

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking,
correcting and training in righteousness."

2 Timothy 3:16

YEAR | BOOK |

Junior 2 Year 1 Book 1

YEAR | BOOK |

JUNIOR 2

Teacher's Guide

The Four Gospels

G.A. of the True Jesus Church

U.S.A



THEME:

The Four Gospels

General Assembly of the True Jesus Church

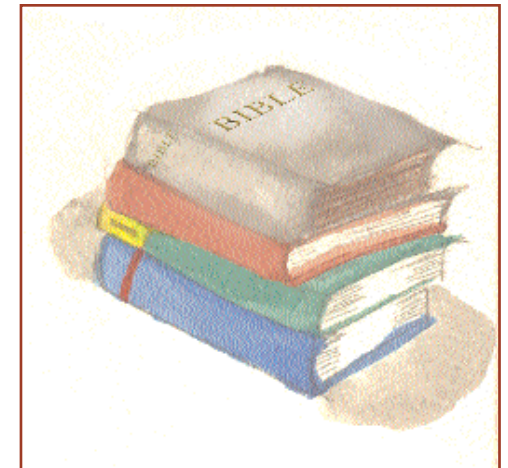
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JUNIOR 2

Teacher's Guide

"Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

Hebrews 12:1-2a



THEME:

The Four Gospels

Published by the General Assembly of the True Jesus Church

True Jesus Church
314 S. Brookhurst St., Suite #104
Anaheim, CA
92804-2472
U.S.A.
(714) 533-8808
(714) 533-8878 (Fax)

THEMES

The Four Gospels

Unit 1: The King, His kingdom and His people

“Who is the Lord Jesus?” was a question that baffled the minds of many in Christ’s time. In the next three lessons, you will be renewing your understanding of the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ is no ordinary person. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, who, in a determined period of history, became one of us. He came to the world on a mission – to die on the cross and to bring us to God. While on earth, the Lord Jesus roamed Palestine, declaring the once hidden mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom that He spoke of was not an earthly one, determined by military might or political power, but a place where God’s principles and values are adhered.

Unit 2: The Joy of Serving

When Jesus Christ came to the world, He did not act like the king or the type of Messiah the people were waiting for, but as a servant who was ready to serve and die for the sins of the people. The Lord Jesus taught an upside-down perspective on being important. The world views someone as great when that person is first and best in everything. He views someone as great when He serves and gives up His life for others.

Unit 3: Freely We Receive, Freely We Give

Though He was God, the Lord Jesus came into the world in human form. Like all men, Jesus Christ went through a lifelong process of growing physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. Because He went through what all men go through in life, He understands and knows our needs. But His love for us is not limited to healing our diseases, blessing us materially, or helping us get out of a tight spot. His love for us is so great that He willingly gave Himself up on the cross to deal with the root of all life’s problems, which is sin. Through His death, the Lord Jesus brought peace and salvation to all men regardless of race, gender, age or worldly status.

Unit 4: Truly Know God

In his gospel, apostle John presents evidence and facts to convince the people that Jesus Christ was no ordinary man. Jesus is God Himself. During His ministry, Jesus Christ used signs and miracles, teachings, and His own resurrection to prove that He was indeed the Son of God. By using the “I am” phrase seven times, the Lord Jesus personally revealed that He was the almighty and everlasting God; He was fully man, and He was also fully God. Despite all the evidence, not everyone believed in Him. But John traces the progress of certain individuals who were able to overcome obstacles and come to a true knowledge that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

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WELCOME TO THE J2 CURRICULUM

This Teacher's Guide has been designed to help the teachers plan the class and become more effective in the teaching ministry.

Because of the impact of God's word, it is our prayer that we see our students understand and apply the Bible to their lives. Our ultimate goal of this curriculum is to see lives transformed. Here you'll find the materials you will need to teach the unchanging truth of God's word.

This Curriculum
Includes:

LESSON TITLE

Getting Your Spiritual Life in Shape

LISTED SCRIPTURES

Eph 6:13 -18; Ex 33:17 - 23;
34:28 - 33; Num 12:6 - 8

LESSON AIM

- 1) To examine the important elements of spiritual growth
- 2) To discover how to win the battle between the spirit and the flesh
- 3) To implement a plan to get the students' spiritual lives in shape by using specific goals

MEMORY VERSE

"That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15) (NKJV)

BIBLE READING FOR THE WEEK

Eph 1-2

All of these sabbath lessons are built on:

1. (Not listed in the Student Workbook) **BIBLE BACKGROUND**
Extra resource related to the lesson for the students and teachers to know.
2. **WARM UP**
Something to capture their focus to get them started.
3. **BIBLE STUDY**
Lead your students in discovering the timeless truth of God's word through inductive Bible study.
(Student Worksheet is only in outline form)
4. **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**
Find out if the students comprehend the information that is being presented. Teachers can check for understanding in different ways. One way is to ask them questions related to what they've just learned.
5. **LIFE APPLICATION**
Help each student apply God's word to his/her life as the Holy Spirit leads him/her. Encourage students to come up with a plan of action to practice what they've learned. How are they going to implement their plans? When are they going to apply it?
6. **REFLECTION AND PRAYER**
Ask them to share with you what sticks in their mind after the lesson, before the concluding prayer.

A Reminder!

Unit goals and teacher devotional are listed before each unit. Bible reading for the week and the memory verse are listed in each lesson. Be sure to read through each lesson before you plan and teach your class.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR TEENS



It is important to teach teens in order to equip them with a strong foundation of good, solid faith. This generation that we are working with is searching for answers to truth. Although they may have many ups and downs in their lives or lack spiritual depth, they do want to know who makes a real difference in the real world.

Teens live in a time when believing in God is considered ridiculous. They also live in a world that is in constant violation of God's laws. Some of the results of this are health epidemics, environmental devastation and domestic violence. Therefore, they are faced with important decisions each and every day. What they decide can ultimately affect their values, faith, education, choice in friends, occupation, marriage, and church-life. In addition to

these complexities, teens may be struggling with peer pressure, fashion expectations, substance abuse issues, family/relationship problems as well as issues of identity and self-concept. In other words, they are rocked with change, whether spiritual, emotional, social or physical.

Teens need something or someone to rely on, anything that they can look up to as their standard. Our job, then, is to lead our teens to see a powerful God in this ever-changing world. Surprisingly, teens want to be "spiritual," despite all the hype around them. Therefore, they need to hear personal testimonies, Bible truths, how God's love has touched the lives of other people and what kind of hopes we all have despite living in an often senseless world. The question we need to answer as we teach is, "How can we affirm their faith in a God who loves and cares for them like no other?"

TEENS' DESIRES (I)

1. Love and Acceptance

Teens have a great need for acceptance by their peers, and they care about what others think of them. They are worried about how others perceive them physically (attractiveness: too tall, too short, too fat, too thin, the notion of sex) and mentally (intelligence: being too smart or dumb). They also look to peers, teachers, sports figures and media personalities as role models. Therefore, the way teachers express their faith and belief will be a positive witness for them.

2. Relationship with God/Finding Faith

At this age, teens will no longer come to church simply because their parents tell them to. They should be beginning to develop their own relationships with Jesus Christ. Although their reasoning skills will cause them to question what part God and the Bible play in their lives, it is important for teachers to continue to challenge them to make time for prayer and devotional life outside of the classroom and church so that they will be able to establish their own faith. Their spiritual goal is to find mean-

ing and purpose in their lives through Jesus Christ.

3. Personal Experiences With God

Up till this point in their lives, teens probably have yet to have many personal experiences with God. Their devotional life has likely consisted of attending church services, going to classes and praying before going to bed. While this regularity is good, it is not enough. Now is the time to encourage them to pray consistently so that they may realize the roles God is playing in their lives. Share with them personal testimonies that will touch their hearts. Soon, they will begin to see God as a personal friend, comforter and advisor.



TEENS' DESIRES (2)



4. Purpose in Life/True Fulfillment

Teens want to know who they are. At this crucial age, they are beginning to ask themselves, "What is my purpose in life?" and "What does it all mean?" A teenager needs to see himself as a separate and a worthwhile person in order to attain a successful transition into adulthood. Their drive for independence is strong and they feel a need to prove themselves as capable individuals. Some parents may have a difficult time letting go and end up being over-controlling because they find this "growing up" threatening. As a result, the teenager may end up rebelling. As teachers, we need to show support and encouragement, and provide helpful advice. We also need to affirm their talents and abilities to let them know their self-worth. Teenagers do respect parents and

adults who show consistency and structure. As they make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes, it will allow them to find their own identities and seek out what it is they believe in. When they are able to do so, they can also become faithful to their beliefs and values.

5. Purity and Holiness

Perhaps because of their young age and their lack of experience in the real world, teens often feel they can overcome anything if they try hard enough. "I can handle it," they might think. "It may have happened to them, but it won't happen to me!" In one sense, it is great to have confidence. However, when they are faced with real temptations, they may also be unprepared to deal with the issues with a clear head. While we don't need to bombard them with stories of people who have failed to remain pure and holy, we do need to let them understand the reality and difficulties. Challenge them to think about what is important to them and encourage them to stand firm in what they believe.

HOW DO I EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH MY STUDENTS?

1. Greet every student at every class session

A friendly and sincere greeting communicates undivided attention. "How's it going?" expresses genuine concern. "It's great to see you" can transform anyone's day. Your greeting may take only 30-40 seconds, but your students will deeply feel that you really care.

2. Send an occasional card/email or pick up the phone to find out how someone is doing

Saying, "I was wondering how you were doing," will make a big difference in someone's life. An investment of four or five minutes and the price of a postage stamp can literally make a teenager's day come alive.



3. Open your home for fellowship or special events

Our greatest memories result from serving the Lord together through fellowship and special services or events. Every fellowship or meeting will provide a new opportunity to "reach out and touch someone."

4. Pray with them

Teens need to know that their teachers are constantly praying for them. Even though they may be very busy with their daily chores, always remind them that praying together at a certain time is the only way to draw wisdom and strength from God.

In this 21st century, 99% of the youth communicate via email every day! With the help of the internet, many people have found a great way to keep in touch with those they normally wouldn't be able to talk to and with those who live far away.

As an RE teacher, using email to reach out to our students is a wonderful way to **build relationships**. Since



you know your students already, send out an email that goes a little deeper than greetings and

praise. Perhaps you could ask your students a thought-provoking question about what goes on in the world, about what he or she believes in, about relationships within their families, or maybe begin with a gentle question about their relationship with God.

The truth is, your students love to find email in their boxes even though you and your students don't really talk frequently. At the very least, consider sending your students an occasional encouraging email or e-card to let them know that they are in

your thoughts or to wish them well on a test or sporting event. You can even make your student's day with a quick note of praise or a written pat on the back.

In order to reach out to your students effectively through email, keep your message brief—two or three short paragraphs is sufficient. And believe it or not, sometimes only a sentence is required. Living in this fast-paced society, not many of us want to scroll through a book-length email. Also, it is very vital to respond to messages within a day or two. Your students look to you for support and guidance. You will easily lose their confidence in you if a week goes by with no feedback.

Last but not least, try to use a gentle tone in your email. Let them know that you are always there, especially when you notice that one of your students is sick or simply feeling low spiritually. Quote Scripture sparingly and use liberal doses of humor. Teens do not respond well to teachers who always condemn. **Be there, and be an example.**

Email is a great door to communicating with your students. May God help us strengthen the faith of our students and nurture understanding with God's word.

HOW CAN I GET THEM MOTIVATED & TO STAY INTERESTED?

You can involve...

1. a game or debate
2. a video clip
3. brainstorming sessions
4. a poster
5. interesting questions and news stories
6. a touching testimony or hymn
7. quiet time for them to reflect
8. arts and crafts



When you deliver your lesson, it can be through...

1. lecture style
2. an in-depth Bible study
3. a skit
4. a meaningful and relevant video

Teachers can check for understanding by...

1. asking the students to share what they have learned
2. asking questions about the Bible study
3. asking the students to come up with a good moral for the lesson
4. asking which one of the characters they would have wanted to be had they been a part of the scene
5. asking the students to apply the Bible study and to make relevant connections to their own lives

MEMORY VERSE CONTEST

Do you know that working on **memory verses** together in class can provide excellent teachable moments about the word of God? Most people think that J2 class students already know many of the verses in the Bible. However, that's not necessarily true. Therefore, we as RE teachers should emphasize this part of the lesson more than others. Why? Because memorizing the Scriptures can help students **resist temptations** and **build a stronger faith**.

Make sure that it's something that involves the **both** of you. Think about challenging your students to memorize the memory verse with you each week. Maybe you could suggest that both you and the students recite all 13 verses by the end of the quarter. This is a great way to motivate your students. Perhaps you could challenge your students to a contest. Make it a real challenge and see who can memorize the

most verses by a certain time. If everyone wins, take your students out for ice cream or even out to lunch.

Since you need to recite the memory verse from week to week, you can spend more time talking about it with your students. Let the word of God impact them in their daily lives and be a part of their lives too. After a period of time, you will definitely see the lives of your students flourish just as God intended. The key point is that if your students see that you are serious about memorizing Scripture yourself, they will see that it is a **vital way of growing more like Jesus Christ**. May God strengthen our hands as we contin-

BIBLE READING FOR THIS QUARTER

1. Matthew 1-9
2. Matthew 10-19
3. Matthew 20-28
4. Mark 1-5
5. Mark 6-10
6. Mark 11-16
7. Luke 1-8
8. Luke 9-16
9. Luke 17-24
10. John 1-7
11. John 8-14
12. John 15-21

MEMORY VERSES FOR SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER

1. "And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Mt 1:21)
2. "Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.'" (Lk 17:20-21)
3. "Not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Mt 7:21)
4. "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mk 10:44, 45)
5. "And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.'" (Mk 9:35)
6. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor 15:58)
7. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb 4:15)
8. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk 19:10)
9. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:26-28)
10. "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high." (Heb 1:3)
11. "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." (1 Jn 5:20)
12. "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Mt 11:28-29)

Goals

Throughout these lessons, our students will examine whether they truly know and believe in God. Do they see God as the supreme ruler of heaven and earth, time and eternity or merely as One who provides for them in times of need? Our students will consider whether they have truly placed the Lord Jesus as King in their hearts and lives, and whether the Lord Jesus plays a role in the infinite choices that they make in their everyday lives.

Our students will also learn that as people of God, we need to abide by the principles and values of His kingdom. These values are often in direct conflict with those of the world. This conflict is reflected in the tug-of-war situations our students often experience between what they like to do and what they are expected to do as citizens of God's kingdom. However, Jesus Christ promises that those who abide by the principles and laws of God will be ultimately blessed with life everlasting.

unit 1

Teacher Devotional

Our Lord Jesus reminded us that we are the light of the world (Matt 5:14). However, why is it that we often hide our faith? Instead of taking a stand for our beliefs, we often avoid trouble by compromising our beliefs or ignoring crises that will help us build a stronger faith. The bottom line? We are too concerned about others' reactions that we fail to shine for Him or even show God's love to them.

Take a moment to reflect on how you stand up for your faith. How can you set a better example for your students? How might your students be standing up for their faith?

Do Not Love the World

*"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."
(1 John 2:15-16)*

Lesson 1

The Gospel of Matthew The King

Listed Scriptures

Mt 1:18-2:1-23, 8:18-9:1-17, 12:1-50, 14:13-21, 15:1-20, 29-31, 16:13-17;
Lk 2:25-35

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to recognize that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal King
- 2) To enable students to evaluate and improve upon their understanding of the Lord Jesus

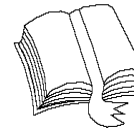
Memory Verse

"And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Mt 1:21)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Matthew 1-9

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



Author:

The author of the Gospel of Matthew is commonly believed to be Matthew. Matthew was also called Levi, which means "joined". He was the son of Alphaeus, a Jew from the Province of Galilee. Before his call to follow the Lord, Matthew occupied the unpopular post of tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government. However, when the Lord called him, he repented and became a disciple and later an apostle of Christ (Mt 9:1-11). Matthew followed the Lord Jesus and wrote down in full detail all that he heard and saw. According to tradition, Matthew preached in Palestine for quite a number of years. Later, he traveled to other countries and ended up in Ethiopia where he preached and established churches till he was killed in 60 AD.

Time of writing:

There is no record of the exact time of when the Gospel of Matthew was written. But it is generally believed to have been written before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. This is based on the fact that when Matthew Chapter 24 was written, the city of Jerusalem did not seem to have been under attack.

Purpose of writing:

For centuries, the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah who the prophets of the Old Testament had foretold. They believed that the Messiah ("the anointed one") would rescue them from their Roman oppressors, establish a new kingdom and rule the world with justice. Over the years, various figures came and went, some claiming to be the Messiah, while others were regarded by the people as likely candidates. But none proved convincing. However, many Jews overlooked prophecies which also spoke of this king as a suffering servant who would be rejected and killed. It is no wonder then, that few recognized the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. How could this humble teacher from Nazareth be their king? Hadn't He been rejected by the nation's leaders? Was He really Israel's long-awaited Messiah? Matthew's gospel answers with a resounding yes! In this first gospel, Matthew fills his account with Old Testament prophecies that point to the Lord Jesus as God's chosen one. He wants his fellow Jews to study their scriptures and find Jesus to be the Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, the son of God. In his gospel, Matthew constantly uses the phrase "kingdom of heaven" to tell the Jews that the Lord Jesus is here to establish a kingdom, but that it's different from the one they anticipated. The Lord was not sent to be an earthly king, but a heavenly king. He did not come to rescue them from their Roman oppressors, but from the oppression of sin and Satan. The Lord did not come to reign over people's land but to rule over people's lives and hearts. His kingdom would be much greater than David's because it would never end. Matthew tries to convince his audience (the Jews) and us today to recognize Jesus Christ for who He really is and worship Him as king of our lives.

W A R M U P



Have you tried convincing someone of something they don't believe in? How hard was it? How did you remove the obstacles? What was the stigma that prevented them from seeing the truth?

B I B L E S T U D Y

Part 1 Who is Lord Jesus?



"Who is Lord Jesus?" was a question that baffled the minds of many. As the Lord Jesus went about preaching the kingdom of heaven, healing the sick and casting out demons, much debate and confusion arose regarding His identity. The multitude, the Pharisees and teachers of the law, and even the close circle of disciples who followed Jesus constantly questioned who He was.

A . Who is Lord Jesus?

a. The Multitude

The multitude was perplexed and curious about the man Jesus and the wonderful works He performed. Often the question, "who is He?" arose among the people as they sought to know His identity. But the Lord did not want to reveal He was the Messiah for fear that the people would think He had come to be the king who would overthrow the Roman Empire. Who did the multitude say Lord Jesus was?

1. The Lord Jesus was a prophet

In Matthew 16:13-20, the Lord asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of man is?" The disciples reported a variety of answers. Some thought He was John the baptist who had come back; others suggested Elijah, or Jeremiah or another of the ancient prophets. This common view may have stemmed from Deuteronomy 18:18, where God said He would raise up a prophet from among the people. The populace thought the Lord Jesus was a prophet because of the signs and miracles He performed (Lk 7:16, Jn 6:14; 7:40-43; 9:17).

