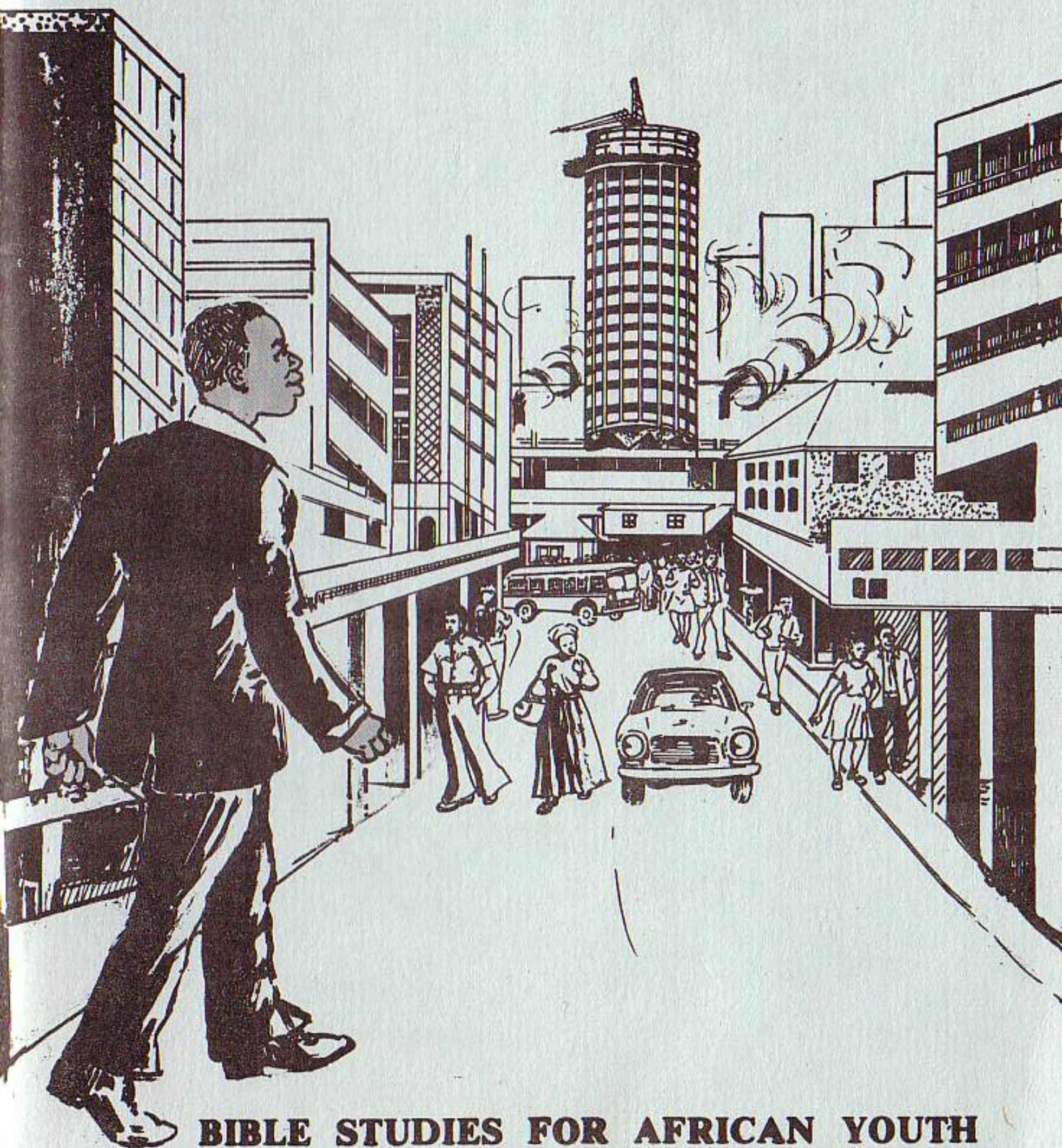


A CHRISTIAN IN TODAY'S WORLD



BIBLE STUDIES FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

A CHRISTIAN IN TODAY'S WORLD

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

**Africa Coordinated Curriculum
for Bible Study**

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CHAPTER ONE

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

Aim: I will examine the cost of following Christ.

Background Scripture: John 15

Verses in Today's Lesson: John 15:18-27; 17:16

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Irene walked toward the hostel one night. Suddenly stones flew from one of the classrooms hitting her. Although she could not see the pupils who had thrown the stones, she knew who threw them. That morning three boys had threatened to beat her.

After making her decision to follow Jesus, Irene had ^{many people} ~~many people~~ ^{began} to hate ^{Irene} her. Her father hated her because she had rejected Islam, wouldn't take part in the worship of spirits and refused to wear charms. Boys hated her because she would not yield to their sexual desires. Girls hated her because she refused to gossip with them.

Irene faced persecution because she believed in Jesus. Persecution ^{comes} is when others hate you because of your beliefs. What did Jesus teach about it? *persecution?*

Interpretation

John 15 tells Christians to expect pruning, to abide in Christ, to keep Christ's commandments, to love one another and bear fruit. It also teaches that those who follow these commandments can expect persecution. In this lesson we will look at persecution and Christ's promise of help from the Holy Spirit. Read John 15:18-27; 17:16.

Jesus spoke these words as he was moving nearer to the pain of the wooden cross. The cross clearly demonstrated that the world hated Christ. They hated him without cause (verse 25). In every man there is something wrong that can provoke our anger, opposition and hatred. In the Lord Jesus there is no wrong, only holiness, pure love, good intention and patient endurance of wrong. He did

everything to prove to the Jews that he was the Christ (Messiah) they were waiting for. All his actions and miracles showed God's power and authority. The Jews hated Christ because he showed them their sinfulness. When they hated and rejected Christ, they showed hatred for God the Father too.

The disciples of Christ must not expect anything better at the hands of the world than Christ received. The world in this passage means those who do not belong to Christ. Why should the world hate Christians?

1. *Because they belong to Christ* The world's hatred of a Christian is a reflection of their hatred of Christ. People do not always tell Christians, "We hate you because you belong to Christ." They do not even realize that what they hate in the Christian is what Christ has planted in the Christian's life.

2. *Because they do not belong to this world* The world hates people who are different. That is why there is religious, racial, tribal and political hatred. The world hates to be condemned for wickedness. The Christian's holy life condemns the world's wickedness. The world hates those who do not conform to its standard. The Christian standard is different from the world's standard.

3. *Because of the world's ignorance of God (verse 21)* Those who have no knowledge of God persecute God's people. The Jews claimed to know God. It was a false claim. We do not know God if we do not know him in Christ.

Application For My Life

It is important for a Christian to learn to face persecution. The Bible says much on the subject, gives

examples of those who experienced it and gives plenty of advice on how to face it. Here are four points that can help a Christian face persecution.

1. *A Christian should not be alarmed by persecution.* Persecution is part of the normal Christian life. We have learnt from the Gospel of John that Jesus taught Christians to expect it. Nobody enjoys being persecuted. Sometimes it means physical pain. It can bring temptation to anger, to hatred and to the giving up of one's faith. But this is a part of the cost of being a Christian. If you are not prepared to face it, you cannot be Christ's disciple.

