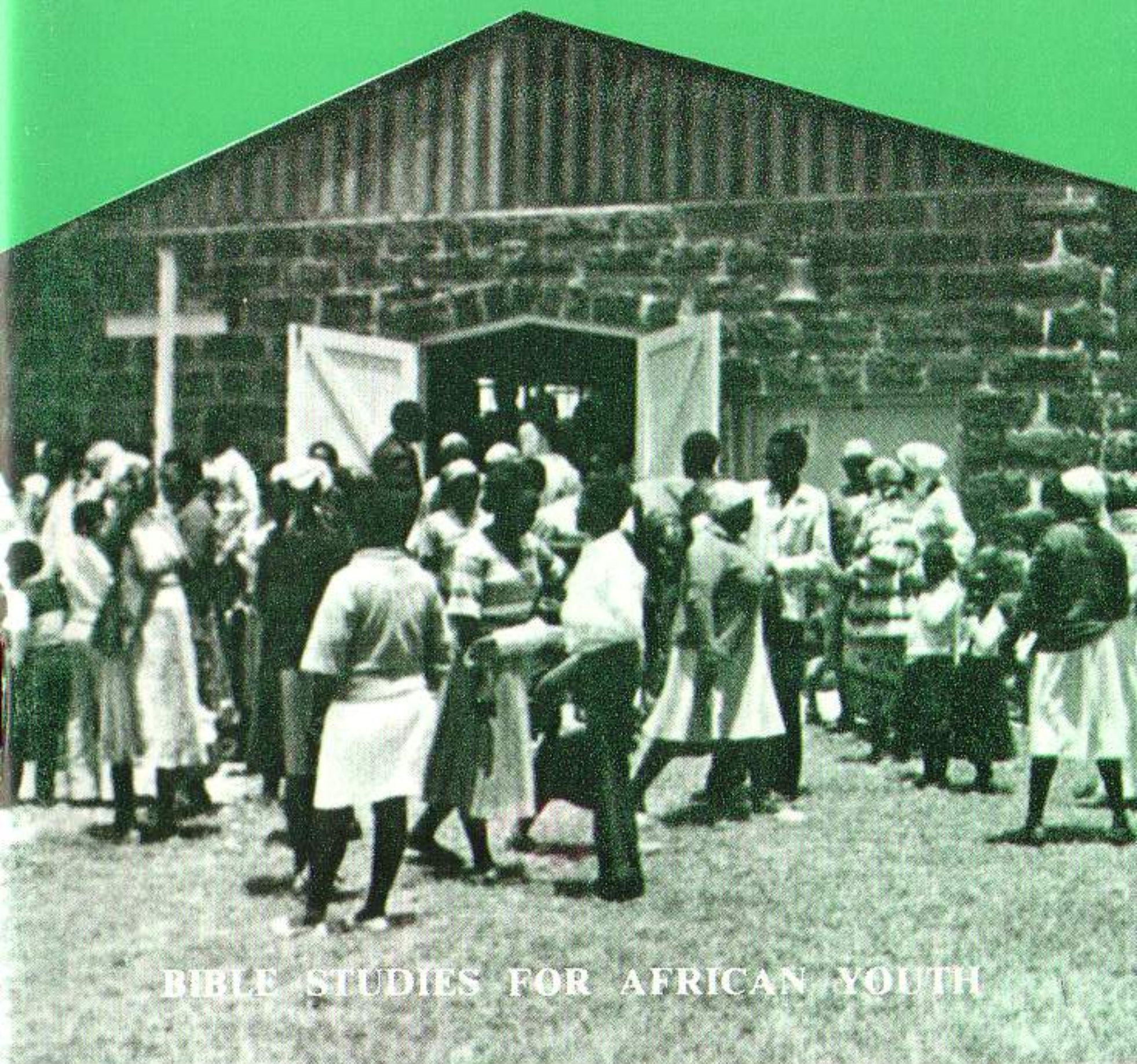


OUR LORD AND HIS CHURCH

(TEACHER)



BIBLE STUDIES FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

OUR LORD AND HIS CHURCH

Written by: Jill B. Branyon

BIBLE STUDIES FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

Africa Coordinated Curriculum
for Bible Study

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CHAPTER ONE

CHRIST IS LORD

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Colossians 1:1-20

Verses in Today's Lesson: Colossians 1:9-20

Memory Verse

"He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent" (Colossians 1:18).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that Jesus is the Saviour, the Lord and the Master of the church.

Teaching Aids: Have a chalk board or large sheet of paper ready to write the questions suggested in this lesson.

Background Study

This quarter we will study the basic truths concerning the church. We will come to understand who the church is, who leads the church, how the church operates and the position each of us holds in the church. You will realise the joy and the responsibility of church membership.

Colossians was written by Paul to the church located in Colossae. He did not personally know these believers, but he had received a report probably from Ephaphras who played a large role in developing this church. This letter was written while Paul was in prison in Rome.

Paul was addressing problems in the church. There were ideas and practices which were not part of the teaching of

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Christ. These believers had combined local religions and Jewish faith and practised such things as the worship of angels (Colossians 2:18) and special circumcision rites (Colossians 2:11). Clearly, circumcision as a social custom is practised widely, but it should never be a requirement for church membership as it was in Colossae.

Paul made it clear to the church that Christ alone was sufficient for church membership.

As you begin to study your Scripture lesson, you should note that verse 9 is referring to verse 4 where the people of Colossae became members by faith in Christ Jesus and the love they demonstrated to the other believers. See John 13:35.

The first place Jesus has in the church is as Saviour. Jesus saved the church. He gave his life to provide a way for us to enter the church. In John 14:6, Jesus says he is the only way to the Father.

Again in Colossians 1:13-14 Paul stresses salvation only in Jesus. "He (God)...transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son (Jesus) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Secondly, Paul points out that Christ is the Head of the Church. We, as church members, must act only as we are directed by the Holy Spirit. The directions we receive from Christ come from his words in the Bible and by praying for guidance. The Lord will hear our prayers if we will come to him ready to do his will.

Lastly Paul points out that Christ is Lord of the Church. In the last part of verse 18 we read, "...that in everything he might be preeminent." Jesus is the Lord, the centre of all

worship and all activity in the Church. The focus of all church meetings should be on Christ alone.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Who runs our church?" Write the question and answers on the chalk board. Some possible answers are: the pastor, the elders, God, choirmaster, etc. Have a student read Colossians 1:18 and repeat the question.

Ask: "How can someone join our church?" Write the question and answers on the chalk board. Possible answers are: be baptised, talk to the pastor, believe in Christ and go to the front of the church. Have a student read Colossians 1:4 and Colossians 1:13-14 and repeat the question.

Ask: "What is the most important part of the worship service?" Write the question and answers on the chalk board. Have a student read Colossians 1:18 and stress the last part of the verse. Repeat the question.

Write these words on the chalk board: Jesus is the Saviour, Lord and Master of the Church.

Examination

"Paul was writing to the Colossians about a problem that we face today. They had added some nice traditions as a means of church membership.

"For example, the Scriptures tell us to confess our faith before men, but our tradition is to walk before the church and confess before those present. It is a good practice, but is it scriptural? If someone were unable to do it like we do it, should they be kept from church membership?

"Paul stressed that Jesus is Master of the Church. Yet many times in our business and church meetings we spend

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time discussing our ideas and fail to pray about such matters. Even young people sometimes plan meetings and rallies without considering if it is God's will.