2. The Lord Jesus was a teacher

Often the Lord was regarded as a great Teacher, or Rabbi. The teachers of the law or rabbis in those days were those who were familiar with the law and who gave spiritual instruction to the people. Yet the people recognized that the Lord Jesus was not like the ordinary teachers. He did not

Teaching Tips

Students can be divided into various groups representing "the multitude," "the Pharisees," and "the disciples" to discuss who they thought the Lord Jesus was. Students can then come together to present their findings.

teach like the scribes and the Pharisees who often quoted from well-known rabbis to give their words or arguments more authority. The people perceived that the Lord spoke with great authority, wisdom and power (Mt 7:28-29; Mt 13:54-58; Mt 22:15-22).

3. The Lord Jesus was a provider

John 6:1-14 records an incident where the Lord Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. After they had their fill, the crowds came again the next day looking for Him. The Lord saw their real intentions, and He said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves” (Jn 6:26). During His ministry, the people saw Jesus Christ as a provider, a healer, or someone who could satisfy their physical needs. They had failed to truly understand who He truly was. They came to Him for physical healing, but had neglected to come to Him for spiritual healing. They came for food for their bodies, but had failed to seek the Bread of Life, the Lord Jesus Himself.

b. The Pharisees

Who did the Pharisees and scribes think the Lord Jesus was?

1. The Lord Jesus was a blasphemer

When the Lord Jesus appeared before Caiaphas, the high priest asked Him bluntly, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” The Lord answered, “I am.” The leaders were outraged that the Lord had made Himself equal with God, and they condemned Him as deserving death (Mk 14:61-64). According to the law, anyone who blasphemed against God was guilty and punishable by death (Lev 24:16). However, the religious leaders did not realize that the very person they were accusing and condemning was in fact God Himself.

2. The Lord Jesus was a lawbreaker

John 9:1-14 records how on the Sabbath, the Lord Jesus healed a man with congenital blindness. When the Pharisees realized this, they were infuriated because according to the Jewish law, no work was to be done on the Sabbath. The Lord, by kneading the clay and healing the blind man, had “worked.” This made Him a lawbreaker. In their eyes, He was not a man from God for He did not obey the many traditions and laws as they did. On several occasions, the Lord violated the Sabbath or did not perform certain rites such as the washing of hands (Jn 9:16; Lk 13:10-17; Lk 14:1-6; Jn 5:1-16; Mt 15:1-6).

3. The Lord Jesus was a threat

The zeal and commitment that the Pharisees showed in following the Old Testament law and traditions won them the admiration of the common people. They were highly respected in the community and had great influence in the synagogues. But they hated the Lord because He challenged their proud attitudes and dishonorable motives. Although the Jewish leaders had turned against Him, they were jealous of His popularity and authority. Matthew 21:15 records that they were jealous and indignant about the wonderful things that the Lord did. They valued their status in the community and their opportunity for personal gain so much that they lost sight of their goal as religious leaders – to point people toward God. Of all people, they should have recognized the Messiah, but they refused to acknowledge Him because they were not willing to give up their treasured position and power. When the Lord exposed their attitudes, He became their enemy instead of their Messiah.

c. The disciples

Who did the disciples think the Lord Jesus was?

1. The Lord Jesus was an earthly Messiah

Although the disciples followed the Lord Jesus throughout His ministry, they too also wondered who He was (Mk 4:41). Despite seeing the miracles that the Lord performed and hearing His words, the disciples were often slow in comprehending the works and teachings of the Lord (Mt 4:13; 4:40; 6:52; 8:33; 16:8) and did not understand the real purpose for His coming to the world. Like the rest of the Jews, the disciples were waiting for the expected Messiah who would overthrow Rome and establish His kingdom. But the Lord came not to establish a kingdom of this world centered in palaces and thrones, but centered in the hearts and lives of His followers. They could not grasp that the values of God’s eternal kingdom were different from the values of the world. But only when the Lord completed His earthly mission and when the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost did the disciples come to truly know the Lord.

B. Who Knew Lord Jesus?

Who were those who truly knew the Lord Jesus?

- a. John the baptist (Jn 1:29)
- b. Simeon (Lk 2:25-35)
- c. Anna the prophetess (Lk 2: 36)
- d. The wise men (Mt 2:2)
- e. Demons (Mt 8:28-29; Lk 4:33, 34)

Part 2 *Who is the Messiah?*



The Jews had preconceived notions of what the Messiah should be like. He should come from an extraordinary background and be a great military commander who would free Israel from Rome's oppression. When the Lord came professing that He was Christ, they did not recognize that He was the Messiah. They could not believe in His wisdom or great power. They could only see what was before them, and that was an ordinary man like themselves. What were the various aspects about the Lord that prevented the Jews from accepting Him as their Messiah?

A. Lowly Background

- a. In Bethlehem, the city of kings, the Lord Jesus was born in a small stable (Micah 5:2). He entered the world and became a part of a family so poor that Mary, His mother, had to offer two doves rather than the prescribed lamb as the sacrifice for her purification.
- b. Although the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He grew up in the city of Nazareth. Nazareth was a small insignificant town despised by the Jews. In John 1:46, Nathanael commented, "What good can come out of Nazareth?" The bad reputation that Nazareth had could be attributed to the Galileans' lack of culture and rude dialect, but also because of the laxity of morals and the Roman garrison that was housed there.
- c. The Lord Jesus was the son of a carpenter (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). The Lord Himself would have followed the same trade. The people of Jesus' hometown saw Him not as their Messiah, but someone very much like themselves. Their preconceived notions made it impossible for them to accept His message, and their prejudice blinded them to the truth.

- d. Because He had a poor background, the Lord Jesus did not receive much education. In John 7:15, the Jewish leaders were surprised when they heard the Lord teach with such authority even though He had never studied.

B. Without Outward Appearance

The Lord Jesus did not have any outward appearance or charisma that attracted the people. Isaiah 53:2 tells us that "He had no form or comeliness that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him." Due to hardships and suffering, the Lord looked beyond His years (Jn 8:57).

C. Without Status

During the time of the Lord Jesus, the tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners were social outcasts, and yet He associated himself with them (Mt 9:9-13). The Lord was also "despised and rejected by men like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not" (Is 53:3).

D. Not Like a King

The Jews were expecting a very different king. In their eyes, the Lord did not have what it took to crush the Roman Empire. He did not act, behave, or speak as a king should. Kings lived in palaces whereas the Lord did not even have a place to lay His head (Mt 8:20). Kings and rulers of this world expect to be served, but the Lord came to serve. The Lord emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Phil 2:5-8). He came to serve the needy, the poor, the sinners and the outcasts in society. He was humble, gentle and loving. The Lord walked the roads of Palestine teaching the truth of salvation and healing the sick. He pointed the people's hopes and hearts to the kingdom of heaven. He raised no army, He sought no earthly glory. He humbled Himself to the point of dying on the cross.

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



- 1** Who did the multitude, Pharisees and disciples think the Lord Jesus was?

- 2 When and how did you come to recognize Christ?
- 3 What were the people's motives for seeking the Lord?
- 3 What are our motives for following the Lord Jesus?
- 4 What were the things that prevented the Pharisees and scribes from recognizing the Lord Jesus' true identity?
- 5 What can we learn from the way the Pharisees saw the Lord Jesus and the way we see and judge others?
- 6 How does knowing the Lord's background contribute to our understanding of the kind of Messiah He set out to be?
- 7 Which other characters in the Bible showed biased thoughts when judging others?

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



We Understand So Little

Once there were two brothers who had spent all their lives in the city and had never even seen a field or pasture. So one day they decided to take a trip into the countryside. As they were walking along, they spied a farmer plowing and were puzzled about what he was doing.

"What kind of behavior is this?" they asked themselves. "This fellow marches back and forth all day, scarring the earth with long ditches. Why should anyone destroy such a pretty meadow like that?"

Later in the afternoon they passed the same place again, and this time they saw the farmer sowing grains of wheat in the furrows.

"Now what's he doing?" they asked themselves. "He must be a madman. He's taking perfectly good wheat and tossing it into these ditches!"

"The country is no place for me," said one of the brothers. "The people here act as if they have no sense. I'm going home." And he went back to the city.

But the second brother stayed in the country, and a few weeks later, he saw a wonderful change. Fresh green shoots began to cover the field with a lushness he had never imagined. He quickly wrote to his brother and told him to hurry back to see the miraculous growth. So his brother returned from the city, and he too was amazed at the change. As the days passed they saw the green earth turn into a golden field of tall wheat. And now they understood the reason for the farmer's work. Then the wheat grew ripe, and the farmer came with his scythe and began to cut it down. The brother who had returned from the city couldn't believe it.

"What is this imbecile doing now?" he exclaimed. "All summer long he worked so hard to grow this beautiful wheat, and now he's destroying it with his own hands! He is a madman after all! I've had enough. I'm going back to the city."

But his brother had more patience. He stayed in the country and watched the farmer collect the wheat and take it to his granary. He saw how cleverly he separated the chaff, and how carefully he stored the rest. And he was filled with awe when he realized that, by sowing a bag of seed, the farmer had harvested a whole field of grain. Only then did he truly understand that the farmer had a reason for everything he did. (A Jewish folktale)

Questions to think about:

1. Coming from the city, the two brothers had no idea what the farmer was doing and sometimes ridiculed him for his actions. How do the brothers' responses reflect those of people today?
(As humans, we often make the common mistake of judging by outer appearances. We often react and pass judgement too quickly. We like to stick to things we are familiar or comfortable with. We are quick to reject what we don't understand or can't accept. We often lack patience to seek and observe. Thus, we miss a lot of chances to learn and see the truth.)
2. Compare the two brothers' actions. During the time of the Lord Jesus, only a few recognized who He truly was, whereas the majority missed the mark altogether. How do you see this in the people we preach to? How do you react when we do not understand God's will or His actions?
3. Today, we may take pride in the fact that we are baptized, attend church regularly, pray and know the Bible. But do we really know the Lord? How much do we know Him? How do we perceive Him? How can we see and know our Lord better?

(Oftentimes we come to church and merely go through the motions of worshipping God. Even though we pray or read the Bible, we do not get much out of it. The key to seeing God more clearly lies in our hearts. Jeremiah 29:13 reads, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." To know God better, we need to actively pursue God and seek Him with our hearts.)

REFLECTION & PRAYER



The Pharisees knew a lot about God, but they didn't know God. The people knew the Lord as someone who could heal them physically and provide for their material needs, but they did not know that He could provide with eternal life. Many came for physical blessings, but not many came for the Lord alone. The Lord Jesus was more than just a great leader, good example, good influence, or a prophet. He is the Son of God. May God grant us the spirit of revelation and understanding so that we may truly know the Lord.

Lesson 2

The Gospel of Matthew

The Kingdom of God

Listed Scriptures

Mt 4:23-25; Mt 13; Jn 18:33-37; Heb 12:28; Rev 21:1-4; 1 Cor 4:20; Lk 11:20

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to know about the kingdom of God
- 2) To enable students to realize the importance of having God as king of our lives

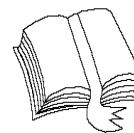
Memory Verse

"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Lk 17:20-21)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Matthew 10-19

BIBLE BACKGROUND



"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" was the message that John the baptist went about proclaiming. Not long later, the Lord Jesus too began His ministry with those very same words (Mt 3:2; 4:17, 23). Throughout the entire book of Matthew, the message of the kingdom of heaven ring; it is mentioned about 50 times. Why was this message so important? What was its significance to the people then and to us today?

Since the beginning of time, God kept the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven a secret (1 Cor 2:7-10; Col 1:26-27). But now with the coming of the Lord Jesus, God was bringing into fulfillment what He had kept hidden from the beginning of the world and what had been prophesied in the Old Testament. Prophets of old had spoken powerfully of a coming kingdom governed by a ruler who was to come from David's line. The king would be God Himself in human form (Is 9:6-7). The ruler would bring peace, comfort, justice, knowledge, prosperity and holiness. All

these blessings would be fulfilled when the king came to reign.

In this gospel, Matthew tries to tell his audience that the kingdom of heaven has already arrived. With the coming of the Lord Jesus, the kingdom of heaven was now in their hearts. Through His teachings, signs, wonders, and healing, the Lord relieved the people of their pain, sorrow and daily concerns and brought spiritual freedom, hope, peace and eternal life. This was the good news of the kingdom of heaven that was preached to the people then and for mankind today.

Please also refer to the Bible Background in Lesson 1 for more information on the Gospel of Matthew (Lessons 2 and 3 are Bible studies on the Gospel of Matthew as well).

W A R M U P



What is your definition of “a kingdom”?

If you were to create a kingdom, what would it consist of? Why are these important?

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1 *The Kingdom of Heaven*

A . The Characteristics of the Kingdom of Heaven

a. Christ is king

Every kingdom has a king or ruler who governs his subjects. In the kingdom of heaven, Jesus Christ is king, and He rules with absolute authority. The kingdom operates according to God’s principles and values.

b. From above

When the Lord was brought before Pontius Pilate, Pilate asked Him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” The Lord answered plainly, “You have said so.” But He further said, “My kingship is not of this world...” (Jn 18:36). The Lord Jesus is king, but He

is not a king of the political world on earth. Rather, He is king of the spiritual world. His was not the political and military kingdom that the Jews had hoped for, but His kingdom was from above. We usually think of “kingdom” as a place, but the kingdom of God has no limits or boundaries. Many mistakenly think that the kingdom of heaven will come mightily and visibly, but in actuality, it is invisible and intangible (Lk 17:20). And because it is not of the world, it is hated by the world (Jn 15:18, 19; 17:14)

c. Full of power

God’s kingdom is marked by the power of God’s spirit (Mt 12:28; 1 Cor 4:20). During His ministry, the Lord Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, and performed many wonders that demonstrated that the kingdom of God had come. God’s spirit, divine power and authority are manifested through the mighty works that are performed.

d. Full of righteousness, peace and joy

Romans 14:17 tells us that the kingdom of heaven is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. When we obey the will of God and submit to His Authority, we will experience the blessings and the richness of life in Jesus Christ.

Teaching Tips

You may wish to compare the characteristics of the Kingdom of Heaven with those of an earthly kingdom. You can do this by drawing a table and comparing the characteristics side by side.



B . Where is the Heavenly Kingdom?

a. The heavenly kingdom

The kingdom of the Lord Jesus is the heavenly kingdom that has been prepared for the saints since the foundation of the world (Mt 25:34). During His ministry, the Lord revealed the existence of the heavenly kingdom. He says, “In my Father’s house are many rooms” (Jn 14:1-3), which refers to the new heaven and the new earth created by God. It is a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28) and of enduring substance (Heb 10:34). It is a kingdom in which there shall be no more tears, death, sorrow, or pain and where the righteous can live eternally (Rev 21:1-4; Mt 25:46b). In Revelation 21:15-27 there is a description of the place that the Lord Jesus has prepared for us. It is a city full of splendor, where there is no need of sun or moon. It is filled with the glory of God. In fact, heaven is far beyond our ability to understand, imagine or describe (1 Cor 2:9).

b. The church is the kingdom of God

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus Christ teaches us to pray, "May your kingdom come, may thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We understand that wherever God is king and wherever the spirit of the Lord reigns – that is the kingdom of heaven. On earth, the church is the kingdom of God and the house of God (Eph 2:19). In the church, Christ is the head, and His Spirit fills the place (Mt 12:28). It is where God grants His grace, manifests His power, reveals His will to humanity and where He is glorified.

c. In our hearts

One time the Pharisees asked the Lord when the kingdom of God was coming. He answered them, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:20). In fact, the kingdom of God begins here and now, when we regard God as the king of our hearts, and when we conform to the will of God by obeying His commandments and leading a life that is pleasing to Him.

Part 2

The Development of the Kingdom of God



In Matthew chapter 13, the Lord Jesus spoke a series of seven parables concerning the development of the kingdom of God from its beginning and advancement, to its final consummation.

a. Parable of the sower

The kingdom of God is like a sower who goes out to sow seeds. The seeds land on four different soils, which produce different responses. The sower is the Lord Jesus who came to the world to preach the good news of the kingdom of heaven. When the message reaches the hearts of individuals, it is met with different types of responses. To some, the truth has no effect on them at all, while to others, it bears much fruit. Here, the Lord teaches us that the condition of a person's heart determines whether God's word will have an effect on him and whether he is worthy of God's kingdom.

b. Parable of the wheat and tares

In this parable, the Lord explains how the son of man came to sow seeds by coming

to the world and preaching the message of the kingdom of heaven. At the same time, the enemy Satan works by sowing tares among the wheat. Tares are darnel, a weed that closely resembles wheat. As seeds, the tares look the same as the wheat, but it is only when they are fully matured at harvest time that they can be distinguished from each other. The Lord here teaches us that although many may come to believe in the message of the kingdom and are converted into the faith, Satan will cause heresies and corruption to arise. True and false believers will coexist. However, God will not execute immediate judgement, but will allow evilness and wickedness to persist until the judgement. On judgement day, He will separate the weeds from the wheat and remove evil forever.

c. Parable of the mustard seed

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that is sown. The mustard seed is not the smallest seed known today, but it was the smallest seed used by Palestinian farmers and gardeners, and under favorable conditions the plant could reach some ten feet in height. Like the mustard seed, the kingdom of God first appeared small and insignificant; the Lord Jesus was born in a stable, raised in a town despised by many, chose twelve disciples who were mainly uneducated, common men, and eventually was crucified on the cross. Although the Lord and His message began with humble and insignificant beginnings, the good news flourished and spread throughout the world and affected the lives of many. However, despite the growth of the truth, there is still the ever-present work of Satan.

d. Parable of the leaven

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour. The woman represents the church, and leaven represents hypocrisy (Lk 12:1; Mt 16:6, 11), malice and evil (1 Cor 5:8), heresy (Gal 5:9) and similar corrupt conduct and traditions. In the Old Testament, leaven was not allowed in the sacrifices (Ex 13:3; Lev 2:11). But in this parable, leaven was incorporated into the dough. This represents how false teachings, evil, and hypocrisy infiltrated the early church, which caused the truth to become secularized and distorted.

e. Parable of the hidden treasure

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure that is hidden in the ground. A man comes by and accidentally discovers the treasure. During biblical times, people had a custom of burying treasures in the ground to prevent them from being stolen by robbers (Job 3:21; Prov 2:4; Mt 25:18, 25). However if the owner died, the treasures could be discovered accidentally or be forever left buried in the ground. The treasures refer to the gospel of the Lord Jesus (Phil 3:8; Heb 11:26). The ground refers to the church of God. It is only in the church that truth and grace are found (1 Tim 3:15). The man, after discovering the treasure, in his joy goes and

sells all that he has to buy the field. Likewise, we should be willing to forsake everything that we value for the kingdom of heaven.

f. Parable of the fine pearl

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant who was in search of fine pearls. The precious pearl refers to the good news of the kingdom of heaven. The value of receiving the truth surpasses everything in this world. In Philippians 3:8, Paul says, "Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ."

g. Parable of the dragnet

The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. This refers to the gospel of the kingdom of heaven when it is preached throughout the world and attracts many to come. Like the many different kinds of fish that are caught, people from different nations and races will accept the gospel of salvation. When the net is full, it is dragged ashore, and a selection process occurs. The angels will execute judgement by selecting the good and discarding the bad. The bad are those who are evil, corrupt and unclean (Lev 11:9-12). Romans 9:6 records, "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel." Therefore, we cannot be satisfied just because we are in the net of salvation. The Lord says that many are called but only a few are chosen. Only the righteous will be "put into the vessels" (1 Jn 3:7,) which refers to the heavenly kingdom. But all those who are evil and lawless will be rejected and thrown into the lake of fire. Therefore, in the last days, the great mission of the true church is to spread the word of God to all men.

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



1 What are the differences between an earthly kingdom and the kingdom of heaven?

2

Where is the kingdom of God?

3

Why did Matthew's gospel repeatedly mention that the kingdom of God is being at hand?

4

Can you trace the development of the kingdom of God? What do you notice about its beginning, advancement and completion?

5

How can we advance the kingdom of God?

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



In this lesson, we have learnt that God's kingdom is wherever God reigns. When we seek and follow God's will and walk according to the Spirit, we are allowing God to be king of our hearts. Like Paul, we need to ask, "What shall I do Lord?" (Ac 22:10). When we allow God to be the king of our hearts and lives, we need to see what God wants us to do when we make seemingly insignificant choices in the course of everyday life. The choices we make, from morning till night, do shape who we are. If we value God as king of our hearts, we will consider if our choices reflect biblical principles or if they bring glory to God's name. Read the following case studies and discuss how each character can apply God's will in their lives.

Case Studies

1. Simon has already graduated from his undergraduate studies. He has been trying to look for a job for seven months, but nothing seems hopeful. He is beginning to worry about his future. One day he receives a call from a company he had previously interviewed with. They offer him a job, and the salary is good. The only drawback is that he needs to work on Saturdays. Feeling very confused, he begins to wonder whether he should take the job. Simon asks some brothers and sisters in church for advice. They congratulate him and say, "Thank God, you have been searching all this time, and now you got this job. It must be God's will." Simon decides to take the job. Do you think Simon made the right decision? How would you know if his decision was in line with God's will?

(Simon has been searching for seven months, and he is beginning to get a little anxious. Now when the first "opportunity" arises, he goes for it. In Matthew 6:31-33, the Lord reminds us that we do not need to worry about what we need, for He will provide. He is our heavenly father, and our duty is to trust in Him. But unfortunately when faced with problems, our total focus is on our problems and the need to resolve them quickly. Often, the decisions we make reflect our needs rather than our faith in God's word or biblical principles. A Christian who puts God first will not consider anything that is contrary

to the teachings of the Bible. He will be able to discern whether his choice will please God or not. He will obey and listen to God's principles even if that decision means putting aside his own wishes, poses more problems, or does not resolve the matter at hand. Sometimes what we think is a good decision and resolves the problem only serves to add to our troubles further down the road. If we have a sincere desire to carry out His will whatever the cost, God will surely guide us and open up better opportunities for us, as experienced by many brothers and sisters and the saints of old. God is loving and gracious, and He will not fail those who choose to trust in Him).

2. Jane has been waiting for this big event for a long time. Prom night. The night she could dress up to the nines, hang out with friends, and behave and be treated like an adult. And what is even more exciting is that Ian has asked her to be his date for the prom. She begins thinking about all the preparations she has to make. But her parents strictly refuse to let her attend. Jane just cannot understand why they would refuse her of this once in a lifetime opportunity. What's the harm anyway? Weren't they always going on about getting experiences in life? Do you think Jane's parents were right in not allowing her to attend? Discuss what God's will is in this aspect.

(As a Christian, God has given us the freedom to make our own choices. Some choices that we make will impact our faith positively, while there are some that can be damaging to our spiritual well-being. Apostle Paul reminds us that "everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial." It is therefore important that we make our choices wisely in light of what is good for us spiritually. Going to the prom is the highlight for all high school seniors in this culture. And for most, it is a much-looked-forward-to event. But as Christians, we have to examine whether what we do is pleasing to God, regardless of how small the matter.

Firstly, Jane needs to consider what her motives are for going to the prom. What is it that makes going to the prom so attractive? Is it because all her friends are going? Is it just because it's an accepted thing? Is it because going on a date would be fun? Secondly, Jane needs to consider what is involved. A prom is the setting for a senior's dance and dinner. Usually there is a lot of loud music, dancing and joviality. The music played, such as rap or hip-hop, ordinarily contains lyrics about power, violence, and sex. When the lights are dim, the music is suggestive and there is a lot of physical contact – particularly in slow numbers - it is very easy to let our guard down and our emotions go.

Thirdly and most importantly, Jane needs to consider what God's views are in this matter. Is this really a situation that would glorify God? Is it a setting that would promote the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life? Would it be healthy to our eyes and mind? Paul instructs us to purify ourselves from everything that would contaminate body and spirit. We have to carefully guard our bodies and our spirit, by keeping away all possible temptations and setting ourselves apart from these things.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



1. *Is God king of our hearts?*
2. *What other things could take God's place as king of our hearts?*
3. *How are we going to place God as king of our hearts in our daily lives?*

Lesson 3

The Gospel of Matthew

Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven

Listed Scriptures

Mt 5-7; Ac 13:47; Phil 3:20; Eph 2:11-22; Col 1:12-23; 1 Pet 2:9-10;
1 Jn 2:1-18

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to learn about the right attitudes a citizen of the kingdom of God should have
- 2) To enable students to understand that as people of God we need to be separate from the world

Memory Verse

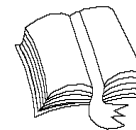
"Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

(Mt 7:21)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Matthew 20-28

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



Please refer to the Bible Backgrounds in Lessons 1 and 2 for additional information on the Gospel of Matthew (the first three lessons of this book are Bible studies based on the Gospel of Matthew).



Draw up a list of the things that make a person a good citizen of his or her country. How do these traits differ from citizens of the kingdom of God?

B I B L E S T U D Y



The Beatitudes

Because of the nature of this Bible study, the **Check for Understanding Questions** are located after each beatitude.

Every kingdom has a king or ruler who governs his subjects. In the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ is King. Who are the citizens? When Pilate asked the Lord Jesus if He was king of the Jews, the Lord agreed. Does this mean that the Lord's subjects are only the Jews of this world? Apostle Paul gave a very clear explanation regarding this. He said, "for He is not a real Jew who is one outwardly,... He is a Jew who is one inwardly" (Rom 2:28-29). This means that all those who have been baptized into Christ have become the descendants of Abraham. They are the spiritual Jews, the citizens of the kingdom of God (Gal 3:27-29).

Since the Lord is king, the kingdom is operated according to His laws and principles. What then are the laws of the heavenly kingdom? The Lord says, "He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day" (Jn 12:48). Since the teachings of the Lord Jesus are the laws of the heavenly kingdom, as citizens we should honor our King by doing whatever He says.

Matthew chapters 5-7 records the "Sermon on the Mount" given by the Lord on a hillside near Capernaum. In this longest-recorded sermon, the Lord Jesus expounds on what is in essence the law of the heavenly kingdom (Mt 5-7). He begins by describing the characteristics He looked for in His followers, and He gives directions on how to live as faithful subjects in His kingdom. The sermon begins with the "Eight Beatitudes." The beatitudes are named from the Latin word "Beatus," which means "blessed." The Greek term means "happy, fortunate." Each beatitude tells us how citizens of the kingdom should live in order to be blessed. Each beatitude

is almost a direct contradiction of society's typical way of life—the kingdom's

values are eternal, and the world's values are temporal. According to worldly standards, the types of people that the Lord describes don't seem to be particularly "blessed" because the beatitudes don't promise laughter, pleasure, or earthly prosperity. Instead, the blessed are those who are spiritually satisfied and rewarded.

a. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:3)

The spiritually poor are those who are "poor" or deficient inwardly. Those who are full will not desire to be filled. Only those who are poor will desire for more (Lk 6:20). Matthew 11:25 records how the truth is hidden from the wise and revealed to the babes. The wise are those who feel they already know enough and have lost the desire to pursue further. The babes, on the other hand, are spiritually "poor." They are those who are humble, inquisitive and open to God's truth. It is to such people that the Lord reveals His truth.

The Ethiopian eunuch is an example of such a person. Although he was the treasurer of Ethiopia, a man of power, knowledge, and status, the eunuch humbly admitted his ignorance when Philip asked if he understood what he was reading. Because of his humility, God opened his heart to understand the words of God and receive salvation (Ac 8:26-40). From this example we can see that the eunuch was "poor in spirit." Those who are poor in spirit understand and know their weaknesses. They realize their deficiencies and limitations and thus have a desire to better themselves. Apostle Paul was a great and accomplished worker of the Lord who received many divine revelations, yet in 1 Corinthians 13:9, he writes "for our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect." Paul recognized that what he knew was still inadequate. He knew how to forget about the past and to continue to strive forward in perfecting himself.

How are the "poor in spirit" blessed? The Lord promises them the kingdom of heaven. Notice how there is the use of the present tense in the first and last beatitudes. The intervening beatitudes describe the reward in the future tense. Those who are poor in spirit are those who recognize their inadequacies and pursue after spiritual fulfillment. When we pursue after God's word and the indwelling of His Spirit, when our hearts conform to God's will and we make God King, then the kingdom of God has come into our hearts.

Questions:



1. Suggest ways we can be poor in spirit.
2. How does the kingdom of heaven begin here and now if we are poor in spirit?

b. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Mt 5:4)

2 Corinthians 7:10 tells us that, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death." Here it mentions two types of grief: godly and worldly grief.

Like the widow of Nain who mourned over the death of her only son (Lk 7:11-15), people grieve over the death or loss of people or things dear to them. Sometimes the grief and sorrow over a loss affect a person so much that in some cases, these feelings lead to death. Godly grief however, leads not to death but to salvation. Godly grief is when a person mourns and grieves over sins and wrongdoings. The Bible records the different reactions that people have towards their sins. When Samuel confronted Saul about disobeying God's commands, Saul tried to justify his wrongdoings (1 Sam 13:11-14). In contrast, when Nathan the prophet pointed out David's sins, David did not try to cover up his sins or excuse himself. Rather, he repented bitterly (Ps 51:1-4). David mourned and wept each night over his sins (Ps 6:6). In God's sight, this type of mourning is most precious.

Why are those who mourn blessed? Because they will be comforted. If we come before the Lord in our times of grief, we will receive comfort from the Lord. Prior to meeting the Lord Jesus, the widow of Nain may have tried to seek comfort from the people or the things around her. But only when she encountered the Lord did her grief turn to joy. The Lord knew her sorrow and bitterness, and He comforted her by raising her son from the dead. If God comforts us of our worldly grief, how much more will He comfort us if we come before Him mourning for our sins? This is by far more precious in the sight of God. Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And in Isaiah 66:2, the Lord says, "But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." When we come before the Lord with our grief, He will wipe away our tears and forgive us of our sins (Jer 15:19; Is 30:15).



Questions:

1. What things do we mourn over?
2. Have we ever mourned or grieved for our sins or the sins of others?
3. Why is mourning for our sins precious in the sight of God?

c. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth (Mt 5:5)

The meek are those who are gentle and humble. They are patient and not easily

angered (Prov 16:32). They do not look to their self-interests but give way to others.

The incident where Isaac gave way to the herdsman of Gerar three times is a great example of one who is meek (Gen 26:12-22). Here, we can see that biblical attitudes are very different from those of society. Today, we may be encouraged to fight for what is ours by right. We may be taught to stand up for ourselves and not allow others to "push us around." Society often requires us to have a more self-assertive and aggressive approach. However, in this beatitude the Lord reminds us that it is the meek who are blessed and not those who seek revenge themselves. In fact, we do not need to retaliate or "get even." It is considered a blessing if, because of our meekness, we are disadvantaged or wronged. In the end, God will fight for us and give us more than what we lost.

How are the meek blessed? The Lord Jesus promises us that those who are meek will inherit the earth. Here, "the earth" could refer to actual physical land or a spiritual inheritance. In Genesis 13:8-18, Abraham offered Lot first choice of the land. When Lot saw the Jordan valley, he chose the best land for himself. While Abraham lost out because of his generosity, God repaid him with much more land than what he had given up.

However, today, the land that we inherit may not be a physical land but a spiritual one. James 1:21 tells us, "to receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save our souls." The seed is the word of God. If we receive the word of God with a meek and humble heart, it will bring us eternal life and we will receive our heavenly inheritance (2 Tim 3:15).

Questions:



1. What does it mean to be meek?
2. How do worldly and biblical attitudes on meekness differ?
3. Have you ever been in a situation where you were treated unfairly? What did you do? What was the outcome?

d. Blessed are those who thirst and hunger for righteousness' sake, for they shall be filled (Mt 5:6)

Our bodies have basic needs and desires. When we are hungry, we long for food. When we are thirsty, we desire water. These are the very things that will satisfy our needs. Our inner being has needs and wants too. However, if we use material things to satisfy our inner hunger and thirst, we find that those needs will not be ful-

filled. We need to find the right things that will satisfy the needs of our soul. After the Lord Jesus fed the five thousand, the people came looking for Him again the next day. When they found that He was not at the place where He fed the five thousand, they got into boats and traveled from Tiberias to Capernaum, which was on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When they found the Lord, He told them not to pursue after physical food, but spiritual food (Jn 6:27). The people were hungry and thirsty for physical satisfaction. They went through great pains to find the Lord Jesus, which showed their intense desire and need. But they sought for the wrong things. People today thirst for more wealth, achievements, and pleasures. But this beatitude says blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Righteousness here refers to doing God's will and imitating Christ. We should have an intense desire and longing to be like the Lord Jesus, and to be right with God. The Psalmist wrote, "as a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?" (Psalm 42:1-2; 119:20)

What blessings will those who hunger and thirst for righteousness receive? They will be filled. When the people came to the Lord, their motive for seeking Him was to gain physical blessings. Such material blessings and enjoyment are temporal and cannot fully satisfy our inner thirst and hunger. It is only when we pursue after the righteousness of God that we are truly satisfied. Through His word and His spirit, our souls will be refreshed, supported, and strengthened (Is 55:1-3; Jer 31:25; Ps 81:16).



Questions:

1. What does "righteousness" here refer to?
2. What kind of attitude do the words "hunger and thirst" suggest that we should have?
3. Was there ever a time when you strongly desired God and His words?

e. Blessed are those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Mt 5:7)

The merciful are those who have compassion and sympathy for the misfortunes and afflictions of others. Being merciful is not only a state of mind, but it is manifested in action. During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus not only demonstrated great power, but many of His miracles were motivated by the love and compassion that He had for the people. He pitied them, for they were like "sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36; Mt 14:14; 15:32). Often we are selective over who we show love and mercy to. The Lord sets us a good example by reaching out to whoever was

in need regardless of background, gender, or status (Mt 14:14; 15:32).

How are the merciful blessed? They shall obtain mercy. This tells us that by being merciful to others, or showing kindness to others, we are in fact showing mercy to ourselves, because we in turn will be shown mercy. In the story of Rahab and the two spies who went out to spy the land of Canaan, Rahab and her family were spared of their lives because she showed kindness to the two spies (Josh 2:1-14; 6:22-25). Ecclesiastes 11:1, tells us that if we cast our bread upon the waters, which is to have mercy and kindness to others, we will find it again after many days. "For the measure we give will be the measure we get back" (Luke 6:38).



Questions:

1. Who needs our mercy and compassion?
2. In what ways has the Lord been merciful to you?

f. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Mt 5:8)

The pure in heart are those who are without sin and impurity. They have a close relationship with God and are washed clean with the truth and the spirit of God (Heb 12:14; 1 Jn 3:1-3). From this we know that to be close to God, we must have a pure heart and lead a holy life. Without a pure heart we cannot lead holy lives. Psalms 24:3-4 reads, "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully." We should preserve our hearts more than anything, for from it flow the springs of life (Prov 4:23).

How are the pure in heart blessed? They can see God. Not only will they see God every day in the future (1 Jn 3:2-3), but they can see God in this present life.

There are different ways that we can see God. The Bible records how God appeared or spoke to different characters. The Bible does not specify how, but God may have appeared to them in dreams and visions (Job 33:14), or through a voice (1 Kgs 19:9-13).

Another way that we can see God is when we see the abidance of God in our lives. When Joseph was made the overseer of Potiphar's house, he was so successful and prosperous in everything he did that even his master, who did not worship God, saw that God was with him (Gen 39:1-4). We realize that we do not have to see visions or dreams to see God. In fact, when we perceive the blessings and abidance of God in our lives, our families, or our work, and when our prayers

are heard, we have seen God. This in itself is most valuable.

Questions:



1. How can we be pure in heart?
2. Have you “seen” God in your daily life?

g. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Mt 5:9)

Peacemakers are those who actively seek to end bitterness and bring about reconciliation. Peacemakers are: 1) those who make peace with God 2) those who make peace with others 3) those who cause others to reconcile 4) those who cause others to reconcile with God. After the fall of Adam and Eve, man was cast out from God’s presence. Man made himself hostile with God. And only through the blood of Christ can man be reconciled with God and reestablish the former relationship he once had (Col 1:20). Thus, we are peacemakers when we make peace with our God. Furthermore, we are entrusted with the message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-19), and it is our duty to preach the gospel to those separated from God. Not only that, but we have to seek harmony with all men (Heb 12:14) and settle disputes among the brethren. Recognizing that Satan works to destroy peace everywhere, we, the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, must work to maintain peace between God and our fellow man.

How will the peacemakers be blessed? As peacemakers we will obtain a rich reward as sons of the Most High God. When we make peace with the Lord, we return to our former status as sons of God. Isaiah 9:6-7 records how the Lord Jesus came as “the Prince of Peace.” As the ultimate sacrifice, He brought peace between God and humanity. Therefore, by making peace with God and others and by preaching the gospel of peace, we will be called sons of God because we imitate our Lord and reflect our Father’s character.

Questions:



1. How do you resolve conflicts?
2. Explain how we are sons of God by being peacemakers.
3. Who should we make peace with?

h. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake (Mt 5:10)

Persecution can arise for many reasons. People may be harassed or oppressed due to differences in race, religion or beliefs. In the Bible, there are many characters

who were persecuted for the sake of Christ and the gospel (1 Pet 2:19-20).

Why do we face persecution? The Lord once said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18:36). As followers of Christ, we do not belong to the world. Our faith, values and lifestyle are different from those of the world. Because of this, we stand out from the world and are hated by the world (Jn 15:18-19; 2 Cor 6; 14ff). Furthermore, the Lord tells us that as long as we are on earth, we will have tribulations, and we are destined to suffer (Jn 16:33; 1 Thess 3:3). Since the Lord suffered and was persecuted, we should not be surprised when we too have to undergo the same trials. As servants of Christ, we should arm ourselves with the same mentality as Christ, our master (1 Pet 4:1; 12; Jn 15:20). Recognizing this, we need not be afraid of persecution but should consider it a deep spiritual joy and honor when we suffer for the Lord (Jn 1:2; Ac 5:40; Ac 13:49-52).

What blessing will the persecuted have? To those who endure trials, the Lord promises the kingdom of heaven, where they will receive great rewards. Therefore, our present suffering fades in comparison with the eternal glory that we are being prepared for.

Questions:



1. Have you ever had to stand up for what you believe in despite opposition?
2. Were you ever teased or slandered because of your faith? How did you feel? Did you take the easy way out?
3. The Bible tells us to rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted. How can we rejoice when being insulted or persecuted?

Teaching Tips

You may wish to have the students discuss in groups and complete the table on the following page (also found in the Student’s Workbook), which serves as a good summary of the main points in each beatitude.

| Beatitude | Write the beatitude in your own words | Name an example from the bible that illustrates this attitude | What are the clashing worldly values? | What blessings are promised? | How can we develop this in our daily lives? |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Poor in spirit | | | | | |
| Mourn | | | | | |
| Meek | | | | | |
| Thirst and hunger for righteousness | | | | | |
| Merciful | | | | | |
| Pure in Heart | | | | | |
| Peacemakers | | | | | |
| Persecuted for righteousness | | | | | |

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



The questions can be found in the Bible Study section, after each beatitude.

LIFE APPLICATION



Let Others See Jesus in You

Numbers 23:9 reads, "for from the top of the mountains I see him, from the hills I behold him; lo, a people dwelling alone, and not reckoning itself among the nations." Throughout history, the chosen people of Israel

were a nation separate and different from the rest of the nations. They were God's own people, and only to them were the laws and commands of God given. God called the Israelites so that they could bring God's qualities to the world. Similarly, God has called us so that we can be the salt and light of the world (Mt 5:13-16). He has asked us not to conform to the world but has set us as a light to the Gentiles, that we should bring the salvation of God to the ends of the earth (Ac 13:47).

Questions to think about:

1. Has there been a time when others could see that you were different - a citizen of heaven?
2. Have you felt inclined to conform to those around you?
3. Do you feel proud or ashamed to be a citizen of heaven?
4. What makes it hard to be God's citizens in this world?
5. How can we be the salt and light of the world?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



The Lord Jesus has given us very specific instructions on how to live and act as citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

1. Do we qualify to be in God's kingdom?
2. Which beatitude is manifested in our lives?
3. Are our attitudes a carbon copy of the world, or do they reflect the ideals to which the Lord Jesus has called us?

Goals

Many of our students at this time will be involved in holy work in one form or another. In this unit, our students will learn through the example of the Lord Jesus the importance of holy work and spiritual cultivation. Our students will discover that the qualities that a company looks for in its employees are often not the qualities or motives that God seeks in those who serve Him. Our students will also identify their gifts and some of the various ways they can serve God and the people around them.

unit 2

Teacher Devotional

Our Lord Jesus once told this to His disciples, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Therefore, it is extremely important to accomplish things for God with His strength and wisdom. As apostle Paul said, "I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13). Take a few minutes to ask yourself, "What would my life be like apart from my Lord Jesus Christ?" Pray to God to show you how you can be even more rooted in the word of God and in your walk with God.

Stick With Our Lord Jesus

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me."
(John 15:4)

Lesson 4

The Gospel of Mark Jesus Christ, the Perfect Servant

Listed Scriptures

Isaiah 42:1-7, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:13; Mk 8:1-10; Lk 22:39-42; Phil 2:1-11

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to understand the need to develop spiritual qualities when doing holy work
- 2) To enable students to learn how to serve from the example of our Lord Jesus

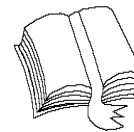
Memory Verse

"And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mk 10:44, 45)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Mark 1-5

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



About the author:

Mark's gospel, like the others, is technically anonymous in that the author does not identify himself. However, the clear testimony of the early church fathers shows that it was written by John Mark. It is believed that Mark created this gospel by writing down Peter's recollections of Jesus' life. Mark is a Roman name that means "hammer," while "John" is a Jewish name that means "grace of God." Mark was a native of Jerusalem, and the church often met for prayer at his mother's house (Ac 12:12). Mark was a companion of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Halfway, however, Mark deserted them. On the second journey, Paul refused to take Mark. But thanks to his cousin Barnabas, Mark was mentored in the faith, and he later reconciled with Paul and became a valuable worker.

Time of Writing:

It was likely written in Rome between AD 55 and 70. Dating the Gospel of Mark with accuracy is virtually impossible because the text contains few clues. It can only be surmised that Mark was written before AD 70 because there is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem that had been predicted by the Lord Jesus (13:1-23).

Purpose of Writing:

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four gospels. The gospel was written to Roman Christians living in Rome to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. Mark did not need to recite the genealogy of the Lord Jesus or refer to fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies as the Gospel of Matthew does. Gentiles don't need a Jewish history lesson; they need a clear picture of Christ. And the Romans believe in power and action. So Mark presents the Lord through a rapid succession of vivid pictures of Him in action – His true identity revealed by what He does, not by what He says. However, Mark shows the Lord using His mighty power to help others and shows Him taking the form of a servant, not a king. Mark weaves the servant theme throughout the book to show us how Jesus Christ came to give up His life and serve others. As disciples of the Lord, we should too.

W A R M U P



Imagine you are an employment agent seeking potential candidates for a job as an editor for a local newspaper and another job as the editor of our church publication. What things would you be looking for in both jobs? What similarities or differences would there be in the job requirements?

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Isaiah's portrayal of Jesus Christ- the Perfect Servant

In the first half of the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah warns the people to turn away from their sins. He prophesied that if they continued in their sins, they would be taken into exile by the Babylonians. Nevertheless, Isaiah comforts the people and speaks of the deliverance of the Lord. He portrays how the Holy One of Israel

will come in greatness and might to enforce obedience, blot out injustice and redeem His people. But suddenly, Isaiah's tone changes. The King who will come will be a servant! In the book of Isaiah, there are four "Servant Songs" (Is 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:13), which speak of the character and mission of the servant of God. At the climax, Isaiah prophesies how the Messiah will die for the people.

Historically, the servant that Isaiah was referring to was Cyrus, King of Persia (559-530 BC), who defeated Babylon and freed the Israelites (Is 45:1-8; 48:14-15). Cyrus allowed the people to return to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, which had been destroyed. However, in the four Servant Songs, God was pulling aside the curtain of time to let the people of Isaiah's day look ahead to the suffering of the Messiah and the resulting forgiveness made available to all of mankind. The songs are therefore, prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus, who would come as a servant. In fact, this contrast between Isaiah's image of the sovereign Lord, acting in power, suffering

and eventually dying for others, was puzzling to the Jews. It was only with the coming of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament that this prophecy was understood.

When Jesus Christ came to the world, He turned the world upside down. He challenged existing views. Although He was fully God, He didn't act like a king or a mighty warrior, but as a servant who was ready to serve and die for the sins of the people. The Lord taught an upside-down perspective on being important. He said whoever wanted to be first must be last. The world views someone as great when that person is first and best in everything. The Lord views someone as great when He serves and gives up His life for others.

Teaching Tips

Read the four "Servant Songs" recorded in the book of Isaiah. Identify the verses that speak of:

- a) the servant's relationship with God
- b) the servant's mission
- c) the characteristics of the servant.



Part 2

The Characteristics of the Perfect Servant of God

a. God's servant obeys and fulfills the will of God

As earthly servants are required to carry out the orders and wishes of the master, Jesus Christ came as a servant of God to complete the mission set before Him. The Lord's mission was to do the will of the Father. In John 3:34, Lord Jesus says, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work." And John 6:38 reads, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of Him who sent me" (Jn 5:19-20, 30; 8:28; 12:47-50; Lk 22:41-44). The Lord's entire life was a preparation and fulfillment of His mission. Everything He said and did was for this purpose. Even as a young boy, the Lord Jesus recognized why He had come (Lk 2:49). At times when it seemed too much to bear, Lord Jesus walked bravely on, knowing that it was for this purpose that He had come (Jn 12:27). Servants need to know what the will of their master is. Similarly, the Lord knew what the will of the Father was (Lk 4:48). In the book of Isaiah, the mission of the servant of God was to bring justice to the nations. He would be a light to the nations. He would open the eyes that are blind, bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Is 42:1; 49:6). The Lord came as a light to the world. He came to preach salvation to those who were in deep spiritual darkness and proclaimed liberty to the captives of sin (Mt 4:16). As a servant, the Lord had fully and completely obeyed the will of the Heavenly Father. And with the words, "It is finished," He accomplished the work of redemption.

b. God's servant is humble

Although Jesus Christ was God, He was willing to leave His heavenly throne and glory to dwell among men. He came not only in human form, but he took on the lowliest status of a servant. The Lord did not make a public entry into the world like the great princes, rather He entered quietly. His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, and it did not come mightily or powerfully. Rather it came without observation. In Isaiah, it says that, "He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break nor cause a smoldering wick to be quenched" (Is 42:2-3). The Lord came with compassion and tenderness. His friends and companions were the lowly, the uneducated, the sinners and tax collectors—those who were rejected or without hope in society. When others tried to make Him king by force, He withdrew from them, for He did not come to be a king, but a servant (Jn 6:15). He came to demonstrate the principle of servitude.

"If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9:35). After performing miracles, the Lord would instruct certain people not to speak about it. He came not to seek His own glory or the glory of men (Jn 5:41; 8:50), but the glory of the Father. Through the washing of His disciples' feet and receiving the cruelest and most humiliating form of death, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples what it really meant to be great in the heavenly kingdom.

c. God's servant will undergo suffering

The duty of a servant is to obey the commands of the master, whether he is willing or not. When a servant has to answer every call of the master, his personal will and freedom is denied. Everyday, the servant lives a life of service and toil, having little or no time to rest.

While Jesus Christ was on earth, He went from village to village preaching the kingdom of God, healing the sick and casting out demons each day. As news of Him began to spread, the Lord became busier and busier. Huge crowds would come to seek Him no matter the time of day. He had compassion on them and served them readily (Mk 1:32-34). He placed aside His own needs and wants to help them. Mark 8:1-10 records an occasion when the Lord Jesus had been preaching for three days and had not eaten. By Mark 3:20, the crowds had come together again, so that He and the disciples were not even able to eat. Often Jesus Christ would toil and labor to the extent that He would not have enough food or sleep. He customarily spent the evenings praying in the mountains or woke up to pray before day (Mk 1:35). Would we be willing to go without food or sleep? Would we be able to keep on giving despite fatigue and hunger? Lord Jesus did not think of Himself. Every moment was spent helping those around Him and saving the souls of the people.

Although Jesus Christ suffered physically, the greatest suffering that the Lord underwent was the punishment of bearing the sins of the world. For our sins, the Lord willingly gave Himself up as the sacrificial lamb to be slaughtered. Isaiah says of the Lord Jesus, "I turned not backward, I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Is 50:5-6). To save us from sin, Jesus Christ took the punishment, upon Himself so that through His chastisement, we are made whole, and with His stripes we are healed (Is 53:4-6).

Teaching Tips

You may wish to ask students to come up with a list of examples from the gospels for each section. You might ask, "In what ways did the Lord Jesus show Himself to be: a) obedient to the will of God b) humble and meek and c) a suffering servant? Students can then come together to share and discuss their findings.

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



- 1** Why would God choose to save mankind through a humble servant rather than a glorious king?
- 2** What does that tell us about the God whom we worship?
- 3** God often works in ways we don't expect. Has God worked in unexpected ways in our lives?
- 4** The prophet Isaiah prophesied centuries before the advent of the Lord Jesus. What does that teach us concerning the promises and love of God?
- 5** In what ways does the Lord Jesus fulfill the picture of God's servant as spoken of in the Book of Isaiah?
- 6** What was the mission of the Lord Jesus? What is our mission today?
- 7** How faithful have we been in fulfilling assigned duties in church?
- 8** What can we learn about humility from the example of our Lord Jesus?

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



To Be Like Lord Jesus

In today's lesson we studied three characteristics required of a good servant of the Lord. Many of us at this time have begun to take part in doing holy works in one form or another. We may have realized that serving is not as easy as it seems. We may face trials, frustrations or risks. In our discussion, we will look at the importance of these qualities in serving the Lord.

Obedience:

"You are my friends if you do what I command you." (John 15:14)

An obedient heart and doing the will of God are the primary qualifications for being God's servant. However, we find that we like to have the freedom to do what

we like. We often don't like being told what to do. When God asks us to do certain things, we don't listen. There are times when we may have to force ourselves to submit to what God wants rather than what we want.

Questions to think about:

- 1.** Give an example of when you were unwilling to listen or do something that you were told to do.
- 2.** Why is obedience such an important quality for a servant of God?
- 3.** Why can it be difficult to submit to God or others at times?
- 4.** Suggest ways that can help improve our submission and obedience to God's will.
(By laying aside our own will and desires, through faith in God's words and promises, by praying for strength to do His will, through our own determination and will)

Humility:

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Mt 11:29)

Often it can be difficult to maintain a humble spirit when school and society encourage us to have self-esteem, confidence and pride.

Questions to think about:

- 1.** Reflect on a time when you felt proud of yourself, your work or accomplishments.
- 2.** What are the characteristics of being humble?
- 3.** How can we be more humble?
(Through understanding ourselves and our own limitations, through realizing that everything we possess is given to us by God (1 Cor 4:7), through observing and appreciating the merits of others (Phil 2:3), through meditating and following the example of our Lord Jesus and other Bible characters (Phil 2:6-8).)

Suffering:

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." (1 Pet 4:1)

Since the Lord suffered for us, we should prepare to suffer physically, emotionally

and socially for Christ (1 Pet 4:1).

Questions to think about:

1. Make a list of all the ways you feel you have suffered while serving the Lord.
2. How did you feel at the time? Did you give up?
3. How did you overcome your difficulties and problems?

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Being a servant requires a high level of spiritual qualities. As we continue to serve the Lord, let us constantly examine our hearts so that our faith and service will be approved by the Lord.

Lesson 5

The Gospel of Mark Servant Qualities

Listed Scriptures

Hag 2:11-14; Lk 12:41-48; Ac 6:1-6; 1 Cor 3:5-15; 4:1-2; 1 Cor 12:1-11; 2 Cor 11:23-28; 2 Tim 2:20-22; 1 Pet 4:1-11

Lesson Aim

To enable students to understand the necessary qualities we should possess as faithful servants of God

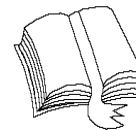
Memory Verse

And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." (Mk 9:35)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Mark 6-10

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



Please refer to the Bible Background section in Lesson 4 for additional information on the Gospel of Mark (Lessons 4, 5, and 6 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of Mark).



"The Lord Jesus has called us to serve"

What is your understanding of this?

How do you feel about serving others?

Is it difficult or enjoyable for you?

What motivates or deters you from serving others?

B I B L E S T U D Y

Part 1

Qualities
of a
Servant

As we get to know the Lord, we will learn to appreciate His love more and more. We will want to give Him something in return. How can we repay God's love for us? The way to repay Him is to live for Him. Living for Christ begins with learning to give. When we give ourselves fully to the Lord, He will use us to accomplish His great purpose. We will become instruments for His use. But as in any job, there are certain requirements that we should have in order to serve God effectively. Today, we will continue to study the qualities required of a servant of God.

A. Love and Compassion

It takes a lot of love to serve God, His kingdom and His people. Only with love can we sacrifice ourselves and our money, time, and energy. This may seem very easy, but to love not in words but in deed and truth takes effort and practice. God did not just say that He loved us. He demonstrated it through sacrificing Himself upon the cross.

Sometimes we think that by loving and sacrificing ourselves to others means giving up our lives and dying as a martyr. Maybe we think that loving God and others is like taking a \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table – "Here's my life, Lord, I'm giving it all." But the reality for most of us is that God sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Usually giving up our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. Jesus Christ demonstrated this throughout His earthly ministry (Mt 15:29-31). As the time for His death drew near, the

Lord and His disciples headed towards Jerusalem. On the way, He told His disciples what was to happen to Him. "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him; and after three days He will rise." (Mk 10:32-34)

As the Lord and the disciples passed by Jericho, two blind men cried out to the Lord to pity them. What would we have done if we were in the Lord's shoes? We probably would have felt that our mission ahead was too important to bother with such trivial matters. The Lord, however, was willing to stop and care for the needs of these two blind men whom others scorned, despite the important and heavy mission ahead of Him. He put aside His personal agenda and asked them, "What do you want me to do for you?" These are the words of a servant ready to serve his master. The Lord then touched their eyes, showing that He cared enough to do something for them, even though He could have simply healed them with a word.

We can thus see that no matter the time or place, the Lord Jesus would lay aside His own needs to serve the people by teaching, healing or preaching. He showed the ultimate love by seeing our spiritual needs and laying aside His heavenly throne to come to the world to die for us. In our busy lives and schedules, to what extent are we willing to lay aside our own immediate needs and time for others? Are we willing to stop and see to the needs of our family and friends? Oftentimes, we are too focused on ourselves to take time out for others. We need to learn from our Lord Jesus who took the initiative to see to the needs of others, and we need to offer our services willingly.

B. Holiness

In the Old Testament, the Levites and priests were people who were set apart from the common Israelites to serve God. Before they offered sacrifices, they had to wash and purify themselves.

In the house of God, there are many vessels of high and low value. In order to become a vessel for noble use, we have to first cleanse ourselves from sin. We must learn how to discipline ourselves, preserve ourselves from evil (2 Tim 2:20-22), have a clear conscience (Ac 20:33-34; 1 Sam 12:3-5; Eccl 12:14), and constantly increase in spiritual knowledge and keep our spiritual fervor.

Why is it important to maintain holiness while doing the Lord's work? In Haggai 2:11-14, the prophet Haggai asked the priests, "If a person carried consecrated meat in the fold of his garment and that fold touches some bread or stew or some other food, does it become consecrated?" The answer was no. Haggai then asked another question: "If a person, defiled by contact with a dead body, touches one of these things, does it become defiled?". The answer was yes. In the Old Testament law a person who was ceremonially "defiled" or "unclean" was not permitted to approach or worship God. In the same manner, those who wish to serve God need to be holy otherwise they will ruin the holy work. God also will not work with those who are unholy (Josh 7:11-12, 25; Heb 12:14; Gal 5:19-21). If we are not holy and serve God, it doesn't matter what position we hold or how much effort we put in—our work will not be accepted by Him.

C . Humility

In the Bible, there are many characters who were used mightily by God. These great workers were not successful because of their talents or leadership qualities. Instead, many were called by the Lord because of their humility. In Amos 7:14-15, the prophet Amos openly revealed that he did not come from a prophet's background. He was a poor man who cared for sycamore trees and whose fruit was a food of the poor. Despite his humble background, God used Amos by asking him to travel to the worship centers of Israel where the rich idled and to proclaim God's condemnation of their distorted values. From this example, we see that God's criteria in using people are independent of background, worldly education or expertise. His work does not depend upon human wisdom and knowledge, but upon simply obeying His will and serving in humility. How can we cultivate humility?

- a.** Humility comes when we realize just how insignificant we are. We are but sinners, yet we have a chance to serve the Almighty God and Creator of the universe (1 Tim 1:12-17).
- b.** James 1:17 tells us that "every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights..." Since all gifts, abilities and opportunities are given by God, what have we to boast of? Let all glory, honor and praise be to our Heavenly Father (1 Cor 4:7; Ps 115:1).
- c.** Phillipians 2:3-8 reminds us that we should consider others better than ourselves. Each person has his or her own flaws and merits. However, a common tendency is that we compare our merits with others' flaws. When we do this,

we actually have grounds to be proud because we are better than others in some areas. If, on the other hand, we compare our flaws with others' merits, we will have no grounds to be boastful. Furthermore, if we compare ourselves with the Lord Jesus, we will have absolutely no reason to be proud. Thus, we need to learn to admire and appreciate others' merits. Only then can we maintain a humble attitude (1 Pet 5:5, 6).

D . Ready to Face Difficulties and Challenges

While working for the Lord, the apostle Paul faced many difficulties and trials. Despite the numerous times he almost lost his life, Paul did not try to run from these hardships or threaten to quit serving. Rather, he faced these challenges head on. In his letter to the young Timothy, Paul encourages him saying, "As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5). If we want to work for God we must always be ready to accept and deal with challenges. What kinds of challenges will we face?

a. Challenges within ourselves

As servants of God, our primary goal is to please our master and carry out His will. This often means laying aside our own will and doing what God wants rather than what we want. Obeying God's will and sacrificing ourselves for others is often painful, as it is contrary to our natural tendency. In fact, according to Paul, our natural self is "hostile to God" (Rom 8:7). When we want to sacrifice ourselves to love others, our flesh tells us to care for our own needs instead. When we want to give more of our time to help brothers and sisters, our flesh tells us that we need the time to do our homework or spend the time shopping instead. When serving God and men, we have to overcome our own wishes and ambitions. We have to put God's command and the needs of our brothers and sisters as our first priority. This may be a struggle at first, but with determination and God's power, we will learn to serve with joy.

b. External challenges and suffering

Another kind of challenge that we may face while doing church work is external challenges. This may include pressures from the environment and from the people around us. Apostle Paul faced many such external challenges. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul gives an account of all that he had to deal with: dangers from travelling, to persecution from the Gentiles and his own countrymen. Peter, however, encourages us that "since Christ suffered for us in the

flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (1 Pet 4:1). Suffering trains us to rely on God's strength. God wants us to serve Him effectively, and He trains us through suffering so that we are purified from the ignoble.



Part 2

Servanthood-Other Considerations

A. Use Our Gifts

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of the different kinds of gifts that are used to help the church function effectively. The gifts were not to cause division, jealousy or rivalry among the believer, but "to equip the saints of the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13).

Each of us is given different gifts and talents to help and serve others (1 Cor 12:11). Such gifts may have been bestowed upon us when we were born. For example, some of us are born with a high aptitude for music or language. Other gifts are given when we ask in prayer (1 Cor 14; Eph 4:12), while still others are given by the laying of hands (2 Tim 1:6). No matter how we receive the gifts, it is God who gives them to individuals to complete the work set before them: Joshua was given leadership qualities to continue with Moses' job of leading the Israelites (Deut 34:9; Num 27:18-20); John the baptist was given the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the people back to God (Lk 1:14-17); the seventy disciples were sent out to work, and God gave them authority to preach, heal the sick, and cast out demons (Lk 10:9; 17).

a. Recognize our gifts

We should look into ourselves and try to know and identify our own qualities, strengths and abilities. There's no secret formula for discovering our spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts don't always show themselves right away; some are obvious while some are developed over time. We should try our hand at doing all kinds of work and see where our strengths lie and where God works with us.

b. Do not belittle our gifts

One of the items in Ripley's Believe It or Not is a picture of a plain bar of iron. It is valued at \$5. The same bar of iron has a far different value, however if it is fashioned into different items. For example, as a pair of horseshoes, that same bar could be worth \$50. As sewing needles, it could be worth \$5000, but if used to make balance springs for fine Swiss watches, it could be worth \$500, 000.

The above illustration reminds us that the raw material is not what is important. What's important is how the raw material is developed and used! Sometimes it may seem as if our special ability is too small or insignificant. Or we may feel our contribution will not amount to much. However, we should imitate the little boy who came forward and offered two loaves of bread and five fish to the Lord. He placed all that he had, little as it seemed, into the hands of the Lord without any preconceptions and allowed the Lord Jesus to work with it. This is the kind of attitude that the Lord wants us to have regardless of whether we have five, two or one talent. So long as we have the willingness of heart, God can put whatever we offer to full use.

c. Do not compare our gifts with others

The church functions with many different kinds of tasks such as preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing, giving, administering, building and many others. Each duty is important for the smooth running of the church.

During the Apostolic time, the apostles found that their duty to preach the word of God was neglected because they had to serve tables (Ac 6:1-6). Also, as the food was distributed, some of the widows were neglected. The apostles therefore appointed seven members who were to be responsible for the task of serving tables, while the apostles could concentrate on preaching and prayers.

From here we learn that preaching the word of God and serving tables were both necessary for the church to function effectively. We cannot say that preaching the word of God is more important than serving tables, and that we should forget about eating and focus solely on evangelism. 1 Corinthians 3:8 says, "He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor." We need not be envious of each other's gifts or value one type of work more highly than others. What God requires of us is that we act according to the best of our ability.

B. Spiritual Cultivation

a. Why is spiritual cultivation important?

As we get involved in church work, spiritual cultivation is vitally essential. From the four Gospels, we can see the importance of these two aspects in the life of the Lord Jesus: "And in the morning, a great while before day, Jesus rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed... and he went throughout all Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons" (Mk 1:35-39). Amidst the Lord's busy schedule of healing, preaching and teaching, He would often withdraw Himself from the crowd and go to a lonely place where He would have deep communion with God (Lk 4:42; 5:16; 11:1; Mk 1:35; Mk 3:7; 6:46). During His communions with God, Jesus Christ received the wisdom and the power necessary to carry out the will of the Father. From here we understand that there is a direct correlation between spiritual cultivation and effective service. The more we cultivate ourselves, the better we can serve God and vice versa.

In 1 Corinthians 9:27, the apostle Paul says, "I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified." Paul here understood the importance of spiritual cultivation. Paul was a great worker of God, with many gifts and talents, but he did not fail to subdue himself. He understood all too well his own weaknesses and the evils of Satan's work. We need to understand that just because we have more talents and do more work, it does not necessarily mean that we are closer to God or are guaranteed to be saved. We are saved not because of the work we do—we are saved depending on our self-cultivation. A person who only pays attention to divine work but neglects spiritual nurture might be rejected by God no matter how prominent his work may be.

b. Spiritual cultivation and service

Luke 10:38-42 records a time when the Lord Jesus was welcomed to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. During this visit, Martha was busy receiving the Lord and in the process, became frustrated and upset with all the work. She complained to the Lord that Mary, her sister, was doing nothing to help her. Instead, Mary was just sitting, listening to Him talk. Sometimes when we neglect our own spiritual cultivation, we too might think, "How come I have to do all this work?" or, "The brothers and sisters have no love. They leave me with all the work."

In a later visit recorded in John 12:2, we can observe a change in Martha. Here, Martha again is solely responsible for serving the Lord Jesus, but there is no further mention of her complaints. Martha has progressed in her faith. She was probably

reminded of the need to draw near to God and spiritually cultivate herself after the Lord Jesus said that Mary had chosen the better portion.

Mary too grew spiritually. In this instance, Mary takes a jar of nard, pours it on Lord Jesus' feet and wipes His feet with her hair. Mary sat by the Lord's feet and absorbed all that He had said. She was now motivated to offer her best to the Lord. What Mary offered was a service of love. She offered a jar of pure nard, which was worth a year's wages. This indeed was a great sacrifice. She was able to deny herself because she spiritually cultivated herself. The love of God moved her to give of her best to God.

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



- 1** How does not being holy ruin or affect holy work?
- 2** In what ways was Jesus Christ humble and meek?
- 3** What are the characteristics of the humble?
- 4** Why is it important to be humble?
- 5** How can we develop humility?
- 6** When we want to serve God, it is important to arm ourselves with the spirit of suffering. How have we "armed" ourselves to do holy work?
- 7** What are some inner and external challenges that you have encountered or are encountering at present?
- 8** Share how you discovered or developed your gifts or talents.
- 9** What other gifts would you like to pray for so that you can help the church more?
- 10** What can you do now to prepare yourself in becoming a useful vessel for the Lord?
- 11** How much time do we spend in spiritual cultivation?
What are some of the difficulties or obstacles that we face in our spiritual cultivation?

12 What are some of the symptoms that may result if we serve without spiritually cultivating ourselves?

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



Testimonies of Servanthood

On Love and Compassion

One sister's grandma had, for a large part of her married life, been physically abused by her husband. However, the grandpa later suffered from an illness that resulted in the amputation of his arms and leg. During this ten years' time, he was also completely bedridden. However, throughout the length of this time, the grandma continued to be by his side. She continued to love and tenderly care for him despite her past sufferings. What great love and forgiveness this is!

Questions to think about:

1. Reflect upon moments where we were able/unable to show an act of love to others.
2. What inspires us to give to others?
3. What prevents us from giving to others?
4. How can we increase in love?

On Holiness

There was a brother who went onto the internet to watch pornography one Friday night. The next day, he was scheduled to translate during Sabbath service. When he was up on the podium translating, a buzz sounded in his ear which he could not get rid of. The sound distracted him immensely. But as soon as the service ended and he stepped off the podium, the buzzing stopped.

Questions to think about:

1. What things may have a negative influence on us spiritually?
2. How are they damaging to our faith?
3. Compare your mentality when you serve God after doing something you know you shouldn't have done with when you serve with a clear conscience.

Ready to Face Difficulties

Once, thirty truthseekers from another church came to seek the truth in a TJC in Taiwan. The pastor of that other denomination was not very happy about this. He did not want to lose his members since each person paid around \$800 (Taiwanese dollars) per month for his salary. And so he hired some gang members to deal with Pr. X, our church pastor. One day, Pr. X was scheduled to visit one of the truthseekers. The truthseeker knew that the gang members were coming to sort out Pr. X and called to warn him. However, Pr. X had already left for the truthseeker's house. When Pr. X arrived, he saw an entire line of motorcycles and gang members with bats in hand waiting for him. Inside the car, the board member who had accompanied Pr. X was trembling with fear. Pr. X, however, thought, "If I need to fight, so be it," and he got out of his car. Turning to the gang members he asked them, "Is there a problem?" As soon as he said this, the gang members all fled for their lives. Pr. X had no idea why, but he guessed that God must have somehow frightened them off. Later, those truthseekers were baptized into our church.

Questions to think about:

1. What was the most challenging thing that you were asked to do?
2. How did you face your challenge?
3. What lessons did you learn from that experience?

On Knowing and Serving God With Our Gifts

During an IA election where a chairman was to be elected to replace the existing retiring chairman, an elder rose to address the audience. This elder knew that many would vote for him as the next chairman, as he was well qualified for the job. However, the elder recognized clearly what his gifts truly were. In his speech, he explained that God had bestowed upon him the gift of writing and that he hoped to devote the remainder of his time to write more books. If he became the chairman, he would not have the time to do what he was good at and what would be beneficial to future generations. He explained that if a hand is given the function of the feet, it can still walk, but it will feel uncomfortable, look strange, and it won't be able to walk for long.

Questions to think about:

1. List the talents that God has given you.
2. Do you think you have fully utilized your gifts for God and others?

On Spiritual Cultivation

An elderly brother in his seventies had been serving in the church for a period of time. Although he was a board member, he began to grow complacent. He criticized others and did little for the church. The local preacher, who observed this, he felt it was his responsibility to draw this to the brother's attention. So, during a house visit, the pastor courteously reminded the elderly brother of his contributions in the past. He also reminded the brother of certain aspects that he needed to improve upon. The brother thanked the pastor for his reminder but inwardly he was seething with anger. He thought, "I am much older than you and more experienced than you, what right do you have to teach me?" He decided that he would no longer do holy work. Later that evening, the brother was riding on his motorbike at around 70-80 mph, when all of a sudden he saw ahead of him, a huge figure dressed in white, holding a white stick. The elderly brother did not reduce his speed and as he came near the angel, the angel whacked him on the back with the stick. The brother fell to the ground and had to be taken immediately to the hospital. Later that evening, the pastor visited the brother in the hospital. He could not recognize him because he had been so badly injured. On seeing the pastor, the elderly brother wept bitterly and repented for his sins. After this lesson, the brother turned out to be a good worker of God.

Questions to think about:

1. From the testimony, what do you see as some of the dangers that may arise from serving without continuous spiritual cultivation?
2. Reflect upon a time when your service was affected because of a lack of spiritual cultivation.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Most of the apostles were men of lowly status and little education, but God used them to fulfill His purpose. The same holds true today; a man's worldly education and status has little to do with the degree of God's usage of him. God seeks those who possess spiritual qualities and are willing to give their lives to Him to accomplish His will.

Lesson 6

The Gospel of Mark Ways to Serve

Listed Scriptures

Mt 25:31-46; Lk 8:1-3; Lk 12:16-21; 2 Cor 9:1-15; Rom 10:14-15; Js 2:14-17; 1 Jn 3:16-18

Lesson Aim

To enable students to know the reasons and ways that we can serve

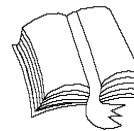
Memory Verse

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor 15:58)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Mark 111-16

BIBLE BACKGROUND



Please refer to Lesson 4 for additional information on the Gospel of Mark (Lessons 4, 5 and 6 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of Mark).

WARM UP

It Matters



Along the coast of the vast Atlantic Ocean there lived an old man. Each day when the tide went out, he would make his way along the beach for miles. Another man who lived out far away would occasionally watch as the old man vanished into the distance and would later notice that the old man had returned. The neighbor also noticed that, as the old man walked, he would often stoop down to lift something from the sand and then toss it away into the water.

One day, when the old man went down to the beach, this neighbor followed after him to satisfy his curiosity. Sure enough, as he watched, the old man bent down and gently lifted something from the sand and threw it into the ocean. By the time the old man made his next stop, the neighbor had come near enough to see that he was picking up a starfish that had been stranded by the retreating tide and would, of course, die of dehydration before the tide returned.

As the old man turned to return a starfish to the ocean, the neighbor called out with a degree of mockery in his voice, "Hey, old timer! What are you doing? This beach goes on for hundreds of miles, and thousands of starfish get washed up every day! Surely you don't think that throwing a few back is going to matter?" The old man listened and paused for a moment, then held the starfish in his hand out toward his neighbor. "It matters to this one."

Ask students to share their reflections on the story. Sometimes what we do for God and the people around us may seem as insignificant as throwing a starfish back into the sea. But in the eyes of God, every little act of love does matter and will be remembered. Let us learn, in whatever small way, to give to others.

B I B L E S T U D Y

Part 1



Reasons to Serve



A . Why Do We Need to Serve?

Once, when the disciples went out to buy food, the Lord preached to a Samaritan woman who had come to draw water from the well. Later, when the disciples returned with the food, the Lord said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know...my food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work" (Jn 4:32, 34).

From the Lord's reply, we may question how working for God is associated with food. Here, Lord Jesus shows how doing the will of the Father, carrying out His desires, and accomplishing His work spiritually gives Him the same satisfaction and enjoyment that food gives to our body. As a Christian, we are nourished through prayer and attending Bible study and services. However, our spirituality advances even further when we strive to obey God's commandments and work for Him. We will also experience an indescribable joy and satisfaction from serving the Lord. Matthew 25:31-46 talks about the parable of the sheep and the goats, which illus-

On the last day, the Lord will divide all humankind into two groups: sheep and goats. The sheep are the ones who have served him faithfully by serving others. Heaven is their reward. The goats on the other hand, are those who have no action. Even though they may not have gone against any of God's commandments, they have not actively sought to please God or man. The kingdom of God is about service, not personal enjoyment and pleasures. A mature Christian is concerned not only with receiving, but with giving and sacrificing oneself for others in order to repay the Lord.



B . How Do We Know When to Serve?

While Jesus Christ was on earth, He served the people whenever there was a need. Lord Jesus' ultimate service was that, while we were still sinners, He came to the world to die for us (Rom 5:6). The Lord saw our deep need and showed love and compassion by coming to save us. In the Bible, there are many examples of people who served when there was a need. When the Lord was about to enter Jerusalem, He needed a donkey. When the owner knew of the Lord's need of it, he allowed the disciples to take it away (Mt 21:1-3). While the Lord was preaching on earth, a group of women followed Him and provided for the Lord and the disciples out of their means (Lk 8:1-3).

Today, opportunities to serve others abound. Serving others can include doing something as small as giving up a seat for others or providing a sympathetic ear.

We need to take note and observe those around us to see if they need our help or service. Through conversations or directly asking others, we will know where help is needed. The following testimony is an example of this.

There was a newly baptized sister who was not involved in a lot of holy work at the time. One night she had a dream, and in her dream, she saw herself sitting down doing nothing. A voice said to her, "Why do you not work?" She replied, "All the work is already taken by others. There is no more work to be done." The Lord then showed her an image of a brother who looked heavy laden and sorrowful. He told her to go ask the brother if he needed help. With that, her dream ended. The sister kept the dream in her heart and the next time she went to church, she asked that brother if there was anything she could do to help. The brother told her that he was overwhelmed with church work and would certainly appreciate her assistance.

Ways to Serve



When asked to serve, we may sometimes hear ourselves say, "What can we do?" or "We are only youths!" Jeremiah and Moses responded in the same way. The following are some ways in which we can offer our services.

A. Offering All We Have

a. Offering what we possess

Once there was a rich man who planned for his future by building greater storehouses, storing up his wealth and enjoying it in the years to come. Little did he know that that very night his soul was to be taken. Jesus concluded, "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Our Heavenly Father has given us many wonderful things to enjoy. He has given us talents, capabilities, wisdom, and wealth, among many others. But these are not "treasures" for only us to enjoy. God has given us these "treasures" so that we can be rich toward God. What does this mean? It means that God has not given us these things solely to further our own careers, fatten our own pockets, or benefit ourselves. He wants us to use them to help the brothers and sisters in church as well as those around us. God gives to us so we can give to others. He provides us with resources so we can help others.

However, there are people who feel that if they offer their wealth or time, they won't have enough for themselves. Some people give sparingly because they regard giving as a loss. Some people hesitate to give generously to God because they worry about having enough money to meet their own needs or buy what they want. Some people don't want to spend the time doing church work because they feel that they have too much on their hands already and they can't afford the time. But consider the examples of brothers and sisters who, apart from working a full time job or have a lot of schoolwork, still devote time to church work. Does their school work or job suffer because of time spent doing holy work? Not at all! Those who offer to the Lord will gain more (Prov 11; 24-25).

2 Corinthians 9:1-15 records the effects of giving to others. During this time, the members in Judea were suffering from a severe famine. Other churches were called upon to assist the Judean believers. Here, Paul specifically praises the members in Macedonia for their relief efforts because despite being in extreme poverty themselves, they offered generously and joyfully to the believers. Paul goes on to explain the effects of giving to others. He tells us that those who give will a) receive more

56 gifts and spiritual blessings so that they can perform more good works (v.6-

8), b) bear more fruits of righteousness (v. 10), c) be blessed by those who are benefited from their good works (v.11-12). Blessings upon blessings will be added to them. Furthermore, by giving to others, the needs of the receivers will be satisfied and they will be physically and emotionally comforted (v.12). Their faith will also be inspired by the love of those who serve them, and they in turn will serve others. Ultimately, God's name is glorified (v.13).

b. Offering ourselves

Besides offering our talents, time, and wealth to the Lord, the most beautiful offering is to present ourselves as a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1 says, "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 spiritual worship." This verse tells us that ultimately, what God wants from us is not what we have, but US ourselves—with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul and all our strength. This is the offering that pleases God. Since Christ laid down His life for us, we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died for us and was raised again (2 Cor 5:15). By living for Christ, we lay down our own desires, fully obey His commandment and give ourselves completely to the Lord. No sacrifices please God more than obedience and submission (1 Sam 15; 22). While we diligently serve God and give Him our time or energy, we have to think about what God wants us to do. We need to learn to respect God's will in every choice that we make. Being a living sacrifice involves being what the Lord wants us to be, saying what He wants us to say, going where He wants us to go, and doing what He wants us to do.

B. Saving Souls

The book of Amos prophesied, "'Behold, the days are coming', says the Lord God, 'when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of God'" (Amos 8:11). Today, this famine is the emptiness that exists in the hearts of men. To fill the void within them, people of the world use alcohol, drugs, sex and violence. They try, but they fail. As such, the entire world is sinking deeper and deeper in sin and is in desperate need of the Lord and the saving grace of the gospel.

The world needs God, and we are the ones who can tell people about Him. Lord Jesus once looked at the people around Him and exclaimed, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:37-38). There is an urgent need to go out and harvest souls for the Lord. This is some of the most noble work that everyone can take part in.

C. Serving Our Brothers and Sisters

In the fall, we usually see geese heading south for the winter, flying along in a “V” formation. It is interesting to learn why they fly that way. First of all, by flying in “V” formation, the birds help each other by flapping their wings, which immediately creates a lifting power for the birds. Secondly, when the head goose gets tired, it rotates back in the group, and another goose helps out and flies at the point. Thirdly, the geese encourage those in front to keep up the speed by honking from behind. And finally, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by a gunshot and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies; and only then do they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their group.

Our culture today applauds individualism and looking after our own needs. People are becoming more and more isolated from one another. But from the animals around us, we learn an important lesson about looking out and caring for each other. The Bible tells us, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 3:4) and, “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him” (Rom 15:1-2). Therefore as brothers and sisters in Christ, we have the duty of caring and watching over one another’s physical and spiritual needs. Our time and efforts are limited, so we have to use them wisely. Instead of spending our lunchtime during the Sabbath with our regular circle of friends, talk with a brother or a sister who is alienated or lonely. Instead of spending our free day shopping or sleeping in, take time to contact a sister you haven’t seen in a few weeks. Instead of buying something special for yourself, buy or do something that will help others feel the love of Christ. Instead of mindless chatter, take time to share what’s really in our hearts and to remember each other in prayer. By doing this, we can bear each other’s burdens, and help each other grow in faith and service to the Lord.

D. Offering Intercessory Prayers

There was a family that had three brothers. One day, the elder brother got caught for misbehaving and was commanded by his mother to kneel down and be punished. Just when the mother was about to discipline her oldest son with a bamboo stick, she saw, kneeling beside him, her two other sons. They pleaded, “Mom, if you’re going to beat our brother, you had better discipline us also. We too are guilty of misbehaving.” When the mother heard their pleas, she laid down the bam-

boo stick, and walked away with tears in her eyes.

On another occasion, the two younger brothers were caught getting into trouble. In the same manner, the mother ordered them to kneel down and be punished. As they were kneeling, the oldest brother knelt beside them and said to the mother, “Mom, if you’re going to beat my brothers you may as well beat me, because I was not a good example to them.” Again, the mother was too touched to beat them.

This true story is an illustration of the power of intercessory prayers. Praying for others is something that everyone can do. If we have one simple quality – love – we can become a person of prayer. We can contribute greatly to the works and the growth of the church simply through our sincere prayers for others. In the tabernacle, out of all the utensils used to serve God, the altar of incense is one of the most important. It is the item that is placed just before the veil (Ex 30:6). Each morning and evening, the priest had to offer fragrant incense for endless generations. The incense represents the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:3-4; 5:8). This shows us that one of the most important ways that we can serve is by offering unceasing prayers for those in need.

In the Bible, there are great men who prayed for others. Moses stood in the breach before God and prayed for the Israelites even though God told him to no longer pray for them (Ps 106:23). If Moses had not prayed for them, they would have been annihilated. When King Saul was rejected by God, the prophet Samuel said, “Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way” (1 Sam 12:23). Jeremiah was a prophet who prayed with tears for the people of God even though they were proud, disobedient and rebellious towards God. From the experience of Jeremiah we understand that earnest prayers for others are not in vain. Sometimes our prayers have quick answers. Some are answered eventually – Jeremiah’s prayers were answered only after seven years. Because of his prayers, God promised to bring the Israelites back to the promised land after their exile.

We can see that praying for others is very important, as it brings about victory and salvation. We should spend more time each day in ardent prayers before the Lord for the weak brother and sisters, for the faith of our families, and for the gospel to be preached throughout the world.

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



- 1** What are some of the reasons why you serve God?
- 2** Can you identify the things that you can offer to the Lord?

- 3 What are the benefits of offering?
- 4 What percentage of your prayers consist of praying for your own needs and praying for the needs of brothers and sisters?
- 5 Can you share a time when you prayed for someone and what happened as a result?
- 6 Have you done anything to save souls?

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



Reaching Out to a Stranger

Frank Daily stared down at the frozen ground. He kicked chunks of snow, blackened with car exhaust, to the side. He only pretended to listen to the chatter of his friends, Norm and Ed, as they all clambered aboard the number 10 bus after school. He spouted out automatic answers to their questions: "Yeah, I aced the Milton test.... No I can't tonight. I've got to hit the books."

Frank and his friends flopped down in the back of the Milwaukee City bus along with several other high school boys, some from other schools. The bus belched a gray cloud out the back and headed west on Blue Mound Road.

Frank slouched into his seat. His hands hung from his two thumbs stuffed in the center of his belt. It had been another cold, gray day just a month ago in November when his world had come crashing down around him. He knew that his basketball skills were as good as the other boys. His mother used to call him "the athlete of the season." When he was smaller, she had nicknamed him "Search and Destroy." He smiled at the memory.

The bus lurched away from the curb, and Frank instinctively braced his Nikes against the floor. It must have been my size, he thought. That had to be it. Five-feet-four. "Since I'm new at Marquette High and only a freshman, the coach must have taken one look at me and decided I was too small to make the basketball team."

It wasn't easy going to a new school, especially an all boys Catholic school. The older boys tended to be a bit clannish. It was especially hard for Frank because he had been a star athlete in all the sports in his elementary school. Now, it seemed

Not only had he excelled in athletics before arriving at Marquette; he had also excelled at politics and history in the fifth and sixth grades. He recalled the advice his teacher, Don Anderson, had given him, "Look, Frank, if you'd put as much time into books as you do into basketball, you could do great in both."

Well, Frank thought, Anderson was right about the books at least. My grades have been A's and B's ever since. Basketball is another story.

A loud horn and a screech of brakes somewhere behind the bus startled Frank. He looked at Norm and Ed. Norm was leaning his head against the window with half-shut eyes, his warm breath creating a circle of fog on the glass. Frank rubbed his own eyes. He still remembered how his stomach had chilled into a frozen knot as he approached the locker room last month. He had read the team list posted on the locker room door, hoping, searching frantically for his name. It hadn't been there. It was missing. No name. He had felt suddenly as if he had ceased to exist. Become invisible.

The bus jerked to a stop at the County Institutions grounds. The bus driver called to some noisy boys at the back to settle down. Frank glanced up at the driver, who had been dubbed "Kojak" because of his bald head. A very pregnant woman hung onto the silver handrail and slowly pulled herself onto the bus. As she fell backward into the seat behind the bus driver, her feet kicked up, and Frank saw only stockings were covering her feet.

As Kojak steered the bus back into traffic, he yelled over his shoulder, "Where are your shoes, lady? It ain't more than 10 degrees out there."

"I can't afford shoes," the woman answered. She pulled her fraying coat collar around her neck. Some of the boys at the back exchanged glances and smirked. "I got on the bus just to get my feet warm," the woman continued. "If you don't mind, I'll just ride around with you for a bit."

Kojak scratched his bald head and shouted, "Now just tell me how come you can't afford shoes?"

"I got eight kids. They all got shoes. There's not enough left for me. But it's okay, the Lord will take care of me."

Frank looked down at his new Nike basketball shoes. His feet were warm and snug. Always had been. And then he looked back at the woman. Her socks were ripped. Her coat, missing buttons, hung open around her stomach, as swollen as a

basketball and covered by a smudgy dress. Frank didn't hear anything around him after that. He wasn't aware of Norm or Ed. He just felt a warm thawing in his gut. The word "invisible" popped into his mind again. An invisible person, marginal, forgotten by society, but for a different reason, he thought. He would probably always be able to afford shoes. She probably never would. Under his seat, he pried the toe of one shoe into the heel of the other and slipped it off. Then the other shoe. He looked around. Nobody had noticed. He would have to walk three blocks in the snow. But the cold had never bothered him much. When the bus stopped at the end of the line, Frank waited until everyone else had emptied off. Then he reached under his seat and picked up his basketball shoes.

He walked quickly up to the woman and handed them to her. Looking down, he said, "Here lady, you need these more than I do."

And then Frank hurried to the door and stepped down. He managed to land in a puddle. It didn't matter. He wasn't cold at all.

He heard the woman exclaim, "Look, they fit me just perfect!"

Then he heard Kojak call, "Hey, come back here, kid! What's your name?"

Frank turned round to face Kojak. At the same time, Norm and Ed asked where his shoes were. Frank's cheeks burned in confusion at Kojak, his friends and the woman.

"Frank Daily," he said quietly. "My name is Frank Daily."

"Well, Frank," Kojak said, "I've never seen anything like that in the 20 years I've been driving this bus."

The woman was crying. "Thank you, young man," she said. She turned to Kojak, "See, I told you the Lord would take care of me."

Frank mumbled, "You're welcome." He smiled at the woman, "It's no big deal."

He hurried off after Norm and Ed. It seemed to him that the grayness had lifted. On the way home, he hardly felt the cold beneath his feet at all.
(Barbara A Lewis)

Questions to think about:

1. *We are at our best when we are giving. In fact, we are most like God when we are giving and serving. Looking back over the past week, what have you done to serve God and others?*
2. *What change took place in Frank during the course of the bus ride?*
3. *In the end, Frank experienced the joy and delight that comes with loving and serving others. Have you ever had a similar experience? How do you feel when you are called to serve others?*
4. *Frank simply gave what he had at the time. What are the most prominent gifts or abilities that God has given you? In looking at your gifts, do you feel you are using them?*
5. *Everyone on the bus heard the woman telling the driver of her plight, but only Frank came to her aid. Have you ever seen an opportunity to serve or help others, but failed to do anything about it? Looking around, is there anyone or any area in the church that needs our help now? What can we learn from Frank's actions?*
6. *If we are most like God in our giving and serving, think of how we can be "like God" this week. Whom can you bless with your service? How will you serve? What will you do that will make the moment extra special for God or that person? Plan your service and then carry it out before the end of this week.*

REFLECTION & PRAYER



The Lord Jesus once said, "For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward" (Mk 9:41). What we offer to the Lord may be as small as a cup of water or two small mites. Or we may be like the young Samuel, who was in charge of doing something as seemingly insignificant as "opening the doors of the house of the Lord" (1 Sam 3:15). Nevertheless, we have to realize that God remembers even the smallest thing. Let us therefore, offer to God whatever He has placed in our hands for His ultimate purpose and use.

Goals

In this unit, our students will learn that we have an understanding Savior who is able to sympathize with our every weakness and need. They need only to trust in Him and bring all their cares to Him. Since God has given us this free gift, our students will reflect on how they can repay the Lord Jesus for all His mercies. One of the best ways is to give to others what we have received, freely and unconditionally. Students will examine how the Lord Jesus came to save and choose people indiscriminately, no matter how insignificant that person may seem to be. They will in turn reflect upon whether their treatment of others is selective and discriminatory or whether it reflects the all-embracing and compassionate love of our Lord Jesus.

unit 3

Teacher Devotional

The Christian life is a spiritual tug-of-war. Sin feels good. It seems so right. So the battle rages.

Paul also struggled with this. He wanted to do right and he got frustrated when he did wrong.

Be encouraged! God's power was made available to Paul and is there for us too through the power of the Holy Spirit. This power can break the iron grip of sin.

The truth is, we do not seek to live right in the hopes of earning our salvation; we desire to live right because we have our salvation.

Dead to Sin and Alive to God

*"And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."
(Romans 6:13)*

Lesson 7

The Gospel of Luke

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man

Listed Scriptures

Lk 1:26-38; 2:1-24; 39-52; 4:1-13; Jn 4:7-26; 11:17-44; Heb 4:14-16; Heb 2:5-18

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to understand that Jesus Christ was not just a man with human emotions and needs, but He was God who became a man
- 2) To enable students to know that we entrust everything to God because He cares and understands

Memory Verse

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb 4:15)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Luke 1-8

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



Author:

To the best of our knowledge, the entire Bible was composed by Hebrew writers, with the exception of one man – the beloved physician Luke. A Greek from Antioch of Syria, Luke was well educated and thoroughly acquainted with the Roman world. He was a travelling companion during Paul's missionary journeys (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16; Col 4:14; Philemon 24). It was probably this close relationship with the Apostle Paul and the church leaders that enabled Luke to hear about the stories and eyewitness accounts of the Lord Jesus needed for compiling the gospel. Since Luke was a Gentile, it is of no surprise that his gospel seems to highlight Gentiles and their response to Jesus Christ. For example, Matthew traces the Lord's genealogy back to Abraham, the father of Jews (Mt 1:2), but Luke traces it back to Adam, the father of the human race (Lk 3:38). Furthermore, Luke's narrative

continues into Acts, where He shows the gospel moving beyond its Jewish origins to include people of every race.

Date of writing:

Probably written around AD 60-61 in Caesarea.

Purpose of writing this book:

Luke's purpose for writing is stated in his preface to the gospel. He wanted to provide "the most excellent Theophilus," a man of position and rank, with a "carefully investigated" and "orderly account" of the life of Jesus Christ (Lk 1:3). His aim was that Theophilus "may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed." In his two well-researched volumes, Luke presents Jesus Christ as a real man. Yet at the same time, by recounting the miracles and the prophecies connected to the Lord's life, Luke portrayed Him as a divine being, God Himself manifest in the flesh. Luke gives the most complete account of Christ's ancestry, birth, and development. He is the ideal Son of man who identified with the sorrow and plight of sinful humanity in order to carry our sorrows and accomplish the work of salvation. One of the aspects that Luke emphasizes is that Jesus Christ came not only to save the Jews, but also to be the Savior of the whole world. The Lord Jesus that Luke portrays reaches out to people of every class and background – Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, Roman soldiers, the poor, women, children, the powerful, the sick, the fearful, the devout, the irreligious. He has something to offer everyone.

W A R M U P



Describe your relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Do you see Him as a friend, Father, an awesome God...? Why?

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Jesus Christ is Fully Man

The Lord Jesus was God who came to the world taking the form of a man. In what ways did the Lord show that He was fully human?

A . Jesus Christ Had Human Connections

The genealogies recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke trace the family line of the Lord Jesus. Of the many reasons for documenting Jesus' ancestry, one was to show that the Lord was truly a man who existed in history. The Lord Jesus came as the Son of Man, which means He came as a human being. Jesus Christ was a person born in a particular time in Roman and Jewish history (Lk 3:1-2). He came into the world when Caesar Augustus was Emperor of the Roman Empire from 27 BC to 14 AD. The Lord also had biological and personal roots. From His genealogy, we see that He descended from King David, and was the offspring of Abraham, both key figures in Jewish history. The first few chapters of Luke and Matthew also describe the Lord Jesus' infancy to show that He was born just like any other flesh-and-blood human being (even though His conception was miraculous). The Lord was born in Bethlehem of Judea, into a family much like any other with His parents, Joseph and Mary, and with siblings.

B . Jesus Christ Went Through the Process of Growing Up

Although the Lord was unique in many ways, He still had a normal upbringing. In terms of development, He, like any child, developed from an infant, to a toddler, to a young child. He learned to crawl, sit up, walk and run. He learned to eat and talk. He did not simply appear as an adult or take any short cuts. Instead, the Lord went through the growth process of a human. Luke 2:41-52 records the Lord Jesus learning in the temple. The Lord did not come into the world already knowing everything He needed to know. He did not acquire knowledge without studying. Though the Lord Jesus amazed His teachers with questions and responses, He nevertheless went through a lifelong process of growing physically, mentally, socially and spiritually (Lk 2:52).

Jesus Christ was born under the law and was submissive to the law. Growing up, the Lord underwent the same rituals and rites as any Jewish boy. For example, He was probably circumcised and named on the eighth day after birth (Lev 12:3; Lk 1:59, 60; 2:21). As the first born son, He was presented to God one month after birth. During this ceremony His parents would buy Him back, or "redeem" Him, from God through offering. For the first three years of life, children received education at home from their mothers. From three years of age on, fathers taught their sons the law. Fathers were also responsible for teaching their sons a trade. The Lord

was not just a carpenter's son (Mt 13:55). He was also a carpenter (Mk 6:3). At about six years of age, Jewish boys attended a school attached to the Jerusalem temple called "the house of the book." Here they were schooled in the Old Testament and the laws. It was here that the Lord Jesus was found at the age of twelve (Lk 2:41-52). At thirteen, a Jewish boy became a "son of the law," fully responsible for performing the commandments. This is known as a Bar-Mitzvah, and is commonly practiced among Jews today.

C. Jesus Christ Had Human Needs and Emotions

Although the Lord Jesus was God manifest in the flesh, He was not void of emotions or involvement with humans. He showed feelings of tender compassion and loving care to all those around Him (Lk 7:12-13; Mt 9:36; Mk 8:2; 10:21; Jn 11:5; 35; Jn 15:11). He also showed indignation, sorrow or even frustration towards those who were unbelieving (Lk 19:41-44; Jn 2:14-17; Mk 8:12).

The Lord not only responded to the people around Him, He also had personal emotions and needs. Like any human, the Lord Jesus was not isolated from the pressures and temptations of life. After a long day of preaching, healing the sick and teaching, He would experience fatigue, hunger and thirst, just as we do. After forty days of fasting in the wilderness, the Lord obviously would have been hungry. The Lord Jesus' status as Son of God did not make this fast easier; His physical body suffered the same severe hunger and pain of going without sustenance like us. The Lord also experienced moments of weakness such as when He had to give Himself up. The intense inner pain and struggle was seen through His prayer where His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground (Lk 22:44). Why was it necessary for the Lord to experience all the human emotions, temptations and needs? By coming to earth as a human being, the Lord experienced our weakness, felt our pain, bore the punishments for our sins, and brought us back to Him (Heb 4:15). Therefore, we should not be afraid to bring our true feelings, our joy and our pain before Him. The Lord understands them for He fully experienced them.



Part 2

Jesus Christ Understands Our Needs



A. Jesus Christ Knows Our Physical Needs

One day the Lord Jesus and His disciples took a boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, when suddenly a great storm arose. The waves beat so hard against the boat that it began to fill with water. In our lives, we may face many worldly storms that blow up suddenly. Sometimes danger, sickness and unpleasant circumstances arise. During such times, it is hard to see God in the midst of the storm. There may also be times when, like the disciples, we question God saying, "Do You not care whether we perish or not?" or "Do You not see what is happening to us?"

Indeed the Lord sees and He cares. We know He cares and sees when He protects and delivers us in times of difficulties and disaster. He knows our needs when in times of trouble, He gives us His joy and peace so that we can transcend all the troubles of life. He tells us that He understands when, despite our troubles, we can maintain a peaceful heart through trusting in His love and abiding in His word.

Not only does the Lord give us physical peace from life's troubles, He also provides for our daily bread and needs. One morning, the Lord appeared to His disciples, who had just returned after a night out at sea, saying, "Children have you any food?" They replied, "No". The Lord then asked them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. They caught so much that they were not able to draw the nets in. Later, as they came onto the land, they saw that the Lord had already prepared breakfast for them (Jn 21:1-13).

The Lord Jesus is not solely concerned with our spiritual well being, but our physical needs too. Here, the Lord Jesus understood that the disciples had been out fishing all night and probably had not eaten. He therefore provided breakfast for them. The Lord Jesus reminds us that we need not be anxious for our physical cares and needs, because these are the things that Gentiles worry about. He tells us to consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Does God not care for them? How much more will He care for us?



B. Jesus Christ Knows Our Emotional Needs

In addition to physical needs, humans have emotional needs too. Matthew 8:1-3 mentions how a leper came to Jesus Christ and knelt before Him, crying, "Lord, if

you will, you can make me clean.” The Lord stretched out His hand, touched him and cleansed him of his disease. In those days, lepers were untouchable. They had to cry out in the streets to warn others to move away from them. They lived outside cities, separated from their loved ones and families. Besides the need to be physically healed of their disease, they had a deep and inner need for love and acceptance. The Lord understood this and He reached out and touched the leper! If we’ve ever been lonely, ever felt rejected or unloved, we know what we need. If we’ve ever been convinced that no one could possibly care for us, we need to remind ourselves that like the case of the leper, we need only to cast our cares and needs upon Him, for He knows us and cares for us (1 Pet 5:7).

C. Jesus Christ Knows Our Spiritual Needs

The ultimate proof that shows that God cares is sending His only beloved son, the Lord Jesus, to the world. Jesus Christ came to deal with the root of all life’s problems, which is sin. He came to give Himself up as an atonement for sin (Heb 2:17). His greatest love and concern for us is shown not merely through healing our diseases, blessing us materially or helping us get out of a tight spot. It is shown through His paying the penalty for sin (Is 53:10; Heb 2:17; 2 Cor 5:21). The Lord saw our need in that while we were yet sinners, He came at the appointed time to die for us, so that we have hope of eternal life.

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



- 1** How did the Lord Jesus show Himself to be a perfect human being?
- 2** Why is it important that Jesus Christ came as a human being?
- 3** In your experience, how has the Lord satisfied your physical, emotional or spiritual needs?

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



“I Understand Your Pain”

Why did the Lord Jesus live on the earth as long as He did? Couldn’t His life have been much shorter? Why not step into our world just long enough to die for our sins and then leave? Why not a sinless year or week? Why did He have to live a life? To take on sins is one thing, but to take on fatigue, hunger and suffering? To put up with the long roads and long days? Why did He do it? Why did He endure all these feelings?

Because He knew you would feel them too. He knew you would be weary, disturbed and angry. He knew you’d be sleepy, grief-stricken and hungry. He knew you’d face pain—if not the pain of the body, the pain of the soul. And He came to experience all this to let us know He understands.

Some people proclaim that science can solve everything. Others arrogantly believe that they are capable of accomplishing everything. But the truth is, our life on earth is brief, our abilities are limited, and we suffer many weaknesses. The Lord Jesus’ message in coming to the world is—Trust in Me. Because Jesus Christ lived as a man, He fully understands our experiences and our struggles. Since He is God, He has the power and authority to deliver us from sin. The Lord Jesus is the everlasting God, the maker and ruler of all things. He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

Testimony 1:

Hallelujah, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I testify about an experience I had during prayer on December 26, 1999 in Toronto Church, Canada. During this prayer, I was thinking about my father who was in Taiwan, working hard to support my family here in Canada. The last time I saw him was over a year ago, and I really missed him. Even though my father is very strict, I still wanted him to come back and hug me, and I wanted to tell him how much I loved him. Thinking about him being so far away made me want to cry.

A few minutes after the prayer began, a bright light suddenly shone into my eyes and began enveloping me until it completely surrounded me. I saw a person dressed in a white garment coming toward me. Following him were five or six people who were also dressed in white. I then realized that the first person was the Lord Jesus and the people following Him were angels!

The Lord walked toward me and placed His loving arms around me. At that moment, I felt incredibly joyful, peaceful and comforted. I felt totally safe and protected. Lord Jesus hugged me for what felt like a long time. Then He said, "I am your Father, I am your God." The Lord Jesus was telling me not to worry. My father in Taiwan would be all right and the Lord would look after him and me.

Out of curiosity, I looked up because I wanted to see what the Lord looked like. But I could not see His face, because it was shining so brightly – even brighter than the sun. The faces of the angels were also shining brightly like the Lord Jesus. The angels formed a circle around the Lord and me, holding hands. They sang hymns in a spiritual language, praising the Lord. Even though I did not understand what they were singing, it sounded heavenly, harmonious and melodious. I had never heard such beautiful singing in all my life!

I then looked down where I was kneeling. The ground had turned pure white, and the whiteness started to spread gradually from the spot where the Lord Jesus and I were, radiating out in all directions until it covered the entire area. The church seemed to disappear and I felt that I was no longer in the world – I realized that I was in heaven! This was the first time I saw a glimpse of the heavenly kingdom with my own eyes. Words cannot describe the beautiful views that surrounded me. Everything was pure white, but it did not seem strange.

Then I heard the prayer bell ring. The Lord Jesus stood up and walked away, with the angels following Him. They all disappeared into a white light in the distance.

As the vision ended, I started to sense the presence of the other brothers and sisters who were praying beside me. I opened my eyes, and I realized that I was in church. I felt incredibly joyful that I had been hugged by my Heavenly Father and that I saw Him with my own eyes!

This was a wonderful experience that I will never forget. I now know that my Lord my God is also my dearest, most precious, loving Heavenly Father. He will take care of me, love me and will always be at my side. I feel very blessed to be His child.

(My Father in Heaven, Manna, Issue 34, Jan–Mar 2001)

Testimony 2:

The past couple of months will remain deeply imprinted on my mind as it allowed me to experience the love of brothers and sisters and the wonderful grace and mercy of God.

As part of my university degree, I had to spend four months in St. Petersburg, Russia. Those four months seemed the longest and hardest months of my life. Looking back, I am glad that I had that experience, although I hated it at the time. Before I left Russia, I knew that I would have a long and difficult time ahead, with a different language and culture. Most importantly, the absence of church members meant that it would be a test of my faith. The thought scared me - I didn't know whether I could sustain four months without spiritual support. But thank God for assuring me in my prayers, confirming that He would not leave me alone.

My first glimpse of God's assurance was through a Russian lady. This lady had been in Edinburgh (Scotland) for a couple of days and was supposed to return to London. Somehow, she missed the last train to London. Not knowing what to do, with nowhere to stay, she wandered in the streets of Edinburgh. Amazingly, she ended up at a church brother's take-away shop and asked him for help. The brother called my aunt, and later that evening, my cousins took the Russian lady to their home. They gave her food and offered her a room for the night. The next morning before this lady left for London, she exchanged addresses with my cousins. She told them that I should contact her once I went over to St. Petersburg. When I learned of the incident, I knew that it was God's providence.

Why did this lady from St. Petersburg appear in Edinburgh? Why did she miss the last train to London? And why, of all the take-away shops on that busy street, did she enter the one belonging to our church brother? I was deeply moved because I realized that God had answered my prayers. He was reassuring me that He would be with me to hold my hand and lead the way. He would not leave me alone. I was much comforted by this incident. Later, I managed to meet with this lady in Russia and enjoyed her hospitality. We have become good friends and I hope that one day, she too will be able to experience the love of God. Truly, God had opened a way.

The second incident that I would like to share demonstrates the importance of prayer. After some time in Russia, I felt alone and depressed. The weather was not improving; I was not getting anywhere with the language. My faith was dwindling. I felt so weak that prayer was an arduous task. On many occasions I did not feel like praying even though my heart reminded me that I had to. Once, when my cousin called, I told her how difficult it was to get myself to pray and how lonely I felt. She reminded me that I should always pray no matter how weak I felt. If we do not even take the first step to pray, how will God help us? For Him to draw near to us, we have to first reach out to Him. After that call, I prayed for God's forgiveness and help - I could not do it alone. I desperately needed God, the only

one who could help me. I realized then the importance of prayer. If I stopped, I would lose all contact with God. This would then inevitably lead to the death of my spiritual life. I did not want that to happen - I could not let it. Not after all that God had done for me. I owed Him that much at least.

Another incident that helped me in my struggling faith was a card I received from a sister. On hearing of my unhappiness and loneliness she wrote: "I just wanted to cheer you up and let you know that a lot of people are thinking about you and praying for you." As I read this, tears welled up in my eyes. I was very touched yet deeply ashamed. Brothers and sisters out there were praying for me. But I couldn't even find the strength to pray. It was so comforting to learn that members still remembered me. They have left an indelible impression in my heart and have enabled me to understand the importance of intercessory prayers.
(God Will Find A Way, Manna, Issue 30)

Questions to think about:

1. *From the two testimonies, how did the people deal with their problems? How do you deal with your problems? Do you bring all your joys and pains to Him? Do you turn to Him in times of trouble and need? Or do you run from difficulties and use your own ways to resolve your problems?*
2. *How did the Lord answer their prayers? Think of a time when the Lord opened a way for you.*
3. *What did the people learn from their experiences? What did you learn from your experience(s)?*
4. *How does knowing that our Lord once came as a man help you relate to Him?*
5. *The Lord Jesus is the perfect embodiment of God, who sees, knows and controls of everything. How will our attitudes and lifestyles change if we really believe and understand that Jesus can relate to how we feel? How will it affect our prayers?*
6. *Do you ever feel as though the Lord Jesus just doesn't understand you or your circumstances? Explain.*

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



1. *If you are not already keeping a prayer journal, try it for one month. Get a little notebook, and in one column, write down the date you prayed about a specific need. Keep the second column open to record when and how God answered your prayer.*
2. *Be on the lookout this week for ways you can convey Christ's compassion to others. Let your friends see that you understand and appreciate their unique troubles. Let your family know that you are trying your best to understand their personal challenges. Do something out of the ordinary. Take a special step out of your comfort zone.*

The Gospel of Luke

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God

Listed Scriptures

Mt 27; Mk 15; Lk 23; Jn 19; Mt 28:1-20; Mk 16:1-20; Lk 24:1-53; Jn 20-21

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to understand that the Son of man came to die on the cross to save mankind
- 2) To enable students to reflect on how to repay the Lord and live their lives for Him

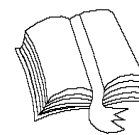
Memory Verse

"For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
(Lk 19:10)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Luke 9-16

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



One of the cruelest and vindictive instruments of punishment used by Greeks and Romans was the crucifixion. It was used to execute victims and criminals who were not Roman citizens. It was a death for the worst criminals and terrorists. Before the crucifixion the prisoner was flogged; the blood loss hastened the death. The criminal carried his own cross, or a part of it, to the place of execution, which was outside the city. Arriving there, the prisoner was stripped of his clothes which became the property of the soldiers, and was then nailed to the crosspiece by the wrists and to the stake by the ankles. The death was slow and painful. The person was left to die of sheer exhaustion and suffocation due to lack of oxygen. This ordinarily would have taken days. While hanging on the cross, the person could use his legs to lift up his body in an attempt to take more oxygen into his collapsing lungs. In order to speed up the process of death, a person's legs were sometimes broken. In most cases the body was left to rot on the cross in the sun and rain or to be devoured

by birds and beasts. It was on the cross that the Lord Jesus gave His life for us to complete the plan of salvation. Because of this, the cross, ordinarily a symbol of curse and horror, has become the most beautiful symbol for Christians. To the Jews, the cross is a stumbling block. To the Gentiles, it is folly, but to Christians, it is the symbol of victory, love, salvation, peace and joy.

Both Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. Annas was Israel's high priest from AD 6-15, when he was deposed by Roman rulers. Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law, was appointed high priest from AD 18 to 36/37. According to Jewish law, the office of high priest was held for life. But the Romans didn't like such concentration of power under one person, so they frequently changed the high priest. However, many Jews still considered Annas to be the high priest and still called him by that title. Although Annas retained much authority among the Jews, Caiaphas made the final decision.

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea (the region where Jerusalem is located) from AD 26-36. Pilate was unpopular with the Jews because he had taken money from the temple treasury to build an aqueduct. Pilate resided in Caesarea, but he came to Jerusalem during the major feasts to maintain order and to handle any riots or insurrections that might occur.

W A R M U P



What is love?

Share an act of love that has touched you the most.

The story of Jesus Christ on the cross is the greatest story of love. Unlike love stories of old that speak of love between lovers, or parents and children, this is the story of the Creator dying for His creatures. "God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). From kings to slaves, from the educated to the illiterate, from the old to the young, from developed countries to primitive tribes, this story of true love has been told over and over again, and it is still being told today.



Part 1

The Son of Man



A. The Lord Jesus' Trial

The Lord Jesus once asked Peter, "Who do people say the Son of man is?" The term "Son of man" is found in both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament, it is used 94 times, and, with five exceptions, always by Christ Himself. On the one hand, the phrase "Son of man" refers to the glorified and exalted Christ who will come and judge the whole world. It refers to the glorious status of Jesus Christ. Daniel 7:13 prophesies how the Son of man will establish a kingdom that will not be destroyed. However, the "Son of man" has another meaning. While it carries the meaning of authority it also refers to Christ's full humanity and His redemptive work and mission. It implies servitude and suffering. Mark 10:45 reads, "for the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." The Lord came not only as the exalted Christ, but to serve, suffer, die and resurrect (Mt 16:21-23; Mt 17:22; Mt 20:17).

a. Before the Jewish authorities

* Before Annas (Jn 18:13-23)

By night, a band of soldiers and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees came to arrest the Lord Jesus. Once the religious leaders had the Lord Jesus in their power, events began to move. Their purpose was to kill Him—determining His guilt and innocence was a mere formality. The Lord was first taken to the house of Annas the former high priest, where He was interrogated. According to Jewish law, trials were not supposed to be held at night. Lord Jesus was tried secretly and illegally because the religious leaders had an objective, which was to have Him executed before the Sabbath so that they could get on with the Passover celebration.

* Before Caiaphas (Mt 26:57-68; Mk 14:53-65; Lk 22:54, 63-65; Jn 18:24)

Jesus Christ was then brought before Caiaphas, the ruling high priest (Mt 26:57-58). Here they wanted to know one thing: Who was Jesus? They wanted the Lord to tell them if He was the Christ. They brought in witness-

es who said that they had heard the Lord say that He would destroy the temple and build it in three days. The Lord Jesus told them, "From now on, the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the Mighty God." By saying this, the Lord Jesus confessed that yes, He was the Messiah, the Son of God. The council needed no further testimony. The Lord had said so Himself. Their accusation against the Lord Jesus was blasphemy – claiming equality with God. Blasphemy, the sin of claiming to be God, was punishable by death. The Jewish leaders had the evidence they wanted. Under Jewish law, a person who committed blasphemy was to be stoned (Lev 24:16).

* *Before the Sanhedrin (Mt 27:1; Mk 15:1; Lk 22:66-71)*

The Sanhedrin was the council of the elders of the people. The council could condemn the Lord to death, but they could not carry out the death penalty under Roman law. The Romans had to condemn Him. So the Lord was led to trial before the local Roman leader - Pontius Pilate.

b. Before Roman authorities

* *First hearing before Pilate (Mt 27:2, 11-14; Mk 15:1-5; Lk 23:1-6; Jn 18:28-38)*

The religious leaders had condemned the Lord to death on religious grounds, but only the Roman government could grant the death penalty. Thus, they took the Lord Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. Pilate did not want to be involved, but the Jews interpreted the charges against the Lord in a political sense. They said, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king." According to Roman law, crimes such as treason and rebellion against the Roman government and Caesar were deserving of the death penalty. Pilate saw at once that the Lord was innocent, yet Pilate was afraid of offending the Jews. He feared that perhaps the religious leaders would report him to Caesar for supporting another king apart from Caesar and for not dealing with a rebel.

* *Hearing before Herod (Lk 23:7-12)*

Because the Lord Jesus' home was in the region of Galilee, Pilate sent the Lord to Herod Agrippa, the ruler of Galilee who was in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Pilate may have wanted to pass the Lord onto Herod as a way of escaping the dilemma of judging the Lord. However, Herod eventually wanted nothing to do with Him and sent Him back to Pilate.

* *Last hearing before Pilate (Mt 27:15-26; Mk 16:6-15; Lk 23:13-25; Jn 18:39-19:16)*

Pilate didn't like the religious leaders. He wasn't interested in condemning the Lord Jesus because he knew the Lord Jesus was innocent. However, he knew that another uprising in his district might cost him his job. First he tried to compromise by having the Lord scourged and then released, which was an illegal act in itself. However the Jews persisted, and when the mob seemed to get more uncontrollable, he ordered his soldiers to inflict the scourging prior to execution. Pilate again tried to convince the Jews of the Lord's innocence. Finally, when the Jews cried, "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend" (John 19:12), Pilate yielded and handed the Lord Jesus over to be executed. Pilate's self interest and political success were more important than his sense of justice. And so Pilate shared in the greatest crime that has ever been committed.

B. The Lord's Suffering and Crucifixion

The Lord Jesus was flogged and then delivered to be crucified (Mk 27:26-31). He had to carry His heavy cross on the way to Golgotha. His strength failing, He stumbled on the way, and the soldiers forced Simeon, a man from Cyrene, to carry the Lord Jesus' cross.

Arriving at Golgotha, northwest of Jerusalem, known as place of the skull, they crucified the Lord on the cross. They lifted Him up between two criminals, one on His left and one on His right. Though suffering deepest agony while on the cross, the Lord Jesus did not forget His mother and entrusted her to His beloved disciple. Through all the suffering, the Lord still prayed for the very people who crucified Him (Lk 23:33-35). The Lord Jesus endured the shame and agony of the crucifixion, the ridicule of the crowd, and the mocking of the soldiers because He recognized that it was for this purpose He came to the world. The Jews and the Romans were not taking His life from Him; He was laying it down of His own accord (Jn 10:17-18). At the height of noon till three o'clock, the entire earth turned dark and the earth shook. This was the time the Lord Jesus' soul went down to Hades (Heb 2:9; Ac 2:27). His soul suffered the deepest agony. The darkness was both physical and spiritual. The curtain that separated the most holy place from the holy place was torn in two, from top to bottom. Then with a loud voice he cried, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," and with that, the Lord bowed His head and gave up His spirit to God (Jn 19:30; Lk 23:46). The Lamb of God who carried the sins of the world had given Himself in place of sinners.

With the death of the Lord, the earth became black, the earth trembled, the rock split and even the dead rose from the grave. The centurion who was standing guard saw the signs, feared greatly and exclaimed, "This truly is the Son of God" (Mt 27:45-54). Most likely this centurion had carried out other such executions, but never had anything like this happened before. Indeed the Lord Jesus was no ordinary human being.

Ordinarily, the crucified were left to die on the cross, but as it was the Sabbath and the Passover Festival the next day, the legs of the criminals were broken to speed up the process of death, and the bodies were brought down. On seeing that the Lord had already died, a centurion pierced the side of Jesus with a spear and at once, blood and water flowed out. Later, Joseph from Arimathea requested for Lord's body and buried Him in his own tomb.

In the history of mankind, the greatest miracle is that the Lord Jesus was able to rise from the dead three days after, just as He and the prophets of old had predicted (Ps 16:10; Ac 2:31; Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 26:32). If Jesus Christ was like any other ordinary man who died and could not resurrect, His body would still have been in the tomb, and God's salvation would be empty. But He is God, the author of life, and He conquered death and sin once and for all.



Part 2

*What Does the
Lord Jesus' Death Mean?*



A . Forgiveness of Sins

Have you ever been in debt? Imagine your debt to be so great that no matter how hard you try to pay it off, the interest keeps adding up. No matter what you do, the debt remains. Before knowing the Lord, we were like people who had debts that could not be paid off. These debts represent our sins. Because of our sins, we were totally cut off from God. Sin became a perpetual barrier between God and us. In an effort to deal with the problem of sin, people in the Old Testament times brought animals such as lambs, goats or bulls to atone for sins (Lev 4). The animal sacrifice became a substitute for the person. The animal's blood was shed so that one's life could be given for another. But people sin continually, so frequent sacrifices were required. In the New Testament, instead of the spotless lamb, Jesus Christ came as the Lamb of God to sacrifice Himself and forgive sin once and for all. He

was the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin. The Lord Jesus was without sin, but in order to redeem us from sin and death, He bore the sins of mankind and paid the full penalty for sin. His life and blood were shed instead of ours, so that through His death we may live. When the soldier pierced the side of Jesus Christ, water and blood flowed out. Today, those who come before Him with faith will have their sins completely washed away by His blood through water baptism (Eph 1:7; Heb 9:13-14; 10:10; Rom 5:8; 8:3; 1 Cor 15:3; Heb 9:28).



B . Reconciliation with God (Rom 5:10; Eph 2:13)

Before Christ called us, we were people removed and separated from Christ. We were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, without hope and without God in the world (Eph 2:12-22). Because of our sins, we belonged not to God, but to Satan and this dark world. Our end would have been pitiful. But, thanks be to God, the Lord opened for us a new and living way through His death. Through the correct mode of baptism we are sanctified and justified in God's sight. Henceforth we can come before the Lord without fear. We are no longer barred from God due to sin. We become reconciled with God and our former noble status as sons of God is once again restored (Heb 10:19-22; 2:14-15; 1 Cor 15:21-22).



C . Victory Over the Power of Sin and Death

There is nothing more horrifying than a convict facing execution. Because of his crimes, a criminal fears the terrifying prospect of knowing that on a particular day, his death will be inevitable. Before knowing the Lord, our fate is like that of the criminal on death row. The moment we breathe our last, we face the horrible prospect of suffering eternally in hell for our sins. The book of Romans tells us that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). Before we knew God, we were bound by sin and Satan. But Jesus came to deal with the problem of sin that leads to death. The Lord Jesus came to suffer and die for us. Yet, the Lord was not imprisoned by death because He was completely without sin. The power of sin had no foothold on Him. In the same way, because of His death, we too can be released from our bondage of sin and the power of death. Through baptism and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, sin no longer has a death grip on us. Although we die on the last day, we will rise up again to be together with our Lord. For this, we sing with loud voices, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O hades, where is your victory? But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:54-56).

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



1

List why the Jews wanted the Lord Jesus executed.

2

List the arguments between the Jews and Pilate.

3

Why did the Lord have to come as a man to die on the cross?

4

The Lord left His heavenly throne to come down in the lowliest form to suffer and die for us. What things have we given up that are dear to us?

5

Jesus Christ resolved to die for us despite the suffering that He would encounter. What resolutions have we made for God?

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

How Much Do You Love Me?



One day I woke early in the morning to watch the sunrise. Ah, the beauty of God's creation is beyond description. As I watched, I praised God for His beautiful work. As I sat there, the Lord brought His presence to me.

He asked me, "Do you love me?"

I answered, "Of course God! You are my Lord and my Savior!"

Then he asked, "If you were physically handicapped, would you still love me?"

I was perplexed. I looked down upon my arms and legs and the rest of my body and wondered how many things I wouldn't be able to do the things that I took for granted. And I answered, "It would be hard Lord, but I would still love you."

The Lord said, "If you were blind would you still love my creation?"

How could I love something without being able to see it, I wondered? Then I thought of all the blind people in the world and how many of them still love God and His creation. So I answered, "It's hard to think of it, but I would still

love you."

Then the Lord asked me, "If you were deaf, would you still listen to my word?"

Again I asked myself how I could listen to anything being deaf. Then I understood. Listening to God's word is not merely using our ears, but our hearts. I answered, "It would be tough, but I would still listen to your word."

The Lord asked again, "If you were mute, would you still praise my name?"

How could I praise without a voice? Then it occurred to me, God wants us to sing from our very hearts and souls. It never matters what we sound like. Praising God is not always with a song, but can also happen when we are being persecuted. We give God praise with our words of thanks. So I answered, "Though I could not physically sing, I would still praise your name."

And the Lord further asked, "Do you really love me?"

With courage and strong conviction, I answered boldly, "Yes Lord! I love you because you are the one and true God."

I thought I had answered well, but God asked, "Why then do you sin?"

I answered, "Because I am only human. I am not perfect."

"Then why in times of peace do you stray the furthest? Why are your prayers earnest only in times of trouble?"

No answer. Only tears.

The Lord continued, "Why only sing at fellowships and retreats? Why seek me only in times of worship? Why ask things so selfishly?"

The tears continued to roll down my cheeks.

"Why are you ashamed of me? Why are you not spreading the good news? Why in times of persecution do you cry to others when I offer my shoulder to cry on? Why make excuses when I give you opportunities to serve in my household?"

I tried to answer, but there was no answer to give.

"You are blessed with life. I made you not to throw this gift away. I have blessed you with talents to serve me, but you continue to turn away. I have reached out to you with my word, but you did not gain in knowledge. I have spoken to you, but your ears were closed. I have shown my blessings to you, but your eyes were turned away. I have heard all your prayers, and I have answered them. Do you truly love me?"

I could not answer. How could I? I was too embarrassed. I had no excuse. What could I say to this? When all tears had flowed, I said, "Please forgive me Lord. I am unworthy to be your child."

The Lord answered, "That is my grace, my child."

I asked, "Why then do you continue to forgive me? Why do you love me so?"

The Lord answered, "Because you are my creation. You are my child. I will never abandon you. When you cry, I will have compassion and cry with you. When you laugh with joy, I will laugh with you. When you are down, I will encourage you. When you fall, I will raise you up. When you are tired, I will carry you. I will be with you till the end of days, and I will love you forever."

Never had I cried so hard before. How could I have been so cold? How could I have hurt God as I had done? I asked God, "How much do you love me?"

And the Lord stretched out His arms as they were nailed to the cross. I bowed down at the feet of Christ my savior and for the first time, I truly prayed.

Questions to think about:

1. *What message(s) does this story convey?*
(What have we done to repay the love of God? We say we love God, but how have our lives reflected this? Would we still love God if we had physical imperfections and if He took all that we love and treasure away? Despite our unworthiness and our weaknesses, the love of God still knows no end.)
2. *Does the author relate to us in any way?*
3. *Has there been a time when we truly experienced the deep love of Christ? Describe that moment or experience.*

4. *What significance does the death of our Lord Jesus have in our lives?*
(Through the death of the Lord Jesus, our sins are forgiven through water baptism. We are reconciled with God, and we have victory over sin and death.)
5. *The Lord gave His life for us, what can we leave at the cross for the Lord?*
6. *How can we help others to understand and feel the limitless depth of God's love?*
(Through being filled by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:4); through recognizing our sins, weaknesses and our unworthiness (1 Tim 1:15; Rom 5:20); through knowing and understanding the nature of God's love (Eph 3:16-19))
7. *When the Lord died, the curtain in the temple tore "from the top to the bottom." What is significant about this phrase?*
(In the Old Testament times, when people sinned, they would bring animals to the priests for sacrifices to atone for sins. Each year, the high priest would enter through the curtain, into the Most Holy Place, where he would offer sacrifices of atonement on behalf of the people. No one could enter or come before God to offer sacrifices except the high priest. But, through the death of the Lord Jesus, the curtain that separated us from God and prevented us from coming before God was torn into two. Through His flesh, a new and living way to God was opened up for us (Heb 10:20). No longer were we barred from God because of sin. We can come before the Lord without fear. And through the correct mode of baptism, we are reconciled with God, and our former noble status as sons of God is restored.)
8. *To get a small impression of the enormity of what God has forgiven us through dying on the cross, write down every sin that we have committed in the last week. Try to leave nothing out – the harsh words, the uncaring attitudes, the selfish actions. Don't rush over the process; try to compile as thorough an inventory as possible. After this, ask God to forgive us of our sins and thank Him for His infinite love and forgiveness.*
9. *Even if we are far from being poets, try to compose a few lines of poetry to describe your feelings about Christ's death. Emphasize what is most meaningful to you.*



May the Lord grant to us power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (Eph 3:16-19).

Lesson 9

The Gospel of Luke

Jesus Christ, the Savior of All Mankind

Listed Scriptures

Lk 2:1-14; 8:1-3; 10:29-37; 16:19-31; 19:1-10; 24:44-48; Gal 3:23-4:7

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to know that the Lord Jesus came to save all mankind
- 2) To enable students to realize the importance of preaching the gospel to the different people of this world

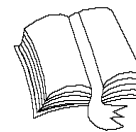
Memory Verse

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:26-28)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Luke 17-24

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



Please refer to the Bible Background section in Lessons 7 and 8 for additional information on the Gospel of Luke (Lessons 7, 8 and 9 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of Luke).



What kind of people do we like to associate with?

Are there certain types of people whom we would rather not be around or have in our lives?

B I B L E S T U D Y

Part 1
*Who
Did the
Lord
Come to
Save?*



In a society where people are discriminated against due to money, education, status, and health, Luke gives comfort by speaking of a Savior who was without any prejudice: "Behold I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:10-11). Jesus Christ came and turned the world and its values upside down. He came to revolutionize lives. He did not judge people based on appearances or factors such as gender, status, education, wealth, or lineage. The Lord saw people for who they were; people who had physical and spiritual needs and wants. He reached out to each soul that needed Him and brought them salvation. By doing this, the Lord abolished every existing human and artificial barrier to save and transform the lives of man. Which kinds of people did the Lord come to save?

A. The Savior of Jews and Gentiles

Since the time of the Old Testament, God promised Abraham that He would bless the world through His descendants, the Israelites (Gen 12:3). God had chosen Israel to be His own people, a separate and holy nation. They were to be a light to the nations and proclaim the news of God to the rest of the world (Is 49:6). But when the Lord Jesus came, the Jews did not recognize Him as their Messiah (Lk 2:10-11).

In his gospel, Luke tells us that although salvation was first given to the Israelites,

salvation is, in fact, universal. Jesus Christ offers forgiveness and salvation freely to all humanity, regardless of race, gender or social merit. Salvation is not only for the Jews, but also for the non-Jews, the Gentiles. To illustrate this, Luke makes constant reference to the Samaritans. In His parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37), the Lord tells the people that it was not a Jew who reached out to help the wounded man. Instead, it was a hated Samaritan, the very race that the Jews abhorred because they were a "mixed race," contaminated by Gentile blood. The Lord's association with the Samaritans, going into their villages, healing the ten lepers and constantly comparing the faith of Gentiles to the unbelief of the Israelites, enabled Jews to realize that He saves even their "enemies" (Lk 17:11-19; Jn 4:1-26).

Besides Samaritans, the Lord demonstrated that salvation could also come to the Gentiles. He excludes no one (Lk 7:1-10; Mt 8:5-13; Mt 15:21-28). Before His ascension the Lord commissioned His believers to proclaim the good news to all (Mk 16:15-16; Mt 28:19). It is God's desire that we preach, from the people of a remote village to the "annoying" neighbor next door. The gospel needs to be spread across ethnic, racial and national barriers.

B. The Savior of Sinners

Ordinarily, people like to associate with those who are wealthy, popular or talented. There are few who would choose to associate with sinners. The majority would much rather keep away from them. The Lord Jesus, however, associated with the sinners. The Pharisees in those days accused the Lord Jesus of being "a friend of tax-collectors and sinners" (Mt 11:19). According to the Pharisees and teachers of the law, contact with tax collectors and sinners made a Jew unclean. The term "sinners" referred not only to immoral and pagan people, but also to the common people, who were not learned in the law and did not abide by the rigid standards of the Pharisees. They were regarded as wicked and opposed to the will of God because they did not observe the rituals for purity that enabled them to eat with others. Thus, to eat and drink with such people was particularly heinous. Furthermore, tax collectors were particularly abhorrent to the Jews because they betrayed their fellow Jews by choosing to work for the Romans. They were also notorious for making themselves rich by adding a sizable sum to the sum due and keeping the money for themselves. The Pharisees would have nothing to do with such people, but not so with the Lord. The Lord was willing to associate with the outcasts of society in order to save them. His mission was "not to call the righteous, but the sinners to

repentance" (Lk 5:31-32). Luke particularly mentions how the Lord forgave the criminal on the cross (Lk 23:39-43), the adulterous woman (Lk 7:37-50). He converted Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) and called Matthew the tax collector (Lk 5:27). Jesus was able to look beyond their sins and see the needs of these people. They were people who needed the gospel the most. Unlike the self-righteous Pharisees, the sinners recognized their sins and humbly came to Him for pardon and a renewed life.

C. The Savior of the Rich and Poor

Throughout His ministry, the Lord Jesus showed mercy to people from all walks of life and different levels of society. He loved the poor and humble as well as the rich and those of high social status. This is because the Lord looks at a person's heart rather than his/her material wealth or status. Among His followers were those who were rich and powerful as well as those who were poor. Joseph of Arimathea, who requested the body of Christ from Pilate, was a councilor and a rich man (Mt 21:57). Zacchaeus too was a rich tax collector who gave up his all to follow the Lord (Lk 19:1-10). Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish council, was a person of power and status.

Luke also highlights the Lord's care and treatment of the poor. He blessed the poor (Lk 6:20); healed their sicknesses and provided for their needs (Lk 9:10-17); commanded followers to help the poor (Lk 14:13); saved Lazarus, the poor man (Lk 16:19-31); chose disciples who came from poor and lowly backgrounds. The poor are those who have no money and are often despised by society. The Lord Jesus recognized the difficulties and hardships the poor faced and so provided for their physical needs. Yet, the poor are usually more aware of their powerlessness, and thus it is easier for them to acknowledge their need for salvation.

Salvation is therefore not limited to the poor or the rich. Not all poor people go to heaven while all the rich go to hell. What matters is whether the individual responds to the grace of God. The salvation of God is open for everyone, regardless of whether one is poor or rich, humble or honorable.

D. The Savior of Men and Women

In a patriarchal society, the Lord came to show that women, as well as men, have needs, particularly the need for salvation. In Luke there are ten references to women, five of which are not mentioned in the other gospels (Lk 4:38-39; 7:11-17;

7:36-50; 8:1-3; 43-48; 10:38-42; 13:10-17; 21:1-3; 23:27-31; 55-24:11). In first century Jewish culture, women were usually treated as second-class citizens, enjoying few of the rights that men had. Women were often overlooked. Jewish tradition frowned upon women studying with rabbis. Some even considered it sinful to teach women the law. Women were permitted in the synagogue but custom required them to sit apart from the men. Luke however, made special note of how the Lord cared for respected and saved women. In Luke 8:1-3 for example, several women are mentioned for their devotion and service to the Lord. Ordinarily, women would not have been acknowledged, but here, Luke records how the women provided for the ministry, followed the Lord, wept at the cross, prepared spices to anoint the Lord's body and were the first to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection.

Furthermore, in a society where women were overlooked and ignored, the Lord Jesus not only spoke to women, but He also healed them of their diseases (Lk 4:38-39; Lk 8:43-48; 13:10-17), showed compassion upon them (Lk 7:11-17), forgave their sins (Jn 8:1-11) and saved them. This reminded the Jews that the Lord Jesus respected men and women equally. It also shows that the souls of men and women are equally precious in the sight of God.

Part 2 **Make the Lord Our Savior**

A. Believe in the Lord Jesus

Was there a time in your life when you held a very strong belief in something or someone? How did that belief influence your thoughts or actions? Today, many people claim to believe in God, but their attitudes and actions do not reflect that belief. Their lives, speech and attitudes reflect a belief in themselves and the world rather than in God. We see, therefore, that the depth of our belief directly impacts how we live our lives. The deeper our understanding and belief of the Lord, the closer we will follow Him and let His words shape our attitudes, speech and thoughts. If we observe the people that the Lord encountered during His ministry, we see that those who believed in Him exhibited a complete change and transformation in their lives. They changed because they had full conviction and confidence in whom they believed. Let us, therefore, examine the depth and genuineness of our faith and ask the Lord to increase our faith and knowledge of Him.

B . Repent

"Repent" in Greek is *metanoia*, which means "a change of heart and life, a change of life direction." A person who repents turns from his old ways to wholeheartedly commit himself to doing the will of God. We need to repent of our past sins, transgressions in daily life, refusal to believe in God, or belief in false doctrines or religions. To show our repentance we need to be determined to change our ways and follow God's direction and commandments. Zacchaeus is a great example of a person who repented from his former life of sin. After knowing the Lord, he demonstrated inward change by outward action. It is not enough to follow the Lord in our head or heart alone. We need to show our repentance by a changed life and changed behavior. Our renewed lives need to reflect a change from our past attitudes, ways and worldly views. Today, what aspects of our lives need repentance? Has our repentance resulted in action or change?

C . Be Baptized by Water and the Spirit

One night a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus declared to him that to enter the kingdom of God, one must be born of the water and the spirit (Jn 3:5). Through baptism of water, our former self is buried with Christ and our past sins are washed away. We become a new person with new life in Christ. