

Goals

In this section, students will begin to think about life in college, and how it affects their relationship with God. Through the lessons, they will be reminded of the importance of securing a close relationship with the Lord, and to constantly examine themselves so that they will not fall in their walk of faith.

In addition, they will be reminded of the need to share the gospel of salvation with those around them and the need to continue to shine for the Lord. This is a key component of maintaining their faith.

unit 1

Teacher Devotional

Preparation is a key component of each individual's life, and even more so as a Christian. But, as teachers, how much preparation have we put into our lessons? Do we just read the textbook the night before and hope that we'll remember everything for the lesson? Or do we read the textbook over and over again, along with the required Bible passages, and pray to God for the lesson to go according to His will? Preparation is vital, especially in terms of serving God. We cannot do His work haphazardly. We need to put our whole hearts into it. We need to constantly meditate on the Lord's words, reflect upon them, and act on them.

Worship Him in Spirit and Truth

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

(John 4:24)

Lesson 1

Giving Our Hearts a Check-Up

Listed Scriptures

Rom 12:1-2; Dan 1:1-21; 2:14-49; 6:1-28

Lesson Aim

- 1) To evaluate the students' relationships with God on a spiritual level.
- 2) To create and work towards a specific spiritual goal that will always lead our hearts on God's path.
- 3) To develop a plan to give our hearts a check-up regularly.

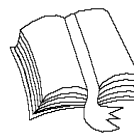
Memory Verse

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."
(Rom 12:1-2)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Daniel 1-3

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Our Lord Jesus Christ reminded us to "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). Many of us want to wholeheartedly do what is right in the spirit but we are often too weak and fall into temptation. What is the secret to overcoming our present surroundings and holding fast to our faith? How were the saints in the Bible able to do this?

Despite living in a foreign land and being assimilated into the Babylonian culture, Daniel resolved to remain faithful to the Lord. He refused to integrate himself into the Babylonian way of life, keeping his identity as a child of God instead. He constantly checked in with God by offering his prayers three times a day. His life of

holiness and prayer is an example for all Christians today. Even his sixth-century B.C. contemporary Ezekiel mentioned him as an example of righteousness (Ezek 14:14, 20).

Joseph was another Old Testament saint who managed to hold on to God despite the things going on around him. In the face of temptation, he remembered the Lord and fled (Gen 39:8–13). His ability to resist temptation and his will power not to fall were due to his intimate relationship with God. If Joseph had not known the heart of God, and had not looked to Him during times of difficulty, he would not have been able to stand firm. What would we have done if we were in his shoes? Would we have been able to resist temptation?

W A R M U P



Johnny was a healthy young man who regularly took part in sports. One day, after a long day of training with his running club, he felt some pain in his chest. He ignored it, but the problem persisted over the course of the next few days. Eventually, he decided to see his doctor, who diagnosed him with some minor heart problems. This shocked him, as he had been healthy throughout his life and regularly exercised. How could this be? The doctor advised him to tone down his training and to stick to a healthy diet. He was also told to have regular check-ups. However, Johnny did not want to give up his training. He continued to train hard every day and forgot about his health problems. He even forgot to go for regular check-ups. A few months later, after another intense training session, he collapsed and died.

What do you think? What could Johnny have done to prevent this from happening? What parallels can you draw from Johnny's story and your own spiritual life? Today, we'll look into the importance of checking our spiritual health so that we won't suffer the same fate as Johnny.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Why Check Our Hearts?



A. To Know the State of Our Hearts

We are often told to go for regular medical check-ups in order to see what our health situation is like. Medical check-ups can detect illnesses and can help prevent them from becoming full-blown, if caught early. Likewise, as Christians, we need to constantly check our own hearts to know what they are and where we stand with God. Only through regular check-ups will we know what situation our faith is in and what we can do to improve it. We need to constantly examine whether our faith is increasing or decreasing. Do not fall in our steadfastness, but grow in the grace and love of our Lord (2 Pet 3:17f; 2 Cor 13:5).



B. To Prevent Serious Spiritual Damage

Have we been damaging our lives with worldly music or with the media? How much have we absorbed from the world that it has become a part of our lives, without us even realizing it? Satan is very cunning and will enter our hearts through various means. Sometimes he enters us through the music we listen to, sometimes through the conversations we have; other times, it is through the programs and films we watch, or even through the Internet. Checking ourselves constantly will help prevent any serious damage, and help us see where we have fallen. Do not leave a foothold for Satan. When we realize that we have given way to Satan, we must quickly get rid of it; deal with it immediately. Do not wait until the damage becomes too serious.

In John 14:30 our Lord Jesus stated that “the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me.” We need to be able to reach this same conviction that the Lord Jesus had: Satan must have no place in our hearts. We must remain firm on this and eliminate any evil thoughts or desires before they become full-blown (Jas 1:14–16).



C. To Allow Our Hearts to Bring Forth Rivers of Living Water

The Lord Jesus said in John 7:38, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has

said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” Here, the Lord was referring to the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we need the Holy Spirit to dwell within us so that we can walk according to the will of God. By checking our hearts, we will analyze whether we are walking according to the spirit or not (Gal 5:25). The spirit acts as our guide and counselor: we need His presence to direct our paths, so that we will walk and live according to His good will (Rom 8:4f).



D. To Check Whether We are Bearing Fruits

John 15:1-11 reminds us of the importance of bearing fruits. It is our Christian duty to bear fruit. If we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off from the vine. Moreover, not only do we have to bear fruits, we have to also bear the correct type of fruits. We need to bear fruits that glorify our Father’s name (Gal 5:22f). This means that we no longer live in the way of the world: we must walk as children of light and bear the fruits of goodness, righteousness, and truth (Eph 5:1-10).



Part 2

How Do We Check Our Hearts?



A. Giving Our Hearts a Daily Check-Up

We’re now going to check up on ourselves to see how much of a God-fearing life we live. Take a few minutes to fill in the columns for the past three days (the chart is on the next page). Be honest. Once the students have filled this out, ask them to summarize their results with the following questions. Then discuss the results with them. Remind them of the importance of daily spiritual cultivation and to arm themselves with the words of God.

Summary:

For the past three days...

1. I prayed ____ times before leaving the house.
2. I read ____ chapters of the Bible.
3. My speech was wholesome ____ times.
4. I acted in a Christian-like manner ____ days.
5. I prayed ____ times before going to bed.

Questions to Think About Daily	Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Did I pray before leaving the house to ask for the Lord's guidance?						
Did I read at least one chapter of the Bible?						
Were the words which came out of my mouth wholesome?						
Did I act in a Christian-like manner all day?						
Did I pray before going to bed to thank God for guiding the day?						



B. Ways to Check Our Hearts

Here are some ways we can check up on our hearts:

a. Read the Bible

We need to take time to ponder, reflect, and focus on God’s words. Reading and understanding His word will ensure that we familiarize ourselves with His teachings. When we are in a difficult situation, or encounter temptations, the word of God will instruct and guide us on how we should act. It will also enable us to see what state our hearts are in and to help us guard our hearts (Phil 4:7).

b. Pray

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (Jas 4:8). Spending time in prayer with God is important for Christians to stay connected to Him. It allows us to speak to God and for Him to speak to us, guiding our paths. We must make sure that we make a daily appointment with the Lord. Prayer is like breathing. Without it, our spiritual lives will eventually die.

c. Listen to Sermons

Another important aspect is to listen to God’s words through other members. The Lord often uses fellow brothers and sisters to encourage us. Therefore, we should take every opportunity to attend services and to listen to His word.

d. Attend Fellowships

Equally important to our spiritual health is our communal life of worship. God

instituted the church (“a called-out assembly”) so that we could worship Him together. The community of faith helps us to support each other, just like the apostolic days (Acts 2:44–47; 1 Jn 1:3)

e. Examine Our Daily Conduct and Our Speech

We need to ask ourselves, “Am I reflecting the image of a true Christian?” We must have a walk worthy of God’s calling. How can we call ourselves true Christians when, outside of the church, we act in an un-Christian-like manner? We need to “lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls” (Jas 1:21).

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 Why is it important to constantly check our hearts?
- 2 What are some of the ways we can check our hearts?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Part 1: Testimony of Transformation

There was a brother, who, once he left for college, felt as free as a bird and invested heavily in alcohol and drugs. Before he knew it, he became addicted. Little did he know the detrimental effect this would have on him.

He began to lose his hair, and later on, he became bald. Turning bald in his twenties pained him, so he continued to turn to alcohol to numb the pain. His family begged him to turn from his ways, but at the time he would have nothing to do with it and his heart was hardened. Everyone in his family felt hopeless. Then one day, out of his hopelessness, this brother began to think that he needed to listen to his grandmother’s advice and turn to Lord Jesus.

From that moment on, he began to read the Bible and watch the gospel channel. When he wanted to smoke he would hear the TV evangelist preaching against it. When he loitered on the streets, he would hear voices or messages telling him to go home. When he wanted to read or watch pornography, either he could not

reach the magazines under the sofa or the tapes were somehow erased. He often came across Bible verses that urged him not to fall into the traps of the devil. Slowly, he realized that God detested filthy things, so he burned all the pornographic materials he had. He started to pray and asked God to humble him.

Once, his sister was invited to the True Jesus Church where she experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. She came back and asked her brother to go, but he hesitated because of his baldness.

One day a sister called him and persistently invited him to go to church, but he refused. He told her, “Unless God calls me to go, I will not go!” So before she hung up she told him to write down the address of the church: B-a-l-d-w-i-n, Baldwin Park Church. He was stunned when he heard the address. The name struck him—Bald Win? The bald will win? He felt that God wanted him to go to church and that he will overcome his baldness. This brother decided to go and despite the initial fear of embarrassment, he was moved by the sermons and no longer felt uneasy about his appearance. He continued to attend church services and pursue the truth. Eventually he received the Holy Spirit, which has since helped him overcome his desires.

(Adapted version: “In Hopelessness I Met God,” *Manna*, Women in the Bible, Issue 38, Oct–Dec 2002)

Questions to think about:

1. Why do you think this brother turned to drugs and alcohol in the first place?
2. If we know someone who is falling into this same fate, what could we do to help him/her? How could we advise him/her?
3. How can we be sure that we do not fall into this trap? What preventative measures could we take?
4. How is the Holy Spirit able to help us overcome our desires?

Part 2: Living A Life of Integrity

Read the following story of Kathy and Janet to the students (or if you prefer, you could put it up on an overhead and ask the students to read it out loud).

I'll never forget the atmosphere at our church youths' end of year gathering.

Among those in attendance that night were two sisters about to head off to large state schools in the fall. Each had demonstrated growth in her faith and the ability to help and support other members. No one was worried that they wouldn't survive, and everyone expected them to thrive in their respective new atmospheres. Not more than nine months later, however, I was surprised to hear that Kathy had virtually abandoned her faith, changed her lifestyle, and cut off almost all ties with Christian friends from home. She was caught up in a life of partying, drinking and drugs. Meanwhile, the other sister, Janet, was doing fine in spite of the same challenges. She was taking steps to grow in her faith, and also began an effective ministry around her.

What happened? What was the difference between Janet and Kathy? They both came from similar backgrounds, were leaders in their church youth group, and were respected as mature believers. What was it that enabled Janet to maintain her faith and continue to grow throughout college while Kathy seemed to abandon everything?

Once you have gathered the students' thoughts on the above questions, say "Although there were probably many factors involved, one key difference was their understanding of lordship." What is lordship? Lordship is inviting the Lord Jesus Christ to be the head of our lives. Two main ideas underlie this: Identity and Purpose. Identity is understanding who we are and living a life which reflects that identity, i.e. God (Gal 2:20). Purpose is understanding the meaning and value of our lives and living a life of integrity (Phil 1:21). Janet understood the purpose of her life, and she knew who was Lord of it. She kept to her faith, constantly checked herself, and made sure she could do everything possible to maintain a heart of worship. Kathy, on the other hand, decided not to keep a check on herself. Instead, she allowed her heart to follow the ways of the world, and forgot to bear good fruit. Ask yourself: Whom do you want to end up like: Kathy or Janet?



Sing hymn 408: Into My Heart.

Being a true Christian requires much discipline and determination on our part. We need to learn to actualize our faith, hope, and love in our daily lives and to constantly keep a daily check on ourselves. Ask the Lord to come into our hearts and to guide us in our journey of faith so that we will always remain faithful to Him (Rom 12:1-2).