"Paul also stressed that Christ is the Lord of the Church. Many times we rush through our services but give little thought to the fact that Christ is present with us. We should sing our songs, pray our prayers and give our offering to Christ alone. To worship Christ as Lord is to give all our energy and attention to pleasing him."

Application

"Let us review our questions for today. 1) How does one join our church? The answer should be through faith in Christ. 2) Who runs our church? Christ, through the Holy Spirit. 3) What is the most important thing we can do in our worship service? To worship Christ."

Ask students to suggest ways that they can be sure that Christ leads their church. (By following the Bible and praying for guidance) Ask the students for ways they can focus attention on Christ during worship.

Have the students repeat and write the memory verse.

Prayer Suggestions

1. Pray that each student will understand that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to church membership.
2. Pray that each student will become a faithful and responsible member of the church.

CHAPTER TWO

FOUNDED ON CHRIST

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: 1 Peter 2:4-8

Verses in Today's Lesson: Matthew 16:13-27

Memory Verse:

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Lesson Aim: To teach that Jesus is the foundation of the Church and every other part of the Church is built on him.

Teaching Aids: On the chalk board or large piece of paper, write: "What makes the church different from any other group of people or club?"

Background Study

Matthew addressed his Gospel to the Jews of his day and tried to show them that Jesus did fulfil the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

As we consider the Scripture lesson for today, we should note that prior to these verses (in Matthew 16:1-12) Jesus had had a disturbing meeting with the Pharisees and had also been misunderstood by his own disciples.

So, when Jesus asked the question, "Who is the Son of man?" it followed two accounts of wrong ideas about himself.

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Jesus often referred to himself as the Son of man. The name means Messiah as written in Daniel 7:13-14 where the Son of man is one that rules his kingdom forever. This vision of the Son of man is also recorded in Revelation 1:13. Another meaning of the name, Son of man, as Jesus referred to himself was to show that he was truly a man who suffered and died. Jesus made sure that his followers understood that he was truly man and gave his life for men.

When Jesus asked the question a second time, "Who do you say I am?" he wanted a direct answer.

The reply of Peter was the basis on which the Church of Christ is built: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." There is no other confession except that Jesus is the Christ. John 11:25-26 shows that you must believe in him alone.

Jesus reacted with pleasure, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona!" Blessed simply means happy. The credit for such a reply is given to the Father in heaven. We also know that no one comes to know Jesus except that God through the Holy Spirit calls him.

Jesus said, "...on this rock I will build my church..." (verse 18). The rock is the solid confession that Peter made concerning Jesus. Jesus added that the gates of hell can not overpower the church because it is built on the confession that Jesus is the Lord. He has defeated the kingdom of darkness by rising from the dead, and he gives to the church the power to overcome Satan's armies.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask the students: "How do young people feel about Jesus? Who do they say he is?"

Say: "There are many false ideas about Jesus in our world today. Some people feel that Jesus is just a legend in a very old book, the Bible. Others think that he was a good man, and they try to live by his commands. Others believe that he is one of many prophets and that he is no different from Mohammed, Moses or Buddha. But some people, called Christians, know that Jesus is the Son of God. Christians believe that Jesus participated in creation, (Read John 1:1.) and that he came to earth specifically to give his life as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. They believe that he established the Church to be his outreach to a dying world.

"Each of you must know who Jesus is. To say we believe in Jesus is not enough. James 2:19 says, 'Even the demons believe—and shudder.' True Christians must accept him personally as Saviour and become a committed part of his work on earth through the church."

Examination

Say: "Peter's confession, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' was more than a statement of belief. Let us look at it more closely. 'You are the Christ' means that Jesus is the fulfilment of all the promises to the Jews concerning the coming Messiah. 'Christ' is the Greek word which means 'Messiah.' Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies. The Jews were waiting for their Messiah. They knew he would reign over his kingdom forever (Isaiah 9:6), but they did not understand that his kingdom would be in heaven. They did not realize that he would fulfil the prophecies of shame and death in Isaiah 53:1-6.

"To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that he fulfilled God's promises and the prophecies concerning his death and resurrection. (See Psalms 16:10; 110:1.)

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“Secondly, to say that Jesus is the Son of the living God is to confess that he himself is God. Jesus was in the beginning. He came to earth for the purpose of redemption. He is risen again and is at the right hand of God. To understand how he could become a man is a great mystery and miracle of God, but because God loved us, Jesus came. (John 3:16)

“He is our living God, and he cares for us. He is establishing his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. That kingdom is the church.”

Application

“Do you know people who love and obey God? They are God’s church. Have you confessed Jesus as Saviour and Lord? If so, you too are part of God’s kingdom. What do you think God wants his church to do? What are some practices that please God? What displeases him? Read 1 John 1:9. What should we do when we do not please God? If we ask his forgiveness and desire to please him in our hearts, we are becoming God’s true Church.”

Prayer Suggestions

- 1. Pray that the Lord will give you wisdom to teach this lesson.**
- 2. Pray for any student who has not yet become a member of the Lord’s Church.**

CHAPTER THREE

COMMISSIONED TO WITNESS

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Mark 16:15-18

Verses in Today's Lesson: Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-8

Memory Verse:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that the work of the church is to tell others about Christ and what he has done.

Teaching Aids: A sheet of paper and pencil for each student.

Background Study

These three Scriptures record the last words of Christ just before he ascended to heaven. These are very important words to us.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Christ reveals the very work of a witness. The words, "Go, therefore," are more often translated, "As you go," or "While you are going." Making disciples is the most common thing for a Christian to do as he is going about his daily affairs. As the true Christian travels from place to place, he desires to tell others about Christ.

The goal of the witness is to make disciples. A disciple is one who believes the gospel message and continues to

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become more like Christ. A true disciple strives to make other disciples by witnessing to others. He brings others to Christ and bears fruit.

The result of a witness that makes a disciple will include baptism. Baptism should follow faith in Christ. Baptism cannot save anyone. Christ alone can save us. Baptism is the sign to others that we have put our trust in Christ.

The passage in Luke 24:44-49 takes the witness a step further. The message of the witness is included in these verses. Verse 44 refers to Christ as the fulfilment of the Scripture prophecies. He is Messiah. Christ explains to his disciples the prophecies in verse 46. He reminds them that he suffered, died and rose again according to these prophecies.

Further, Christ promised the power of the Holy Spirit to his disciples. The Holy Spirit brings power to the witness so that those who hear the message may believe. The actual name, witness, used in Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8 shows us that our work is to be a witness.

Acts 1:8 presents a stronger message than the other passages. Christ *commands* us to be witnesses. The witness goes everywhere with the important message that Jesus saves all who will believe.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Let us suppose that as you were on your way to church this morning you saw a bus accident. Perhaps the policeman would ask you to appear in court as a witness. What would you do as a witness?" (Allow several to answer.) A witness tells exactly what he has seen and knows.

"Christians are also called witnesses. What do you think that means?" (A witness for Christ is someone who tells what he knows about Christ.)

Say: "In Luke 24:44-48, Jesus told his disciples after his resurrection that he suffered, died, rose again and that they are his witnesses. He urged them to tell all that they had seen. So, the disciples became witnesses to all that Christ had done."

Ask: "What are we witnesses of in our own Christian lives?" Some answers may be: Jesus lives within us; Jesus helps me overcome trouble; Jesus forgives sin and gives peace; or Jesus brings joy to our lives.

Now ask your students to give specific accounts of how Jesus has helped them. These reports are called testimonies. The person who is giving the testimony is called a witness.

Say: "Let us suppose that you were called as a witness and asked to testify to what you saw at the bus accident. What if you began by saying, 'I don't remember anything.' Would you be a good witness or not? A good witness must know what has happened and describe it so that all those who hear will understand."