2. *The Christian should not confuse being persecuted for Christ and being punished for one's own sins.* Some Christian secondary students use prayer, fasting and attending Christian conferences as excuses for disobeying authority. They will pray after lights out and attend conferences without the permission of the headmaster or parent. When they are punished they say, "We are being persecuted for Christ." They are not being persecuted for Christ. They are suffering for their own sins.

3. *The Christian should rejoice in persecution.* Persecution is always an indication that one is living right with God. The world cannot persecute those who say they are Christians but live like those of the world. Jesus taught that there is reward for those who are persecuted for his sake. The hope of Christ's reward should give us cause to rejoice.

4. *The Christian should not develop a negative attitude toward his persecutors.* Revenge is something very natural in us. Some would say, "He has made me suffer, let him suffer in return." Some Christians are tempted to hate their

persecutors. As a result they create barriers between themselves and the non-Christian. Such Christians would find it difficult to draw people to Christ. The New Testament teaches us to pray for those who persecute us and even to give them food and water when they are hungry or thirsty.

Things To Do

1. Read Acts 6:5, 8-9; Acts 7:54-60.
 - (a) What characteristics were present in Stephen's life?
 - (b) Why was he persecuted?
 - (c) How was he persecuted?
 - (d) What was his attitude towards his persecutors?
2. Read John 19:38-40.
 - (a) Why had Joseph been a secret disciple of Jesus?
 - (b) What action did he perform openly that showed he was no longer a secret follower of Jesus?
3.
 - (a) What holds you back from being an open disciple of Jesus?
 - (b) If you have been persecuted, what has been your attitude toward your persecutors?
 - (c) Has this lesson changed your attitude toward your persecutors?

Memory Verse

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

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CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS TRUE WISDOM?

Aim: I will learn to distinguish between true and worldly wisdom.

Background Scripture: 2 Chronicles 1:6-13

Verses in Today's Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

"Wisdom is better than knowledge," Otieno used to tell his son, Ogola. But Ogola never took these words seriously.

Ogola was a very bright young man. He went through university with no difficulties. He got a degree in veterinary medicine and became an important officer in animal husbandry.

His habit of drinking alcohol started when he was in secondary school. In those days he drank little, partly because he did not have much money, and partly because he did not want to get into trouble with school authorities. When he got a job, he began to drink without limit.

Soon he lost his job because he always came to the office drunk. He continued to drink more and more alcohol until he became an alcoholic. As a result he became very poor and a town beggar. He died at the age of thirty. Was he wise? How can a person get wisdom?

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Interpretation *good to put the Scripture passage*

In this passage Paul had two points to make. First, there are differences between God's wisdom and the world's wisdom. Secondly, worldly wisdom tends to make people proud, and God stands in opposition to all that is proud.

The Corinthian Church was divided on a number of grounds. One point of division was the pride of those who thought they had spiritual knowledge. They separated themselves from other church members who did not have as much knowledge. Paul regarded their knowledge as worldly wisdom.

God's wisdom often appears foolish to the men of this world who consider themselves wise. Paul gave the examples of Jews and Greeks who failed to recognize the wisdom of God in sending Jesus to die on the cross.

Paul emphasized that God's wisdom is evident in the crucifixion of Christ. This is what he means by preaching Christ crucified. He felt that human wisdom weakened the power of this message. What is the wisdom in Christ crucified? The cross brings together God's powerful nature of justice and love. God's justice hates and punishes sin. Jesus took the punishment for our sins on the cross, and he conquered sin. God's love desires to forgive the sinner and to relate to him. Those who accept God's wisdom in the cross receive God's love and forgiveness. The Jews and Greeks failed to recognize this wisdom.

The Jews expected a messiah who would give miracles from heaven of God's power. This power would defeat the Jewish enemies. But when Jesus came his miracles helped lowly people. He acted like a servant and not a king. The Jews considered this foolishness and killed Jesus.

The Greeks' wisdom said that God was without feeling. They could not accept the Christian message that God loves us because they thought love is a feeling. For Jesus to show God's love was foolishness to them.

We can see why God hates worldly wisdom. It makes us proud and blind to our need of true wisdom in the cross. That is why God chooses humble men. When they accept God's wisdom, they bring shame to the proud men of this world. God's aim is that, in the end, men will praise the wisdom of God and have no other ground for boasting.

Application For My Life

Every young person has to choose between God's wisdom in the cross and worldly wisdom. If by faith and humility you accept God's wisdom in the cross, it will open your eyes to solve many problems and give you guidance for the many choices you have to make in life.

Young people face internal problems that are the results of sin. Some of them are guilt, discontent, being lost, worries and fear. Some young people pretend these problems don't exist. Others try to crowd them out with alcohol, drugs, cigarettes and pleasure. Jesus came purposely to deal with the sin problem. This is the reason he died on the cross, and he sends his Spirit to all who ask him. The cross, which to many youths of this world appears to be foolishness, is God's wisdom and power to deliver you completely from these evils.

What about conflict with elders and relationships with members of the opposite sex? Many young people in Africa are more educated than their parents. This tends to make them proud and to cause them to despise their parents. Does education make someone wiser? Is the world not filled with educated fools? The Bible, which is God's wisdom,

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teaches us to honour our parents and to respect age (Ephesians 6:1-3, 1 Timothy 5:1).

Teenage girls, who reject God's wisdom, get into troubles. They are misled by men who pretend to love them. Some do not know how to control themselves once they have fallen in love. Sex and pregnancies before marriage are the consequences for those girls who reject God's wisdom. God's wisdom can deliver them from this mess.

Every young person has three important choices to make in this life: the choice of a partner, the choice of work and the choice of a Saviour. We need God's wisdom in these choices. God's wisdom is available to every Christian.

Things To Do

1. List some areas of choices you face. What seems to be man's wisdom in these areas? Pray about these, asking for God's guidance and wisdom.
2. As you seek God's answers to your problems make a habit of writing down a list of your choices. When you discover God's answer put a mark beside that choice. Beside each choice also write down whether it is God's wisdom or man's wisdom. Accept God's wisdom for this problem. God will give you his wisdom.
3. What do your non-Christian friends think about Jesus' crucifixion? If you don't know the answer, go and talk to them. Explain to them the wisdom of the cross of Jesus.

Memory Verse

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him" (James 1:5).

CHAPTER THREE

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

Aim: I will obtain Christian guidelines for living with others in peace.

Background Scripture: Romans 12:9-21

Verses in Today's Lesson: Romans 12:15-21

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

The hatred between the families of Abwoni and Baraza started twenty years ago when the two were still at school. They loved the same girl, and the girl preferred Abwoni. Baraza hated Abwoni for taking his girl and sought every opportunity to revenge.

He tried to hire thugs to rob and murder Abwoni. He tried to get someone to give poison to Abwoni. He failed in all his efforts. Their hatred deepened and spread to all the members of their families. Many times the children of both families fought against each other. They could not visit each other or attend each other's celebrations or even funerals.

This same experience can be seen in many parts of the world. People find it difficult to live together. Some even believe that peace is impossible. The Bible teaches that men can live together.

Interpretation

In Romans 12:16-18, Paul tells Christians to live in harmony with one another and in peace with all. In every society today there is strife. This can be felt between husband and wife, parents and children, teachers and pupils, between nations and between political parties. The causes of strife are many: selfishness, greed, pride, love for material things, racial prejudice, differences and failure to forgive others. Romans 12:15-21 is the formula for peaceful living. Let us look at the parts of the formula.

1. *Sympathy* "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). It is a natural thing in us to seek sympathy from those around us. This we do when we are in sorrow and when we are glad. In Luke 15 Jesus gave examples of the woman who found her lost coin, the shepherd who found his lost sheep and the father who found his lost son. In each case neighbours were called to come and share the joy of finding that which had been lost.

Many times people find joy in the troubles of others, but Jesus wept with those who wept. He wept with Mary and Martha when their brother, Lazarus, died and comforted them by raising Lazarus from the dead. A Christian should follow the example of his Master and share the joys and sorrows of others.

2. *Humility* (Read Romans 12:16.) Humility is having a modest opinion of one's self. A humble person does not feel that there are people who are unworthy of his/her friendship. He does not feel bad when he associates with the poor, the socially inferior, the ugly, the weak and those who have failed. Jesus was a good example. He associated with the poor, the despised, children and sinners. People called him the friend of tax-collectors and sinners.

3. *No revenge* "Repay no one evil for evil" (Romans 12:17). It is natural to hit back when we are offended. The easy response might be, "He made me suffer, let him suffer in return." Jesus did the opposite. "When he suffered, he did not threaten" (1 Peter 2:23). Evil cannot be conquered by evil. We can only conquer evil by doing good, even to our enemies.

Application For My Life

There are several things that contribute to the happiness of a young person. One of them is friendship. Some people find it easy to make and keep friends, while this is hard for others. What is the secret of making and keeping friends?

1. *Interest in other people* This includes interest in their joys and sorrows. Many people make friends for selfish reasons. They are interested only in what they can gain from their friends. People soon discover that these are not true friends and leave their company.

There are those who want to share in other's joys and laughter only. When times of trouble and sorrow come, they are nowhere to be seen. People must cry together to become real friends.

Sometimes it is hard to rejoice with others, especially when their success means disappointment to us. They may succeed in making friends with the boys and girls we admire. They may wear good clothes when we are in rags. It is only when selfishness is dead in us that we can rejoice in the success of others.

2. *Humility* It is quite easy to despise and refuse to associate with students whom you consider ugly, poor or not very intelligent. Some young people despise old people

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and don't want any contact with them. They consider old people as ugly and useless. Jesus despised no one. That is why he was able to make many friends.

We often make the mistake of judging people's values by their outward appearance or by the things they have or don't have. God judges people from their hearts. James says that some of the people we admire in this world are the very people who often make our lives difficult. (Read James 2:1-7.)

3. *Being willing to forgive others* Young people often think it is cowardice to ignore insults. One must prove to everyone that he is tough and that no one can play with him. If everyone thought the same, there would be no peace in the world. Revenge only produces revenge. It does not promote friendship.

Things To Do

1. List the names of the people you have trouble relating to. Write a sentence about the problem. For example: "He is too dirty," or "He always wants to fight with me" or "People like him, and they don't like me."
2. Choose one person from the list. Pray for that person everyday. Try to use what you have learnt from Romans 12:15-21 to make friends with that person this week.
3. Choose another person from the list - one you do not really love. Write down what prevents your loving that person in truth. How can you overcome that thing?

Memory Verse

"If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18).

CHAPTER FOUR

COMMITTED TO CHRIST'S STANDARDS

Aim: I will apply Christ's standards for living to my life.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

Verses in Today's Lesson: 1 Corinthians 6:17-20

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

"Stephen," said the father, "you must bring Jane, your girl friend, to stay with you. You will live with her as husband and wife until she conceives. If she does not conceive, she will not be your wife."

"But Father," Stephen protested, "you know I can't do that. It does not fit with Christ's standards. Sex before marriage is sin. Marriage is still marriage whether there are children or not."

"Alright, My Son," the father replied. "You will have to pay your own dowry. Don't expect me to give you dowry for a woman who cannot produce children. You may have to forget your Christian standards when it comes to marriage."

What should Stephen do, and how should we meet similar problems? What does the Bible teach?

Interpretation

The world of Paul's time was a wicked world. Everything seemed out of control. Sex was out of control. Crime was the cure to boredom. It was an age of violence. People

destroyed each other for material gain. It was to this world that Paul took the gospel and made converts. Paul wanted to help those converts save themselves from the wicked world and live by Christian standards.

Take the case of sexual immorality. The divorce rate was very high. It was almost impossible to find virgins among teenage girls. Women used sex to gain money and satisfy their uncontrolled lust. Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman emperors were homosexuals.

Many philosophers also taught that the human body did not matter. It was just a prison house for the spirit. It did not therefore matter what a person did with his body.

In this passage, Paul taught that the Christian's body belongs to God just as much as his soul, mind and spirit. The body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and the instrument through which the Holy Spirit works. Because of this the body should be used as an instrument of righteousness and a means of glorifying God. It should not be used for sexual immorality. When Jesus died on the cross, it was to redeem the whole man, including his body.

Sex outside marriage is sin and a defiling of the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. "If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:17).

Does that mean that sex is evil? Not at all. Sex is good. God created it for the purpose of deepening the love between husband and wife and producing children.

Application For My Life

Romans 12:1-2 tells Christians to give their bodies as living sacrifices to God. It also tells Christians not to

COMMITTED TO CHRIST'S STANDARDS

conform to the standards of this world. We have already learnt Christ's standard for the use of our bodies in 1 Corinthians 6:17-20. What does this mean to us? How can we honour God with our bodies?

1. *Sexual purity* This may mean that we have to change our attitude toward members of the opposite sex. Men must not look at women as objects to satisfy sexual desires but as people to be respected and loved. Women should not consider men as just sources of pleasure.

We must abstain from adultery and fornication. This is especially difficult in a society where sex has gone out of control. The Corinthians were like that, but Paul made it clear that the Christian standard is not to have sex out of marriage.

2. *Fitness for God's work* We have already said that the body is the instrument through which the Holy Spirit works. Therefore we must do everything we can to make our bodies healthy and physically fit. This means we should do physical exercises, eat well balanced meals and keep ourselves clean. We must also avoid anything that destroys our bodies. Cigarettes and alcohol are poisonous substances. Alcohol causes liver disease and alcoholism. Cigarettes cause lung cancer and heart trouble.

3. *Keep the inside of the temple clean* The body is a mere instrument of your will. What your will has decided to do, the body will do. If your will is surrendered to Jesus, then your body will do what Jesus wants. But if your will is rebellious against Christ your body will do what you want. The inside of our lives must be clean before we can use the body as God's instrument. The inside of our lives means our attitudes, thoughts, emotions and will.

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Things To Do

1. Read Ephesians 4:22-5:5. From the passage list characteristics that are Christian and those that are not Christian.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS

UNCHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS

2. Write down some areas of your life that you need to commit to Christ's standards.
3. Write down two things that people do in your village that do not agree with Christ's standards.

Memory Verse

"You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

CHAPTER FIVE

A CHRISTIAN'S VIEW OF SEX

Aim: I will learn about God's purpose for sex and marriage.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7

Verses in Today's Lesson: Genesis 2:18-25

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

A group of young people approached their teacher one day to challenge his claim to being saved. They said to him, "Sir, why do you claim you are saved and yet you are married? A saved person is a holy person. He can't have anything to do with sex. Wasn't sex the fruit which Adam and Eve ate and God punished them for it?"

"Jesus was not married. Paul was not married. Catholic fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters don't marry. These are the only people who have the right to say they are saved."

Interpretation

When Christians talk about sex they mean the total relationship between a man and a woman. When other

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people talk about sex they may mean only the bodily sexual union between a man and a woman.

When God created man, he made them male and female (Genesis 1:27). The differences between male and female can be found in all areas of a man's life: body, attitudes, feelings and the will.

Genesis 2:18 gives one of God's purposes for sex which is companionship. When God created man he deliberately made him incomplete. He needs the company of another person to complete his being. God saw that animals were not sufficient company for man. He gave the man a suitable helpmate who received the name of Eve, a word meaning a woman. The success of this relationship depends on their willingness to leave their parents, to cleave to each other and become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). This includes a sharing of ideas, feelings, aims and body.

1 Corinthians 7 was written as a result of questions put before Paul by the Christians of Corinth. We don't know what the questions were, but we can guess from reading the passage. One of them may have been something like this: "Is it right for a Christian to seek marriage and to have sexual intercourse with his wife?" This question may have been the result of wrong teaching by some philosophers of that time that sex is evil and unworthy of a good man. To this question Paul gives the following answers.

There is nothing wrong if a man chooses to remain single. In a number of verses in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul gave some advantages of remaining single. However, those who choose to remain single have the problem of facing the temptation of sex outside marriage. If a man cannot exercise self-control in the matter of sex, it is better for him to marry than to suffer with sexual passions. One of the

reasons people marry is to avoid sex outside marriage because this is sin.

Application For My Life

Today we are living in a generation when sex has gone out of control, and its importance is exaggerated. People give all sorts of reasons for sexual intercourse outside marriage. Some say you will become sick if you exercise self-control. Some say that God gave us the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. Some say that everyone is doing it these days and they should not be the exception. Others say it is impossible to control sex.

A Christian knows that God is the Creator and Author of nature. He has all power to help us control nature. There are numerous examples of young people who have given their lives to Christ, and God has given them full control over their sex life.

Let us consider pornography. This refers to writings and pictures that deal with sexual sins and treat them as though they were normal things. They include magazines, novels and cinema. People have discovered that sex can be used for economic advantage. They know that any sex-centered thing will pull in the crowd and bring money. That is why sex is discussed so widely today. A Christian should avoid such things that are meant to arouse sexual desires.

Should a Christian attend dances and parties? There is nothing wrong with many dances and nothing wrong with attending parties. What is wrong is that dances and parties have become sex-centred. They are used for trapping girls for sinful purposes. That is why they take place mostly at night, for it is in the night when evils are most free.

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Some people attend dances and parties with clean hearts and good intentions. They believe that they will be safe. Sometimes they are safe, but this is not always true. It depends on the kind of people they meet there and the will of the person regarding sin. Each individual must be determined to resist sin.

What does God expect regarding our preparation for marriage? God intends for men and women to keep themselves sexually clean for their marriage partner. Have you considered what you would like for your marriage partner to be like? Do you have the faith to believe that God will give you such a person to be your husband or wife? When he does provide that person you will want to present yourself to that one without the stain of sex before marriage. Pledge to keep yourself sexually clean for your marriage partner.

Things To Do

1. Imagine the Christian husband or wife you would like for God to give you. Don't concentrate on the bodily appearance, but think about his/her emotional and personality traits. What characteristics would you like to see in that person? Write these things down and keep them to reread later.
2. What characteristics do you have that will make you a good Christian husband or wife for such a person?
3. Commit yourself to remain pure for that person whom God will give you in his own time.

Memory Verse

"Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous" (Hebrews 13:4).

CHAPTER SIX

BECAUSE WE CARE

Aim: I will consider my responsibility for all that God gives to me.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 16:1-2;
2 Corinthians 9:6-14

Verses in Today's Lesson: 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

Her real name is Christine, but most people call her Jagwondo. Jagwondo in her language is a nickname meaning one who does not like to share her property with others.

This does not mean people do not like her. She is a very gifted musician and performs even for radio and television. Her desk contains many invitation letters asking her to go and perform musical concerts in many places. She makes much money through this.

But it has never occurred to her that God gave her the talent, and that one day she will give an account of her stewardship. She thinks only of the money she will get in the next concert. Long ago people stopped going to ask her for help. She refuses to give anybody anything.

Is this what we should do with what God gives us?

Interpretation

In 1 Corinthians 4:2 Christians are described as servants and stewards of Christ. The Bible teaches that the whole world belongs to God and everything in it. (Read 1 Corinthians 10:26.) This includes man himself. What then can we say about men and their possessions? The truth is that men are only stewards of God's property. All that we possess, we hold in trust for God who is the rightful owner. This includes our bodies, our time, our children and everything.

What God requires of stewards is that they be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). One day each of us will give an account of his stewardship to God (Romans 14:12). What then does God expect us to do with what we call our possessions?

1. *Our Bodies* "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1). This is a command for us to give the whole of ourselves to God: our will, heart, talents, personality, strength and body. This means we shall never use any of these powers for any other purpose other than obeying and glorifying God. In Romans 3:13-14, Paul describes the state of those who are under the power of sin: "Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood." This description is the opposite of the man who has given the whole of himself to God. He gives no part of his life as an instrument of wickedness.

2. *Tithes* The Bible commands us to give one tenth of all our possessions to God. (Read Malachi 3:6-12.) This is

the property that goes to the Church to maintain its services and pay its workers. This is the minimum amount that God requires us to give to him. There are Christians who give a lot more than a tithe.

3. *Our Other Possessions* The Bible also commands us to share our possessions with those in need (Luke 3:11; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Jesus promised that if we share our possessions, we will obtain the more permanent heavenly possessions. Heavenly possessions don't grow old; thieves cannot approach and no moth can destroy them (Luke 12:33-34).

Application For My Life

Perhaps by now you have realized that what is wrong is not the things we possess. Something is wrong with our lives. This is what makes us misuse the things God has given to us. This causes our reluctance to share them with others. Before we can think of our responsibility for all that God gives us, we must deal with some things in our lives. We have to put an end to selfishness and love of material things and replace them with love for God and for the whole of mankind.

One of the problems of man is that we so easily forget that we did not make ourselves or the rest of creation. We brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of this world. The Lord created, gives and takes away. Why should we take someone's property and use it as though it were ours? The owner has the right to remove it from us and give it to someone else. He even has the right to punish us for misusing his property.

In my country I have observed a situation which I believe displeases God. Only the young people who have failed

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their exams enter into full time ministry in the service of God. Those who are intelligent enough to go to university believe that the work of the Lord is for failures. Who makes a man's brain? Who makes him pass his exams? Who gives him talents and abilities? If all these things belong to God, why should we feel that it is unworthy to use them for his service? This is not to say that if a man becomes a medical doctor, he is not serving God. But there are some whom God calls as full time preachers or pastors in churches. These also need to be men of intelligence and with leadership qualities.

Some young people say, "I have nothing to give because I have so little." If you can't give the little you have, you will never give even when you have much.

Things To Do

1. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.
 - (a) Why did Paul praise the Macedonians?
 - (b) What excuse could they have made for not giving?
 - (c) What did they give first to God?
2. Read Philippians 3:7-9. What was Paul's attitude to possessions?
3. Read Mark 10:17-22. What was the young ruler's attitude to possessions?
4. What is your attitude to your possessions?

Memory Verse

"Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

CHAPTER SEVEN

STRENGTH TO CONTROL OURSELVES

Aim: I will learn how to get strength from God.

Background Scripture: Hebrews 4:15-16; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Verses in Today's Lesson: 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

A boy once gave this testimony, "I was a slave of bad temper for several years. I felt very guilty in my heart. I made resolutions to overcome it, but I could not. Every time someone irritated me, I would find myself shouting, using abusive language and wanting to fight. I never gave up trying to overcome this weakness, but I never gained the victory.

"One day I met one of these people who talk a lot about the Holy Spirit. He told me to stop trying and start trusting Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. I gave my life to Jesus. He filled me with his Holy Spirit, and now I have gained power over my temper."

This is just one example of God's power in helping men to overcome temptations and weaknesses. Paul gives many examples of how God's power helped him overcome weaknesses.

Interpretation

One of the problems of man is pride. This is the pride which makes a man believe he can manage all on his own

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and deal with every difficulty by his own power and wisdom. This is the sort of pride which always goes before a fall. We learn to our bitter shame and disappointment that we are dependant on God who made us. We cannot do without him.

Our pride seems to increase with the more gifts we receive from God. The tendency is to boast and act as though they are results of our own efforts and not gifts from God. Paul was one of these gifted persons. God gave him power to heal the sick, cast out demons, speak in tongues and see visions. Like other human beings, he was tempted to pride and boastfulness. But he refused to yield to the temptation. He knew that there was nothing he had which did not come from God and that without God he could do nothing. He had discovered that the power of God works best in those who are humble, acknowledge their weaknesses and put their trust in God.

Sometimes God refuses to give us certain things in order to keep us humble. In this way we can keep trusting in his power and not in our strength and achievements. That is why he refused to remove the thorn from Paul's flesh.

There is a lot in this world that men can do. God has given us good health, intelligence, physical strength and other abilities. Through these, we have discovered many things and made many scientific wonders. These have tended to make us proud. We have even come to believe that we can do without God. However, experience has shown that there are many things we cannot do. We cannot control our thoughts, emotions and bodily desires. We may desire to do right, only to find ourselves doing the wrong things we hate.

Paul was in this dilemma (Romans 7:14-25) until he discovered Jesus Christ and the power of his Spirit. This power is available to all who put their trust in God through Christ.

Application For My Life

There are two things we need to do. We need to acknowledge our weaknesses and our need of God's power. We also need to know how to get this power. Young people always find it difficult to control feelings of antagonism toward others. Others are disturbed by feelings of disappointment, frustration and worry. Sex is another thing that blows young people everywhere. Some say it is impossible to control the sex instinct. In our own strength it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. How do we get God's power?

1. *Prayer* In Luke 11:13 Jesus said, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" It is a matter of asking God to give you this power.

2. *Faith* In Mark 11:24 Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will." It is not enough for us to ask God to give us things. We must believe that he fulfils what he promises. He has promised to give us the Holy Spirit, and he will.

3. *Obedience* In Acts 5:32 we read, "And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." There is a strong connection between the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to obey the Word. If a man's desire is to obey God, the Holy Spirit is ready to help him obey. If you are stubborn, rebellious and

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disobedient, you limit what the Holy Spirit can do in your life.

4. *Repentance* This word means a turning from self and a turning to God. Selfishness, which is the root of all sin, fights against the working of the Holy Spirit. We always want to have our way in life and not God's way. We have to resist this tendency if we want the Holy Spirit to work in us (Acts 2:38).

5. *God's promise* Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Sometimes you may feel no one else is tempted like you are. But that verse tells us that all people are tempted. God has promised to give us a way out of all temptations. You have no excuse to yield to temptation.

Things To Do

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 again.
 - (a) What temptations are common to youth today?
 - (b) What ways can you avoid some of these temptations?
 - (c) Write this verse in your own words.
 - (d) Memorise this verse.
2. How did Jesus deal with temptations in Matthew 4:1-11?
3. Use 1 Corinthians 10:13 to help you fight temptation.

Memory Verse

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHEN SPIRITUAL GIFTS DIFFER

Aim: I will appreciate people with gifts that differ from mine.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:4-18, 27-31

Verses in Today's Lesson: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

There was a weekly Christian fellowship meeting in the teacher training college. At first the number of Christian students that attended it was large. Later on the number began to grow smaller and smaller until only about five students attended the meeting.

A visitor was invited to give a talk in that meeting one day. When he arrived he asked Rose why she was one of those who no longer attended the meeting. "I just don't feel like attending," she answered. "I always feel out of place. I can't speak in tongues. I feel I am useless in the fellowship. There is nothing I can contribute to it."

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Rose was not alone in feeling like this. Others felt exactly the same. The meeting was monopolized by those who spoke in tongues and those who prophesied. Every other person was ignored.

What should we do when spiritual gifts differ?

Interpretation

A similar situation to the one we have just read existed in the Corinthian Church. God has filled the Church with all kinds of spiritual gifts. These gifts were meant to bless the Church and help it grow. Spiritual gifts are as perfect as the giver, God. The problem is the recipient, the Christian, who is not as perfect as the gift, and so he intends to misuse the gift. The Corinthian Christians were doing exactly that. They were misusing their gifts.

Looking at the whole chapter you get the impression that some Christians in the Church claimed special recognition because of the gifts they had. Others despised the Christians that did not have their special type of gift. Others thought they were useless in the Church because they could not speak in tongues or work miracles. Others even thought God did not love them. That is why he did not give them the desired gifts.

Paul answered these problems by saying that the Holy Spirit has a variety of gifts. He gives these gifts to individual Christians according to his will. Every Christian is part of the body of Christ and has specific functions within the body of Christ. Therefore Christians need each other.

In conclusion, Paul said, the Church belongs to God, and he controls it himself. He appoints people to various offices.

In view of this, quarrelling or jealousy over the offices of the Church is clearly wrong. If there is any coveting of spiritual gifts, it should be the gift of Christian love. Spiritual gifts minus love equals spiritual ZERO.

This explains why many of our fellowships are sick. Every Christian is not given the opportunity to use his gifts for the good of the whole Church. The Church is like a body where the arm is working but the rest of the parts are paralysed. Where only one gift is allowed to monopolize the fellowship, the Church is like a man suffering from cancer. Cancer is a group of cells in the body that multiply very fast, faster than the other cells, until they destroy the whole body.

Application For My Life

We have already learnt that the Church is the Lord's. He obtained it through his precious blood. He is the Foundation and Head of the Church. He controls it and provides its gifts according to his will. We have no right to tell God what gifts he should give us. Instead we should be open to receive whatever gift he chooses to give us.

Praise God for what you are. There is no one like you in all the world. There are things that only you can do. If you fail to do them, you have left a gap in the life of the Church that nobody can fill. You should take time to develop the gifts you have.

We should not despise a fellow Christian because he does not have the gifts we admire. It is not his fault that he does not have these gifts. God is the Supplier of gifts and we are all recipients. Instead we should appreciate others and their gifts. We should encourage them to use their gifts for the Church and for the glory of God.

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On the other hand, we should not envy those who are more gifted than we are or who have the gifts we admire. The gifts are not for the person who has them. They are for us. They are for the good of the whole Church. Often we might say, "My friend has all these gifts. She is going to be more popular than I am." This is nothing but the voice of envy, pride and selfishness. We should repent of these sins and leave God to shape others according to his will. It is not for us to decide what the friend is going to be.

The truth is, the more gifts one has, the more work he has to do. He is responsible to use his gifts. So if you have fewer gifts, do the best you can with those few. God will not hold you responsible for what you don't have.

Finally, put on love. Love is not jealous or boastful. All the Church members are as important as you are. Enjoy their love and the use of their gifts.

Things To Do

1. (a) What things do you enjoy doing?
(b) What talents do you have? (Even a good football player can use his talent for God.)
2. Make a list of the talents you have. By each one, write a sentence telling how you might use it to praise God or to share it with others. If you cannot think of these things ask a Christian brother or sister to help you.
3. Praise someone for the gift he uses for God. Try to praise someone this week whose gift does not usually receive praise.

Memory Verse

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

CHAPTER NINE

USING SPIRITUAL GIFTS RESPONSIBLY

Aim: I will learn to use my spiritual gifts responsibly.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Verses in Today's Lesson: Romans 12:3-8

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

The teacher asked Mectar why she was sleeping in class while the lesson was in progress.

"Our sisters were shouting and speaking in tongues the whole night," she replied. "We could not sleep. The prefects told them to keep quiet, but they would not listen. They said that to keep quiet was to quench the power of the Holy Spirit."

Meanwhile a report came from the headmaster's office with the effect that the five girls who had prayed loudly the previous night were suspended from school. They were to report back to school after two months and to bring their parents with them.

Would you say that these girls used their spiritual gifts responsibly?

Interpretation

In Romans 12:3-8, we are given important rules that can give us a foundation for the proper use of spiritual gifts.

First of all the passage repeats the ideas we learnt in the previous lesson. It teaches us to know and accept the gifts God has given to us. We are not to envy someone else's

gift. We are not to complain or regret that certain gifts have not been given to us. We are to accept that all gifts come from God and should be used for his glory and not for our personal prestige.

The main emphasis of this passage is humility (verse 3). We have already seen that the possession of certain gifts tends to make us proud. Consider the hearts of Christians after a Sunday service of worship. The preacher could be proud of the way he moved the congregation and made people cry. The singers and the guitarist could be proud of the way they displayed their gifts before the congregation. This sin of self-glory becomes even more dangerous when they start despising those without the gifts they think are important.

What caused Satan to fall? The Bible teaches that Satan was once an important angel of God. He was beautiful and wise. The possession of these powers made his heart proud and caused him to rebel against God. Read Ezekiel 28:17 and Isaiah 14:12-17. This can be true of church leaders. So often the position of leadership, which should make us humble, will make us proud. We therefore need humility to use these gifts for God's glory and not for personal prestige. We need humility to accept other people and the fact that their gifts are just as important as ours. We need humility to accept the fact that we need others and that without them our lives would not be complete. We need humility to use our gifts for service.

Application For My Life

We must be warned about the misuse of spiritual gifts. They can lead to unpleasant consequences and needless sufferings. This is especially true when the possession of certain gifts makes us feel we don't have to obey human

authority (parents, teachers, church leaders and government). We should also not forget that we shall one day stand before God to give an account of our stewardship here on earth.

Take time to write down your spiritual gifts. Then bring them to God and, if you mean it, pray: "Our Father, I thank you for all your gifts to me. I am giving them back to you. I am willing to use them for your glory."

Whatever you do, don't let it make you proud. The possession of gifts only is not enough. You need God's power to help you succeed in using the gifts correctly. The devil will do everything within his power to frustrate God's purpose for your life. You need a daily commitment to God's will for your life.

We need to have time with God in Bible reading and prayer. God has ways of speaking to us through his Word. He can direct us in how to use his gifts and how not to use them. Bible reading is useless to those who don't want to obey.

Our aim is to glorify God and not to please ourselves. God is not glorified when we disobey authority, monopolize Christian fellowship, judge brethren, disturb our neighbours and dodge our responsibilities. If non-Christians accuse us of misuse of gifts, we should not conclude quickly that they are persecuting us for Christ. We should examine these criticisms carefully. They may help us to glorify God in future.

The more gifts we have, the more careful we need to be. The more gifted person meets more temptation than the less gifted. We have seen very gifted preachers and evangelists fall because of women, money and pride. Remember, to whom much is given, much is also expected.

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Things To Do

Think about the list of gifts you wrote down last week. Write down each gift and make two columns beneath it like this:

Gift: _____

Selfish use of this gift:

**How I will use this
gift to please God;**

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How I will use this gift to please God:

It would be helpful to do this exercise with a Christian friend.

Memory Verse

"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace"
(1 Corinthians 14:33).

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CHAPTER TEN

LEARNING CHRISTIAN LOVE

Aim: I will learn what the Bible says love is.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 4:7-10

Verses in Today's Lesson: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

The love between John and Phoebe was so strong that no one seemed able to separate them. Outside the class periods they were always together. The headmaster warned them about breaking school rule number 11 which states that girls are not allowed out of the hostel from 7:00 pm to 7:00 am.

At first the teachers were worried that John and Phoebe were going to ruin each other's academic career. Apparently that was not the case. They did very well in all their

subjects. Phoebe never became pregnant as people had expected. They finished their school very well. Phoebe went to a teacher training college and John went to university.

Three years after this they got married. Some time later they got a divorce. They did not even want to see each other's face. What became of their "strong love"? What is love?

Interpretation

1 Corinthians 13 teaches us the meaning of true love. In verses 4-8 Paul describes the characteristics of that love.

1. *It is patient.* This word means endurance of suffering without losing heart. In our relationship with God, it means waiting for God's own time. In our relationship with others, it means not being quick to judge. We must not grow impatient and angry with others. We must try to understand others and give them time to show their real character.

The Old Testament describes God as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6). This means God is patient with men. He hates sin, but he gives the sinner a chance to repent.

2. *It is kind.* This word has three meanings. First, it means forgiving those who have done wrong to us. Secondly, it means bearing the evil that men do to us without trying to pay it back. Thirdly, it means doing good to your enemy as well as to all who are in need.

God is very kind to all men. "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

3. *It is not selfish.* Boastfulness, jealousy, being quick to anger and slow to reconcile, revenge, rudeness, arrogance and insisting on one's own ways are all parts of our selfish nature. To overcome this, we need to love our neighbours as we love ourselves.

4. *It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.* If we love a person, we wish that person to be as good as he possibly can be. If we see him going the wrong way, we are sad and angry. This is the reason we punish our children, and it is also the reason why God punishes us.

5. *Love never gives up hope and it never ends.* This needs no explanation. It means what it says.

Application For My Life

Love for members of the opposite sex *Eros* is the Greek word for sexual love that exists between a man and a woman. We have already learnt that sex is not sin. It is God's gift to man. Yet experience has shown that this love alone without the one described in 1 Corinthians 13 can ruin the lives of men and women. When sexual attraction fades away, *eros* fades with it. This explains why John and Phoebe could not continue loving one another. The sexual love between a man and a woman must be supported by God's love, if it is to bring meaningful fulfilment.

Understanding elders It is said that experience is the best teacher. Elders have come through many experiences to learn that certain actions lead to happiness and some lead to disaster. That is why they are interested in correcting their young people. They will blame, rebuke and punish the youth in order that the youth may avoid actions that lead to disaster. When the youth misunderstand this, they think

it is because they are not loved and that elders don't want them to enjoy themselves. A child may enjoy swinging from a tall tree, but he won't enjoy it when he falls to the ground.

This is not to say that elders don't make mistakes. They do, and they also need your forgiveness, patience and kindness. When youth and elders fail to understand and love each other, relationships are strained.

Love is stronger than hate Alexander the Great was great because he conquered many lands with the sword. There are many people who believe that the best way to deal with the enemy is to hate and destroy him. Jesus conquered a lot more than Alexander did with love. He has turned enemies into friends. This is what you and I should do. We need love in all areas of life: at work, at school, at church, in family relationships, sports, friends and in our relationship with God.

Things To Do

1. Name three people you feel you love. What characteristics of love from 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 are in each relationship? What areas of each relationship do you need to grow in? Commit these areas to God as you seek to really love.
2. Is there someone from the opposite sex who says he/she loves you? How does he/she behave toward you? Does that behaviour indicate real love as described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8?

Memory Verse

"Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LET LOVE BE GENUINE

Aim: I will learn to show my love in my ministry to other people.

Background Scripture: 1 Peter 3:8-9; 1 John 2:9-11; John 15:12-13

Verses in Today's Lesson: James 2:14-17

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

"There she goes again," commented Rose. She was referring to Auntie Awori. The aunt was on the other side of the house talking with her nephew, Seth. She was giving her usual empty promises saying, "You don't have to worry about school fees. My husband will pay them. As for school uniform, I will bring it to you within two weeks. I don't want to see the children of my sister suffer."

Auntie Awori is a business woman. Her husband is a railway station master. Together they earn enough money to help pay the fees and buy the school uniforms. The problem is that she never comes through with the things she promises. Is love a matter of words and not actions? How

long can you keep fooling people that you love them when you don't?

Interpretation

In this passage James is talking to Christians whose expression of love is very much similar to that of Auntie Awori. Their expression of love was stopped only with words like "God bless you, Go in peace, Keep warm, May God supply all your needs according to his riches in glory." But they were not prepared to give any of their property to help others. This is nothing but an attempt to cover selfishness with religious language. One wonders whether such people have the Bible type of faith. Men are not saved by good works, but good works are the results of Christian faith.

We must admit that this is not the only way people pretend to love. The word, love, is probably the most used and the most misinterpreted word in the world. Some say love is sex, but we know only too well that there can be sex without love. Some say that love exists in family life, but there are many families without love. Others talk of falling in love. It is quite easy to fall in love and fall out of love. That is why so many people are led into many miseries under the name of love.

The Bible explains that there are many ways of expressing love. One of them is meeting the needs of others. This may mean feeding the hungry, giving clothes to the naked, welcoming strangers and visiting the sick and those in prison. (Read Matthew 25:31-46.)

Jesus expressed his love for men in many ways. Acts 10:38 summarizes what he did: "He went about doing good and healing all those that were oppressed by the devil." We all know what he did. He treated all people alike. Everyone

was important to him. He healed the sick, cast out demons, fed the hungry, taught the Word of God, forgave sinners and, most of all, offered his life on the cross in love to save us from our sin.

Application For My Life

We have already seen that love shows itself in service - meeting the needs of others. It is important to know, therefore, that people have more than one kind of need. They have physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs. We may not manage to meet everyone's needs, but we can meet some.

Physical Needs Physical needs include food, clothes, shelter and good health. In trying to meet all these needs we look at the whole man and the whole teaching of the Bible. We may flood a man with material things and spoil his own initiative to work hard and earn his own living as the Bible commands (Ephesians 4:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Giving material things is one way of showing love. But not all giving is a sign of love. All of us are familiar with the terms, "Sugar Daddies or Mommies." Who are these people? They are older men and women who flood the young people with material things in the name of love, but their real motive is to get sexual pleasure. In this way they can put young people into real trouble. We must be careful with those people who give us things with motives other than that of love. We too must see that we have clean motives when giving out things.

Intellectual Needs Everyone of us has a desire to know the truth, not only the truth about God, but also the truth about other things. We should want to know the truth about man, history and current events. There are, of course,

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certain people who prefer to live in lies or in the fool's paradise. But most people prefer to know the truth. The most important truth everyone needs to know is the truth about man and God. Proper teaching of the Bible can meet this need.

Emotional Needs Everyone needs to love and be loved. We can show our love by kindnesses we do for other people each day.

Spiritual Needs Our greatest need is the spiritual need for salvation from sin. Only Jesus can meet this need, but we can introduce people to him and help them understand that he wants to save them. He has already done all that is necessary for our salvation when he died on the cross. When we accept his death as payment for our sin, we are saved. Our most important work is to bring people to Christ in love.

Things To Do

1. Think of one family member, one friend and one fellow student. What needs do you see in each one's life? What could you do to meet that need in love?
2. Everyone needs to feel loved and appreciated. Try to express appreciation to every member of your family this week.
3. Think of the people you have pretended to love. In what ways have you pretended to love them? In the light of what we have studied in this lesson, how are you going to behave toward these people?

Memory Verse

"So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:17).

CHAPTER TWELVE

NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

Aim: I will learn about God's new creation.

Background Scripture: John 15:14-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Verses in Today's Lesson: Ephesians 2:19-22

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

There was commotion in the school. Nobody had expected Job and Moses to become Christians. They were the most popular boys in the school, the best football players and the most active in organizing dances. They were also the top students in academic performance and the most common in the "London Street" and the "Colonial" field. The "London Street" is a path in the school compound where boys are most often seen escorting their girl friends. The "Colonial" field is the football field which turns to a wooing field at night.

These boys' conversion came as a surprise to many people. They had been the most active in persecuting Christians. At first people doubted the genuineness of their conversion. After two months, people saw that they had really become new people. Their behaviour had completely changed.

The Bible teaches that when a man is in Christ he is a new creation.

Interpretation

Ephesians 2:19-22 describes God's new creation. The Church is this new creation. In the past men were separated from each other and from God because of their sin. When Christ was crucified the sin was removed, and a direct access to God was opened for both Jews and Gentiles. This also brought healing from the separation that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The result is unity and peace between God and his people, and between man and man. Paul describes this unity as a new creation. It is the creation of one new man (the Christian) in place of two. The Jews and Gentiles are now members of one family - belonging, sharing, participating, relating and communicating.

In verse 19, Paul refers to this new family (the Church) as "saints." This word means people who are called out of the world to be God's own people. Throughout the Bible, the saints are urged to live lives befitting their position. Sometimes they are also referred to as the body of Christ (2:16). They are Christ's voice and life to show what God is like, what God wants and what God plans.

In verses 20-22, Paul changes the illustration of this new creation from that of family and human body to that of a building. The new family is like a house, God's house. The foundation stones for that house are apostles and prophets. Jesus himself is the chief cornerstone of that foundation. Every Christian is a building block in the house.

It was a source of pride for the Jews that God dwelt among them. In verse 22, however, Paul says that Christians are the dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

In conclusion we see that Christians are the new creatures in Christ. Each one has received new life. Together they

make up the new family, house and dwelling place of God. They should live lives that befit their position.

Application For My Life

Where do we come in all this? The new creation is available to all whose eyes are open to the need of it. It is the answer to the many perplexities of this life. Today many young people are knocking at the doors of the church building to find answers for their empty feelings and frustrations in life. Many go away disappointed because they don't get the answers they expect. Like the rich man of Mark 10:17-22, they go away sorrowful because they don't want to meet the Bible conditions that will bring them new life in Christ. What are these conditions?

The first condition is repentance of sins. Secondly, the person must accept Jesus's death on the cross as payment for sin. This is the way of salvation, and there is no other requirement for a person to be saved. As a result of this experience, however, the person's life will be changed. He will develop a desire to obey God. His life will bear fruit that is different from the old life. Read Galatians 5:17-23 to see the fruits of the old life and the fruits of the new creation.

As a result of this experience, the new Christian will want to obey God and undergo baptism in water. This baptism does not save the person, because he has already been saved. But it shows the world that he is now a new creation in Christ. After baptism the person can become a member of a local Church.

Now, as a member of the family of God, the new Christian finds that his brothers and sisters come from all races, all tribes, all clans and all families. There are no class distinctions. All are equally important.

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From this point the Holy Spirit will lead the new creation into ways of personal service to his Lord. He will want to serve God through his local Church also.

There is much that we can say about the work of the Church in this world. The Church exists for many special purposes, but in this lesson we can only give a summary. The work of the Church is to be the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). It is to bring people to Christ and disciple them (Matthew 28:19-20). It is to serve and meet the whole need of man (Luke 9:1-2). It is to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5). It is to perfect the saints and equip them for service (Ephesians 4:11-16). It is to worship God (John 4:20-24).

Things To Do

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul tells us that a Christian is a new creature and that old things are passed away. The passage we have been studying in Ephesians tells us that the Church is built up with each new creature in Christ. The characteristics of the new creatures help to build the entire body of Christ.

- (a) What does the Bible teach are the characteristics of each new creature? Read Galatians 5:22 and other Scriptures to help you write your answer to this question.
- (b) What is the work of the Church? Read Ephesians 3:10. Do you think this work is being done by your Church?

Memory Verse

"This I command you, to love one another" (John 15:17).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

OUR CHURCH TODAY

Aim: I will reveal the light of Jesus by my own life.

Background Scripture: Mark 9:50; John 15:1-17

Verses in Today's Lesson: Matthew 5:13-16

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

Introduction

A king once asked his three sons how much they loved him. One said, "I love you as much as I love sugar." The second said, "I love you as much as honey." The third son said, "I love you as much as I love salt." The king ordered the third son to be killed.

Instead of killing the son, the people helped him to escape to a far country. With the Lord's help the third son became a king in a foreign country. One day he invited his father to visit him. When the father arrived he was given very nice food but with no salt. The guest asked, "Is there no salt in this country?" The son replied, "We have plenty of salt, but we thought you didn't like salt." Until this time the father had not recognized his son. He replied, "We like salt very much. We cannot do without salt."

The son said, "Do you remember when your third son once told you that he loved you as much as salt?" The father's eyes were opened and he saw the truth.

Salt is a very important item.

Interpretation

The Bible teaches that the Christian is the light of the world and the salt of this earth. Christians do not have light of their own. They reflect the light of Christ.

In John 8:12 Jesus spoke to the Jews saying, "I am the light of the world, he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Light in the Bible is a symbol of truth and righteousness. Darkness is a symbol of sin. Jesus came to reveal to us the truth about the righteousness of God. He came to reveal to us the truth about man and sin. He came to reveal to us how we can live a meaningful life and how we can be reconciled to God. All these revelations came through in his teaching, his life and his actions. When a man walks in the light of Christ, he becomes light to others. That is why it is impossible for a Christian to hide himself.

Jesus also said that Christians are the salt of the earth. The work of salt is to give flavour and to preserve things from decay.

The work of the Church therefore is to give flavour to life that has lost taste. It is to give meaning to life that has lost meaning. Many people find this life meaningless. They don't know what to do about injustices and problems they face in this world. They don't know whether they should continue to live or commit suicide. It is the work of the Church to show such people that God has a purpose for

them. It is for them to find that purpose and live according to it.

As salt preserves things from decay, the Church should preserve the world from sin. We must have courage to condemn sin wherever it shows itself. We must discourage people around us from sinning. The Church must have courage to speak against the sins of their neighbours and to correct them. But all must be done in love.

Application For My Life

Light has many important functions. It helps us to see where we are going. It helps us to put things in order. It shows us danger. And it shows things as they are. Light gives life.

In the same way the Church and Christians have many functions. They show people what course of action they must take that will lead to peace, joy and happiness. They warn people that certain actions lead to trouble, destruction and unhappiness. Therefore they should be avoided. They help people to know the relative value of things and what ought to be their priorities. In Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, we have life; and we have it abundantly.

Being light and salt requires action and discipline. It is continuous action as long as a Christian lives. It amounts to bringing people to Christ who alone can solve our problems and meet our spiritual needs. We can bring people to Christ through preaching or through good works. People say, "Action speaks louder than words." We must be prepared to help other people. The Bible tells us, "Let us not grow weary of well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9). Some people start well, but do not continue.

A CHRISTIAN IN TODAY'S WORLD

A headmaster was brought to Christ through the actions of Christian students. When the students accepted Christ as their Saviour and Lord they decided they would show examples of good behaviour as part of their Christian witness. They obeyed all the school rules. They worked hard at their books. Several times they saved their school from riots and strikes. This is how the headmaster came to notice them. For the first time he saw Christian students who put their faith into action. He was convinced that only Jesus could have made the students what they were. He too accepted Christ as his Lord and Saviour. This is what it means to be the salt and light of the world.

Things To Do

1. Look at the community in which you live. List some ways you could show the light of Jesus where you are. For example, you could visit an old person. Perhaps you could help that person by cutting wood, shopping for him/her or cooking some food. Choose some of these things to do today and each day of this week.
2. If you have a Christian group in your school, suggest to the group that you decide on a project that will bring joy to someone. In this way you will be obeying the command of Jesus to be the light of the world.
3. You can bring permanent light into a life by introducing that one to Jesus. Tell someone about the Light of the World today.

Memory Verse

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).