Examination

Say: "In Luke 24:44-46, Jesus reminded his disciples of all that they had seen and heard concerning him. Remembering all that Christ has done in our lives makes up our witness or testimony.

"A good witness to an accident must recall all that he has seen and knows. Likewise the Christian should try to remember how he met Christ and became a Christian. He should tell others in an understandable way.

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"In Acts 1:7-8 we are reminded that we must be concerned as witnesses. Jesus teaches us not to worry about heaven. The end of the ages will come one day, but now we must be busy as his witnesses.

"The work of the church is to witness to the power of God through Jesus Christ. The church members must tell the world of all that Christ has done.

Application

Ask: "Do you know anyone who is a good witness? Can you remember who told you about Jesus?"

Give each student a sheet of paper and a pencil. Ask them to write a few sentences about how they came to know Jesus. After they have had time to finish ask several to read their answers.

Now ask them, "Has Christ done anything for you since you became a Christian?" Let them list some things. Tell them to be specific and clear in their answers. Ask several to read what they wrote.

Now ask: "Has Christ done anything in your life this week?" Tell them to list their answers and read what they have written.

A good witness should be able to tell how they met Christ and how he works with them in their lives daily. A testimony must show what Christ has done recently as well as how they became Christians.

Prayer Suggestions

1. Pray that your students will be better witnesses.
2. Pray that those who are not Christians will accept Jesus as their Saviour.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHEN THE CHURCH WAS YOUNG

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Acts 5:1-6:5

Verses in Today's Lesson: Acts 4:32-37

Memory Verse

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

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that the church not only preaches the gospel of Christ, it also meets the needs of her members.

Teaching Aids: Pieces of paper and a pencil for each student.

Background Study

The church began after the resurrection of Christ. Those persons who had faith in Christ and became his church joined together for teaching and preaching. Generally an apostle led the meetings when he was present. They used no song book other than the Psalms from the Bible. The apostles often preached the gospel in the market place, and many people believed their message under the power of the Holy Spirit.

The high priest and his leaders disliked the apostles greatly because so many people were believing in Jesus. The preaching of the apostles attacked these religious as the murderers of Jesus. These religious leaders, who were called the Pharisees and Sadducees, used their political influence

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to persecute and mistreat and abuse the Christians because they feared their teaching and popularity.

The disciples continued to preach and heal in the name of Jesus. As a result, the abuse of Christians increased. Many Christians lost their jobs and their businesses were ruined. Many Christians were poor in the first place. The Holy Spirit led them to practice the love of Christ and share what they had with others in need. To have all things in common is the goal of some governments in the world today, but apart from the great love of Christ changing hearts to want to share, these governments have failed.

Acts 4:34 states, "There was not a needy person among them...." God's blessing on his people meets the needs of everyone. God supplied enough for all of the church. No one was needy. Even those who gave what they had found that their needs were met as well.

Verses 34-37 declare to us the true meaning of denying one's self and taking up the cross. These early Christians trusted God to supply their needs and gave all they had to follow the Lord.

Not everyone could sell his house or land because the Christians would have no place to meet if they did that. Nothing is mentioned about quitting jobs or giving up work in these verses. One must continue to provide for his own family and at the same time provide for others in need. Christ gave totally of himself to others, but he also enjoyed those restful times at the home of Lazarus.

Following this passage of Scripture is the first record of hypocrites. Ananias and Sapphira pretended to give all they had to God. They wanted to appear good before others, but they had not allowed the Lord to change their hearts. God despises a wicked heart that pretends to be godly. Ananias

and Sapphira died for their deeds. The same is true for anyone who pretends to be good. They die spiritually. The true spirit of giving and caring for one's neighbours comes from the Holy Spirit.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "What are some needs that you have?" (They might include food, clothes, school fees, house and others.) "Who meets those needs?" (parents, relatives)

Say: "Families care for each other. Parents care for their children, and later when the parents get old, the children care for their parents. The church is also a family. The church is the family of God.

"Why do you think some needs among your church members go unmet?" (Others don't know about them, some people are selfish, some don't care about them.) "Christ commanded us to love one another so that the world could know we are his disciples.

"How does the village view a church that stands by while some people are hungry and cold because they lack clothes or charcoal? Are we showing Christ's love to the world?

"How could your church help the needy in your community?" (money, food, used clothes)

"Giving in an unselfish way so that others can be fed and clothed is the greatest testimony to our love and faith in Christ. We should cut back on extra things we like (like sweets, gum and sodas) so that we have more to give to those in need. Maybe our class could start collecting some money to help someone with school fees or school uniforms."

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Examination

"The church not only preaches about Christ, it also gives to others as Christ has shown us. He loves everybody, including the poor, sick and burdened.

"Christ had little patience with the wealthy who cheated the poor and kept all the profits for themselves. He said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. (Matthew 19:16-24)

"Some wealthy people are unwilling to share with others, and they don't give God the glory for what they have. They are proud of their wealth even if they might have cheated poor people to get it.

"Let us consider Lazarus, Mary and Martha. They had some wealth. They owned a home which they opened to Jesus and his disciples. They gave to the work of the church. They prepared food and showed hospitality to all who came with Jesus. They had many friends who shared their grief when Lazarus died. They feared and worshipped God.

"Someone has said that a man is happy who owns his wealth, but sorrowful when his wealth owns him. Many people are burdened by their wealth. They must work hard to protect it from thieves. Others are happy because they have learnt to share and that all good things come from the Lord."

Application

Say: "Each of you write a list of things you have. Include money, clothes, school supplies, good health, strong body and other things. Now look at your list carefully. Which of those things are really necessary? How could you share your possessions with other people?"

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Be sure to mention the pocket money. Remind them that one tenth of all their money belongs to God. Call attention to opportunities to use strong bodies and energy (and time) to help their parents and older people.

Prayer Suggestions

1. Pray that your students will learn that they have some things which they can share.
2. Pray that your church might be more caring for those in need.

CHAPTER FIVE

LED BY THE SPIRIT

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Galatians 5:22; Romans 8:16

Verses in Today's Lesson: Acts 13:1-4; 16:6-10; Romans 8:9-10, 14

Memory Verse:

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students about the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

Teaching Aids: Write the topic on the chalk board or large piece of paper.

Background Study

In the first lesson in this book we learnt that Christ is the Head of the Church. He is the one who moves the Church through his Holy Spirit. God has always used men led by his Spirit to make his will known to his followers. That method has not changed through the ages. God still speaks to men and churches through the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 13:1-4, the Holy Spirit led the church leaders to set apart Paul and Barnabas for a special calling. Paul and Barnabas knew that the Holy Spirit was leading them to leave Antioch and become missionaries. The Holy Spirit led the early church to its first ministry outside the church's own area, the ministry of missions.

Verses 2 and 3 stress another important fact about the Holy Spirit. He spoke to the church members while they

were involved in worship. Notice that the prophets and teachers fasted, prayed and ministered to the Lord before the Holy Spirit spoke to them. They were praising the Lord, and the Holy Spirit spoke to them.

Verse 3 shows another way the Holy Spirit led these men. The Holy Spirit led them to lay hands on Paul and Barnabas. The laying on of hands means that they were agreeing with the call of Paul and Barnabas into missions and that they would support them in their ministry. In many places people extend their right hands to those they call friends, the very ones they would share food with. In the same way, the laying on of hands has a deeper spiritual meaning similar to the social meaning of a handshake. It showed to Paul and Barnabas Christian love and support through prayers and money.

Paul and Barnabas depended on the Holy Spirit to lead them in their mission. See verse 4. Those who are full of the Holy Spirit continue to be led by the Holy Spirit in their daily living and in important decisions.

The Holy Spirit closed doors for Paul and Barnabas as well. God has a plan greater than our own understanding. In Acts 16:6-7 the Holy Spirit turned them away from preaching in Asia. He sent them to Macedonia. The Holy Spirit does not stop with calling people to serve. He also chooses the places where they must serve.

The Holy Spirit in a believer's life is a sign to others in the church that one is a Christian. Romans 8:9-11 clearly states that one who belongs to Christ has the Spirit of Christ in his life. The true Christian will continue to be led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, however, can not stay where there is sin. Therefore the Christian who sins as we

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all do must confess daily his sins and be cleansed so that the Holy Spirit can lead.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Who runs the Church?" (Christ) "In our first lesson we learnt that Christ is the Head of the Church. Christ leads the Church through his Holy Spirit."

Ask: "Have you ever felt that the Lord was speaking to you about something? The Lord speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never lead us to do something different from the Bible or the character of God.

"If you have never felt that God was speaking to you, perhaps you have never asked the Lord to lead you. He only leads those who desire his leading. Another hindrance is an unconfessed sin. All Christians fail the Lord and commit sins, but the one who fails to confess and repent causes a blockage to the work of the Holy Spirit in his life.

"Let us look at ways the Holy Spirit led Christians in the early Church."

Have a student read the Scripture passage. As you read together tell the students the points you learnt in the Background Study and Examination.

Examination

The Holy Spirit led the early Christians in ministry. The same Spirit works today. The Holy Spirit who called Paul and Barnabas to the work of missionaries calls out people from your church. He calls out pastors, Sunday School teachers, deacons and others to serve in the church. Those who serve in these positions must be called by the Spirit and led by the Spirit.

Sometimes, however, some who were called by the Lord do not answer. Some who answer the call fail to continue in the Spirit and allow sin to block their power in the Spirit. These Christians bear no fruit. They don't experience true peace, joy, patience and other spiritual fruit listed in Galatians 5:22.

The Spirit guides the Christian in which areas he should avoid. There is much good work to be done in the church, but one person is not called to do it all. There are many gifts of the Spirit and many ministries. Each member of the church must find his place of service and say no to the others. (Acts 16:6-10)

Application

Say: "The Holy Spirit leads every believer who allows him control of his life. Think of a time when you felt God leading you in some special way." Allow time for responses. "When was the last time you felt his leadership in your life? (Do not require answers.) If it was a very long time ago, has some sin entered and blocked the Spirit's leadership?"

Have the students to pray silently asking the Holy Spirit to lead them. Ask them to confess to the Lord any known sins and ask forgiveness for them.

Remind them that they should do this daily and keep a record on paper of what the Holy Spirit leads them to do. The Holy Spirit often speaks to us through the Scripture. Perhaps he will lead them to study the Scripture and spend more time in prayer. Tell the students you will ask for reports next week.

Prayer Suggestions

1. Ask the Lord to lead you by his Spirit as you prepare and teach this lesson.
2. Ask him to work in the lives of your students this week.

CHAPTER SIX

ONE THOUGH MANY

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13, Philippians 3:4-8

Verses in Today's Lesson: Romans 12:3-18

Memory Verse:

"For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Romans 12:4-5).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that each member of the church has a role and no one is more important than another.

Teaching Aids: Chalk board or large sheet of paper. Write the topic on it.

Background Study

Paul wrote the letter to the Romans to help the church in her understanding of the Christian life. Paul had never visited the Roman church. Like most churches, the church at Rome struggled with class differences, race differences and educational differences. The Jews had a long history of dislike and distrust of Gentiles. The early church taught that both belonged to Christ and were equal in his sight.

In other epistles (letters) Paul dealt with the question of a haughty attitude. First Corinthians 13 is the exact opposite of such an attitude. In Philippians 3:4-8, Paul reminded the Philippians of all of his personal attainments and said they were but rubbish before the Lord. There are no personal

accomplishments of any worth outside of God's plan and his glory.

The Jews often criticized the Gentiles because they did not practice circumcision. The Gentiles often accused the Jews of refusing fair treatment to them. The differences between Jews and Gentiles were racial, cultural and religious. The Jews came from a background of strict religious laws and fear of God. The Gentiles came from a background of paganism and many gods. These two very different groups of people became one body in Christ, but the problems still existed in the sight of the Jews who included and excluded people on the basis of their old religious laws. Likewise, the Gentiles faced problems of meat sacrificed to idols and whether they should eat it or not. They also felt inferior to the Jews.

Paul said that every man should be careful how he thinks about himself. He urged sound judgement as God shows us who we are in Christ. No one church member is greater than another. Pastor, teacher, choir boy, small child and old person are all equal in God's sight. God loves each one.

God loved the church so much that he gave gifts to his followers. These gifts are very different and each has a different responsibility. Each one is equally honourable in the Lord's sight. The key to harmony in the church is understanding this idea. Each person is important, and each task is important. Each member must use his gift to the best of his ability. No one has the right or the ability to judge someone else or their importance or worth before God.

In verse 10, Paul stressed the correct relationship between all church members: "Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honour." No adult is more important than any youth; likewise no youth is

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more important than another. No race, no tribe is greater than another.

Verse 13 goes even farther in explaining the Lord's commands. He says Christians must meet each others needs and practice hospitality. The importance is in serving others, not judging.

Paul's strongest words come in verses 17 and 18. The Christian does not repay evil, but he is at peace with all men. This is far beyond our natural ability. Christ must be in control for the Christian to have this attitude.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Can you think of someone in your school or home area that everyone abuses or cheats? Is this person the type of person that people think is lowly and below them? Why do you think people like to feel more important than others?"

"People everywhere enjoy being greater than someone else. This proud attitude comes from the world and not from God.

"Paul said that Christians should give preference to one another in honour and not think of themselves more highly than they should. The Bible teaches this different attitude--the attitude of love.

Examination

People today are the same as the people in Paul's day. They want to be important. They want to be better than someone else. People use many excuses to reach their goal. Paul said that in Christ there is no difference between the Jews and the Greeks. Some say that men are more

intelligent than women. Paul said that in Christ there is no male or female. A superior attitude comes from Satan. The attitude that God has made us equal requires love, peace and unity.

The church today faces the same problems. Some feel that because they have money or educational degrees they are good leaders. God said that he would lift up the humble and resist the proud. God desires leaders who trust in him and not in themselves.

Application

Ask: "Have you ever known someone who pretended to be better than you? How did they make you feel? What was the reason for their pride? (money, beauty, cleverness) Are these good qualities on which to judge people?"

"Perhaps you have pretended to be better than someone else. Maybe you pushed ahead of someone in a queue. This expresses a feeling that you are more important than the others who are waiting.

"This week be careful to treat people equally. Greet all of your classmates, not just your friends. Treat everyone you meet as your equal."

Prayer Suggestions

1. Ask God to show you any way that you are failing to treat others as equal and to forgive you for that sin.
2. Pray for ways to show your students the importance of their attitudes. At some time during this lesson be sure to give opportunities for students to give testimonies about how the Holy Spirit has led them this week. You told them last week that you would ask for these reports.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHOSEN THROUGH CHRIST

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Verses in Today's Lesson: Ephesians 1:1-4

Memory Verse

"He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will" (Ephesians 1:5).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students what it means to be in Christ.

Teaching Aids: Chalk board or large piece of paper.

Background Study

In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul addressed the theme of God's purpose in establishing and completing his church. Paul used a variety of words to teach about salvation in Christ. Some of his words are: in him, through Christ, in the beloved, and in Christ.

The use and meaning of these words help us to understand the meaning of "destined" in verse 5. Some groups of Christians believe that this means that God calls only those who will respond to his love. Others believe that they are free to do anything they choose because God destined or decided beforehand.

Because Paul used the words, in him or in Christ, we are able to understand the true meaning of the word, destined. First of all, destined means planned in advance. In this

case, God has planned something on our behalf. What has God planned? God planned that we would be his adopted children through Christ. When we accept Christ as Saviour, we are adopted into God's family.

God also planned for us to be blameless and holy. How can sinners be blameless and holy? Only in Christ can this happen. In him we become holy and blameless, not in our own righteousness, but through the righteousness of Christ.

God planned all of these things to take place in our lives only "in Christ." The verse does not say that God chose who will be and will not be in Christ. Instead he has planned that those who accept his Son will be adopted as sons and will also be blameless and holy.

When accept Christ we become "in Christ." Because of this we are blessed with every spiritual blessing, like love, joy, peace and many others. We become holy and blameless as his adopted sons. We receive his grace, redemption and forgiveness of sins. God has made known to us the mystery of his will and has given us an inheritance, eternal life.

Lastly, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. A seal is proof that something is official. Valid government laws and decrees have the government seal. Since the Holy Spirit is God's seal, we who have the Holy Spirit are confident that we will receive eternal life when Christ returns.

We are saved in Christ for a special purpose, to the praise of his glory. These words declare our new goal: to live our lives so that others see how great God is. One definition of glory is to give the correct opinion or estimate of. So our lives should give the correct idea about God. If we live a life of evil then people assume that there is no God or that God is evil. If we live a clean, good life, people will know that God is good.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "What do you think the words, in Christ mean?" Allow time for answers. Share what you have learnt from the background study.

Say: "In Christ means the new life we have in him." Ask some student to write on the chalk board or large paper what things are in Christ. The others should help. Some answers could be: blessed with blessings, adoption as God's sons. All of these things become our possessions when we accept Christ.

Ask: "What does 'to the praise of his glory' mean?" This is the new goal after Christ comes into a person's life.

Ask the students to define glory. Tell them what you have learnt in this lesson about glory.

Examination

Discuss thoroughly the ideas surrounding the phrase, in Christ. Have you ever seen anyone wearing a work coat or an overall? His personal clothes are covered by the overall.

Something similar happens when we accept Christ. We become "in Christ." When God looks at us he sees only Christ. He does not see us and our sins. He sees the perfectness of Christ covering us.

The Christian must deny himself and remain "in Christ" content that no one ever sees him. They see Christ as he really is, holy and blameless, above reproach. Satan tries to convince Christians that they really are nice and do not need to look like Christ. He tempts people to be happy with their sins and to make excuses for their mistakes. Christians must be aware of the lies of Satan.

Application

Ask: "Have you ever felt that God was far away and didn't care about you? Today's lesson says that God loves us so much that he even wants to adopt us as his sons.

"Have you ever felt that you were not sure if you would go to heaven? These verses tell us that we have the same inheritance as Christ who was raised from the dead to eternal life. The Holy Spirit is proof of the fact as a seal.

"Have you ever done anything that brought praise to God? Have you ever done anything that brought shame to the Lord? There is forgiveness for all who will repent of their sins."

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for the privilege of adoption and a prayer of repentance for the times that you failed to bring glory to God.

Prayer Suggestions

1. Pray that God will help you to do those things that will bring glory to him.
2. Pray that you will have faith in Christ and know that your inheritance is eternal life.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Ephesians 1:1-23

Verses in Today's Lesson: Ephesians 1:15-23

Memory Verse

"He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent" (Colossians 1:18).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that Christians are part of the body of Christ of which he is the head.

Teaching Aids: Write the topic on the chalk board or large piece of paper.

Background Study

In chapter seven we learnt that the word, destined, means that God chose for all believers to be like Christ. For all believers to be like Christ is part of the theme of this letter to the Ephesians.

Paul began this section by stating that he knew about their faith and especially their love for fellow believers. He continued by praying for their maturity in Christ. The maturity and growth Paul encouraged depends on God as the giver of wisdom. God is the one who reveals himself to his believers.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would come to know why they were saved. He desired that they would know the purpose for which God had called them - to bring glory to God. Further, the Ephesians needed to understand the glory

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of their inheritance, eternal life. Christ was the first one to be raised to eternal life after death, but now all who believe on his name also receive that life.

Finally, Paul reminded the Ephesians of the power of the Lord. The power of God raised Christ from the dead. That same power is available for changing lives today. Our God is a mighty God.

Then Paul changed his emphasis from the privilege of the believer in Christ to the privilege that Christ has through his sacrifice and resurrection. Because of his perfect sacrifice, God raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand. A person seated at the right hand of a king is a person who is honoured and whose influence is great. Jesus is with God.

Jesus is above all authority, power, dominion, above every name that is named. He has the highest nature and character of anyone. He is perfect. He rules over every kingdom on earth and is greater than any power of darkness.

Paul also emphasized that Christ is the Head of the Church. The Church is symbolized by a body in which Christ is the Head. Clearly, a body without a head has no life. The same is true of a church that is not founded on or led by Christ.

Paul further described this relationship of the Head and body by saying that the Church is the fullness of Christ. He fills us with himself. Christ's presence in the world is through his Church. The Church plays a key role in the kingdom of God. Every believer needs to be a part of the work of the church.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

“What does it mean to be called by a school? The headmaster has reviewed your scores and wants you to become a student in his school.

“In some ways, when Christ calls us, the idea is the same. Christ calls us who believe and who put our trust in him. He is the head teacher and desires that we become students in his school. A person who believes that Christ gives eternal life and abundant life joins himself to Christ in order to learn the Christian way. The word, disciple, means learner.

“Why do students join a school?” Most desire to finish the work there, pass their exams and go on to higher school. In the higher school the student specializes in a few areas, and the subject matter becomes more difficult.

“Believers join Christ because one day they believe that they will inherit eternal life. Disciples work hard to learn from Christ. They are tested in their faith. The student who has learnt his lessons well will face a test or temptation with success. But the student who has not learnt his lesson well will surely fail the test.”

“Why do some students want to join prestigious schools?” They believe that the good reputation of the school will make them more acceptable to positions of authority and influence.

“The disciples of Christ have the greatest authority of all. The Holy Spirit dwells in each believer and gives power to strengthen him. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit influences others to believe our testimony about Christ.”

Examination

"We have talked about what it means to be called by Christ, to receive an inheritance and to know his power. Now let us look at Christ as the Head of the Church."

"Christ is able to bring all of this to pass because of his death on the cross. Death, to mankind, seems like the end or failure. Because Christ obeyed his Father even unto death, God raised him to new life. The Father called the Son out of the grave to become the Ruler of the world.

"God, the Father, placed him on his own right hand as a symbol of power and influence. He gave Jesus the name above all names and placed all things under his feet. In every kingdom there are those who disobey the king, and God, the King, will judge those people some day. But today the King is carrying out his plan through obedience of his church and by bringing men to repentance."

Application

1. "This week as you study your Bible consider it as a textbook and Christ as your teacher. Ask the Lord to teach you something. Write down what you learn. Be aware of instances when you are tested on that matter.

2. "Realize that eternal life is a greater reward than good exam results. Thank God for his great gift. Praise Christ for his sacrifice.

3. "Make sure that you are involved in God's work through his church. If you have not been as committed as you should be to your church ask the Lord to forgive you. Start by giving one-tenth of all you have, time and money."

RECREATED FOR A PURPOSE

Prayer Suggestions

1. Ask the Lord to help you be a good student of his, and a good teacher.
2. Pray for your students' commitment to the work of the church.
3. Pray that the Lord will give you power through his Holy Spirit to be a bold witness for him and to give him the glory.

CHAPTER NINE

RECREATED FOR A PURPOSE

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Romans 3:9-18

Verses in Today's Lesson: Ephesians 2:1-10

Memory Verse

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God--not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that heaven is a free gift and cannot be earned. Good works are a result of the gift of God to show gratitude to him.

Teaching Aids: Chalk board or large sheet of paper and pencils.

Background Study

The theme of this passage can be summed up in one word, GRACE. Paul's emphasis on the grace of God includes word pictures of sinners before grace and believers after receiving grace.

Let us look at the person outside of grace in Ephesians 2:1-3. Paul described this person as dead. A dead person has no life. The person without grace lives by the standards of the world and under the influence of Satan who is called the prince of the air. He is also a son of disobedience and one who lives only to satisfy his own desires so he is greedy and selfish. He does whatever he feels like doing without

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any restraint or concern for others. Further, he is a child of wrath. He always repays those who wrong him with evil and hatred. This man becomes angry with the smallest problem.

At one time, before we became believers in God's grace through Jesus Christ, we too were like this man, even though we may not have acted in all these ways. This man (like we were) is lost without God.

Paul does not stop here. He gave us hope in verse 4. He began with *But*. The word, but, tells us that we have a change coming next. Even though we were dead in our sins, God has done something to help us.

God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love and even though we were dead in our trespasses and sin, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

Grace is a wonderful gift that we do not deserve. Grace is receiving a favour for which we are not worthy. It is a one-sided act. The giver alone is responsible. The receiver neither deserves nor asks for it.

God has done what no man could do. God has given us *new life* through Christ. God did it and God alone! No person will ever be perfect enough to please God, so God gave his perfect Son in our place. That is the marvelous mystery of God's love.

God's grace is wonderful to us who believe, but Paul also described the results of that grace. In verses 6 and 7, we find that we have been raised up with Christ and are seated in the heavenlies. We are in the kingdom of God right now. We no longer view things in an earthly way, but now because we are seated in the heavenlies we see things as God sees them. Further, we are acceptable in God's sight right now. We can enter heaven's gates and have a meeting with God right now through prayer. Since we are now in

God's kingdom we have a new King. Jesus reigns as our King. He stands as the object of our devotion, worship and obedience. We put away our old desires to serve ourselves, and now we serve Christ. The process through which we are changing takes a lifetime and is known as denying one's self.

Why has God done all of this? Verse 7 tells us that God wants to demonstrate his grace in kindness toward us.

None of us deserve all that God has given us, but it is his grace that has saved us.

Verses 8 and 9 are key verses. They remind us that salvation comes from God as a gift and that our own goodness cannot earn it. God does not want us to boast in our own goodness, but we should boast to everyone about the wonderful grace of God in Jesus Christ. Our witness to others should be boasting of the great love of God.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask the students to read the passage. Divide them into two groups. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pencil. Ask one group to read verses 1-3 again and describe the person in those verses.

Ask the other group to read again verses 5 and 6 and write down on their paper a description of the person in these verses.

Ask each group to read their lists to the group. Ask if the students see a difference in the persons described. Ask them to read verse 4 aloud together.

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Ask them how such a great difference has come about. Who is responsible for this difference?

Ask the students to decide which person they would like to be like.

Have them read verses 8 and 9 to find out how they can be like the person described in verses 5 and 6.

Examination

As the students look at verses 1-3, they should keep in mind that these verses describe all of us before we accepted Christ. This is how we looked before God without faith in Christ.

As the students understand that we all are sinners, they should be more patient with friends and classmates who have not found Christ yet. In other words, there is not room for self-righteousness. Another point to remind them is that only through God's gift of grace is anyone saved. No one can earn their way to heaven. Good works should be to show God our thanks for his grace to us.

Application

As we pass through this life we will meet many people who do not know our Lord, and they will live like verses 1-3. We Christians must be careful that we do not feel as though we are better than they. We must realize that at one time we were the same way in God's eyes.

As we grow in Christ we will do good works. These works are to show our gratitude to God for salvation. They are not to earn it. This week thank God for his gift of grace. Try to tell someone about God's free gift of grace.

Prayer Suggestions

1. Pray that you will be able to teach your students what grace is.
2. Pray that they will understand that man can not earn salvation by doing good works.
3. Pray for anyone in your class who has not accepted the gift of salvation from God.

CHAPTER TEN

THE FAMILY OF GOD

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Isaiah 57:19; Genesis 12:2-3

Verses in Today's Lesson: Ephesians 2:11-22

Memory Verse

"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that all believers of all nations are children of God in Christ Jesus.

Teaching Aids: Chalk board or paper and pencils.

Background Study

The letter to the Ephesians is written to the church at Ephesus. It was meant to be read to other churches as well. Paul's great missionary work was among the Gentiles. The Gentiles, before the coming of Christ, were excluded from Judaism. The Jew considered all people outside of Judaism as unclean and unworthy of God's promises. The Jews refused to be a channel of God's love to others. They enjoyed being God's chosen people. The promise of Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 touches other people and not just Abraham. The covenant says that God will bless his children, and they shall be a blessing. Also, through them all families of the earth shall be blessed. This means that the Jews were to share their blessings with others. The Jews kept all of God's blessings for themselves.

Paul knew that God had called him to be a missionary to the Gentiles. Today's lesson focuses on the meaning of Christ's coming for the Gentiles.

Paul reminded the Gentiles of their position before Christ. Write down the phrases or words that he used. He said they were the so-called "uncircumcision" by the so-called "circumcision." A great problem existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews held to former traditions of circumcision even after accepting God's new agreement in Jesus Christ. Paul stressed that this circumcision is in the flesh by human hands, thus rejecting its purpose in Christianity.

Further, he claimed that formerly the Gentiles were separate from Christ and excluded from the nation of Israel. The Gentiles had no hope and were without God.

Like chapter nine, the change comes in the word, *but*. Just when the Gentiles faced life hopelessly and without God, God does something wonderful. God, through Christ, brought the Gentiles into the family of God.

Christ broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile and brought both groups into one family. The barriers that existed and still exist between Jew and Gentile include racial prejudice much like tribal differences, different customs, different languages and different ways of worship.

Paul described the problem well using the word, hostility. This means that the Jews and Gentiles did not like each other. They even hated each other and would not talk to each other.

But Christ brought these two groups together and established peace. The desire of God is that both groups become one body in love.

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Verse 17 is also recorded in the Old Testament in Isaiah 57:19. Isaiah prophesied that God not only loves the Jews. He loves all people. Hosea also preached a message that God would call those people who were not his people, his people. So, Hosea gave another prophecy that God's new covenant would reach beyond the Jews and include the Gentiles.

Paul used his strongest language in verse 19 concerning including the Gentiles. Read that verse again.

Further, Paul explained the purpose for God's including the Gentiles in verses 20-22. God wants us to become his church and a dwelling place for his Spirit. Paul used the word picture of a building. He said the foundation is the apostles and prophets, and Christ is the cornerstone.

The cornerstone of a building is the most perfect stone. All other stones are chipped to be fitted to the cornerstone. The same is true of us. We are shaped in Christ's image and then join him in his church.

The church must be alive with the Holy Spirit and following Christ as the Head.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "What were the differences between Jews and Gentiles?" Tell them that Paul was a Jew and became a missionary to the Gentiles.

Give them a sheet of paper or have them list on the chalk board all the ways Paul described the Gentiles before the coming of Christ.

Discuss the list and tell them what each thing on the list means. Say: "Write the word, BUT, (largely) and let us find

what God did to change the condition of the Gentiles." Next, have the students list what happened to the Gentiles as a result of Christ's sacrifice.

Examination

Remind the students that this is true only for those who believe in Christ. Tell them about the verses in Isaiah and Hosea that told that God would include the Gentiles in his plan one day. Tell them about the promise to Abraham and how the Jews did not fulfil it by blessing others.

God has a plan to love all people, but sometimes we act like the Jews and do not include others. Perhaps your students can think of examples of this. There were some people at a school who were sure that they were born-again Christians. But they accused others of not being Christians because they did not attend their meetings. These students, like the Jews, refused to include people who were different than themselves. Sometimes tribal differences could cause problems in churches. Even different church denominations quarrel over which one is the true church. This does not please God. He wants peace among his children and in his family. Christians must not be exclusive or proud of their position. God loves us all through his grace and desires us to love others. Human nature cannot love in this way, but God's Spirit through his church can.

Application

Ask the students to try to think of times when they have refused to love someone who was different. Was the person from a different area, religion, church, tribe or school? Tell them to ask God's forgiveness.

Say: "Think of ways you could show peace and unity of the family of God in your home area." Perhaps they could

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have a youth meeting and invite youths from other churches to come.

Ask the students to pray and request God's help in loving others who are different.

Prayer Suggestions

- 1. Pray that God will help you love others as he loves you.**
- 2. Pray for any other church member with whom you may have had a disagreement. Ask God's forgiveness.**
- 3. Pray that you will accept each student as God's gift to you.**

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE CHURCH IN THE ETERNAL PLAN

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Colossians 1:24-29

Verses in Today's Lesson: Ephesians 3:1-13

Memory Verse

"That through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that Jesus fulfilled God's purpose of bringing man to God and now we can pray directly to God.

Teaching Aids: Write the topic on the chalk board or large piece of paper.

Background Study

Paul opened this section by reminding the Gentiles that he was indeed a missionary to Gentiles. He said God is the one who gave him this task.

Paul spoke of a mystery that God had revealed to him. The idea of a mystery is throughout Paul's letters. He felt that Jesus is a great mystery because God has done the unexpected and the impossible. God has become man in Christ and more than that, God has died for the sins of man. What a mighty love God has demonstrated toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Paul was a Jew of great religious learning. He knew the prophecies concerning the Messiah. He never dreamed that the fulfillment of these prophecies would come about as

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they did in Jesus Christ. What a great mystery this was to Paul! No Jew had expected this kind of fulfillment. God kept it a secret. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit did Paul understand this great mystery.

Another great mystery to Paul was that God could love Gentiles as much as he loved the Jews. The Jews could not believe that in God's sight, they were no longer special or chosen. The Gentiles were equal with them in God's sight. Jesus had died to save the Gentiles as well as Jews. The mystery of God's plan stayed hidden because most Jews could not believe that the Messiah would die, and certainly not that he would die to include Gentiles in his kingdom.

In verse 6, Paul explained this mystery. Gentiles are fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. Paul claimed that Gentile Christians were equal to Jewish Christians. This bold preaching of equality between Jews and Gentiles angered Jews in every way. Jews hated Gentiles. They would not eat with them or talk to them, but Paul claimed that they were equal. Many of Paul's beatings came because he preached that Jesus made Gentiles equal. Man has difficulty loving and accepting those who has hated for so long, but God shares his love with all who believe. People of every skin colour and every language and every tribe will be in the kingdom of God if they believe in Jesus Christ.

Paul felt that his mission was to preach this mystery to everyone, even to the rulers and authorities. Because Paul preached boldly his message to all, he found himself stoned, beaten and in prison many times.

Another problem that the Jews had with Paul was that he taught that through Christ, one could pray directly to God. (Read verse 12.) The Jews believed that God could

only be prayed to through a priest. This made the Jewish priests angry because it threatened their jobs.

Paul said that in Christ we have boldness and confident access to God. Traditions are hard to change, and the Jews did not want to change their tradition about priests. When the Jews followed their traditions instead of God's plan in Christ, God worked through the Gentiles to spread the gospel. There are many Gentiles spoken of in the New Testament. Timothy was half Jew and half Gentile.

Those who hold to traditions show their pride and do not submit to God. Because Paul understood his place with God, he did not fear problems or persecution. He was able to stand the pressures put on him by the Jews and to praise God. Paul knew that Christ had overcome death and that through the Holy Spirit, he too had power in death. On the other hand, the Jews feared the teachings of Paul. Their empty traditions could not withstand the power of Paul's words. They reacted as humans without God. They wanted to kill Paul. Through this comparison it is easy to see that the truth of God's power in the Christian is greater than any tradition.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Tell the students to read the passage and count the number of times the word, mystery or secret plan, is used. Have them try to define the word, mystery. A mystery is something which is not known or understood. Say: "What is racial prejudice?" It is disliking someone because he is different. Perhaps it is his skin colour, customs or tribe that makes him different. Ask: Have you ever seen any racial prejudice?"

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Examination

Christ broke down the barriers of prejudice, and Christians are to love and accept fellow Christians as equals. To God there is no difference between skin colour, tribe, customs, education, male or female. Anyone who does not practice this equality in the family of God is sinning against God. Jesus knew the temptation of people to feel better than others, especially the rich. He said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

There exists a problem between male and female. Many men feel that they are better than women. The Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches that each has a job to do, and each job is important. God's idea of equality not only exists between men, but it also includes women. In the church men and women must work side by side.

Application

Say: "Tell me again the meaning of mystery. The good news is also a mystery today. People who do not know Jesus cannot understand God's plan for the salvation of man. Christians are to be like Paul and explain this wonderful mystery to others." Ask the students to think of friends who do not know Jesus and to ask God to help them share the mystery of his love with them.

"Christians cannot be like the Jews and keep the good news of Christ for themselves."

Prayer Suggestions

1. Pray that God will help you share the mystery of Jesus with your students.
2. Pray that the students will understand that prejudice is sin against God.

CHAPTER TWELVE

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Philippians 1:8-14; John 16:23-24

Verses in Today's Lesson: Ephesians 3:14-21

Memory Verse

"That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that through prayer they can overcome problems with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Teaching Aids: Pieces of paper and pencils for each student.

Background Study

Paul begins this Scripture with the same words as in chapter eleven: For this reason. We recall what that reason was when we look again at Ephesians 2.

Chapter two, you will remember, is divided into two parts. Part one includes verses 1-10 and is a general message about lost man, God's gift of grace and the results of that grace. Part two includes verses 11-22 and points directly to Gentiles as they were before Christ, what God did in Christ and the results of knowing Christ. The central message is that although man was lost, God has done something to change that through Christ, and the results include new and eternal life.

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When Paul said, "For this reason..." he referred to the work God did for man, salvation. Paul said that because God acted to save man, he would ask God to give the Gentiles power through his Spirit to be strong. Paul knew that through Christ he could pray directly to the Father in boldness and ask on behalf of others. Paul was careful to ask only for things that were in God's will. God wants each of his children to have his Spirit.

Paul prayed that Christ would make his home in the hearts of the Gentiles through their faith. This too is God's will. All of our prayers should be in agreement with the will of God.

In verse 17, Paul referred to roots. Roots have several functions in plants. Roots feed the plant so it can grow. Likewise, our Christian growth must come out of love for God and for our fellow Christians. Secondly, roots hold a plant to the earth and prevent wind from blowing it away. In many ways the roots are the strength of the plant. We, too, must be grounded in love so that we can withstand trials and problems without falling away from Christ.

Paul suggests in verse 18 that it is difficult to understand God's love. He says we need God's power to understand how great is Christ's love. He wants us to know Christ's love, but he warns that it can never be fully known. Paul says it is impossible to understand God's love without the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit comes when we accept Christ. So those who do not believe in Christ can never understand the love of God.

Paul tells us that if we could understand and know the love of Christ, we would be completely filled with the very nature of God. Paul suggested that all of God's nature comes out of his love for us. God does not tolerate sin because he loves us, and sin destroys us. Most parents will

not allow their children to continue doing harmful things such as hitting other children. Rather, because the parent loves the child, he disciplines the child for his own good. All of God's actions to us come out of his love. Paul suggests that if we could know and understand that love, we would be more Christlike, because we would trust God's will totally as Jesus did.

Paul closed on the key to our salvation and growth in verse 20. To him Christ, but his working in us, gives us the key to our Christian life. Christ lives in us and works in us through his Spirit to change our inner selves. Man has tried over and over again to change his behaviour, but he always failed. Prisons can seldom change prisoners unless they come to know Jesus.

Sometimes people will try desperately to act like Christians without accepting Jesus. Christ must be living inside a person for him to change and become Christlike. A person decides each day to let God have control as he prays, reads the Bible and obeys God.

Lastly, Paul reminded us of God's power to do more than we can ask or think. God is at work in our lives changing us for his glory.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil. Tell them to write the definition of prayer. Tell them to read the Scripture passage and list the prayers of Paul. Ask the students if Paul's prayer was in God's will. Ask: "Does God desire the things which Paul prayed for? (Yes) Then Paul has prayed in God's will. The Bible has many guides for praying in God's will. Now write some of the things that

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they could pray for at any time knowing that it was in God's will."

Say: "Now write the meaning of love." Explain to them what you have learnt about God's love.

Examination

God chose to reveal his secret plan of salvation through Christ to bring glory to his name. Through him we can partly understand the greatness of God's love. God is marvelous, everlasting love. God's love is so great that we cannot understand it without his Spirit to teach us.

God chose the Church as an instrument of his love to the world. Christ arose from the dead and returned to heaven. Now the Church, filled with his Spirit, is his body on earth. The Church must show the love of God to the world. We who are the Church must bring glory to God. We must show the world who God really is. We must demonstrate the great love with which he loved us.

Application

Ask the students to think of ways they can show the love of God to their friends who do not know Christ.

Ask them to make a list of things in the Bible for which they could pray for others or themselves and know that it is the will of God. Encourage them to use the Scriptures in their prayers.

Prayer Suggestions

1. Pray that you can show the love of God to your students.
2. Find a Scripture verse that you could pray for each of your students this week. Tell them the verse that you chose for them. This passage contains some good ideas.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

GROWING IN CHRISTLIKENESS

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Scripture: Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 5:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:12

Verses in Today's Lesson: Ephesians 4:1-16

Memory Verse

"Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1b).

Lesson Aim: To teach my students that they must grow more Christlike everyday.

Teaching Aids: Write the topic on the chalk board.

Background Study

In chapter twelve we learnt about the great love of God. We learnt that he demonstrated his great love by giving Jesus to die in our place. We learnt that today the Church must demonstrate God's love to a world which cannot understand that love.

In this passage Paul laid down the practical ways that we Christians can show God's love. Paul urged the Ephesians to live a life that measures up to the standard God set when he called us. God calls everyone through Christ. Jesus said that no man could come to the Father except through him. God's standard is perfection. Paul urged us to submit to Christ and allow his Spirit to perfect us.

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In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul reminded us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling because God is at work within us to make us willing to obey him.

The actual working out of our salvation involves two parts, God at work in us and actions that show that we are obeying his guidance. Let us look at the example of a young girl before she is married. She does the things she wants to do and visits her friends when she wants to do so. After marriage, however, things change. She does most things with her husband and likes to be with him when he comes home from work. She cooks and does things to make him happy. The good wife is happy doing these things because she loves her husband.

The girl's habits changed because she got married. She acts differently because she loves her husband.

The same type of changed behaviour happens to a Christian. First, he accepts Christ and is united with Christ. Then he begins to act differently because he loves Christ. In these verses Paul tells us what is pleasing to the Lord. We should joyfully practise these things to please Christ because we love him and we are thankful for what he has done for us.

Paul urged the Ephesians to be humble, gentle and patient. These are the attitudes which please the Lord. From the time a child is small he is taught to do the things which will be acceptable in the community where he lives. He learns these things and practises them throughout his lifetime. The same is true of the Christian life. We learn what behaviour will make our Father happy, and we learn to live in that way. Paul explained some of these things.

In verse 2 Paul said that we should show love by tolerating others. If a person has patience, he will be more

tolerant of others. We should also preserve unity in the body of Christ. That is we should work together in the family of God. Being patient with others and preserving unity are not natural to man. Our world today is a good example of disunity and disharmony because of distrust and hate. The new Christian learns right attitudes by practising them.

Paul explained that unity is necessary because of the oneness of God. In verse 7, Paul urged Christians to use the special gift God had given them. Each Christian has some special ability to do a special job in the family of God. In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul addressed the problem of each person wanting another's gift, boasting in gifts and envy. Paul demanded that the Corinthians be responsible to God for their gifts. Paul stresses that the gifts are given for only one purpose - the building up of the body of Christ. For any family to live in peace it is necessary that family members be given jobs and work together. Paul said that we should practise using our gifts so that we could become mature people. This maturity includes reaching the full stature of Christ. From the time a child is born until he dies, he is still reaching maturity. A child learns to act in a certain way, and he imitates adults. In the same way we imitate Christ and learn the ways a Christian should live. If we were to remain as little children and act selfishly, we would be in danger of being deceived by evil men and liars. Paul said that Christians must grow up to be mature people. He meant that they will learn to practise the lessons Christ teaches through his Word and through his Spirit.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Read verse 2 and list three virtues Christians should practise." (Be humble, gentle and patient.) Ask the

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students to define each word. Ask someone to tell the difference in the behaviour of a married person and a single person. Compare that change in work and behaviour to the new life a person has when he has accepted Christ. His life is different.

Ask: "What are the differences between the behaviour of Christians and non-Christians?"

Ask: "What are some differences in the behaviour of an adult and a child? Let us also compare the behaviour of a new Christian and an older Christian."

Examination

God is at work in us changing us and making us more like Christ each day. Just as a parent trains a child, the child must participate in the learning.

Christians must practise the attitudes of Christ in order to become mature. Christ is at work in our lives through his Spirit teaching us and training us. Because we love God we participate by practising obedience. James said that if you believe in God, you will perform good works in the name of Jesus. Jesus said that the works he did, his children would also do, and they would do even greater works.

Application

Stress the importance of reading the Bible every day. Tell the students to pray before they read God's Word this week. They should ask the Lord to teach them some specific lesson each day. Ask them to keep a list of these lessons, and list the ways they practised the lessons in order to learn them well. Tell them to notice whether this direct effort to learn from God makes a difference in their Bible study in any way.

Prayer Suggestions

1. Ask God to teach you this week.
2. Pray that you will become more like Christ. Ask him to help you lead your students to become more like him.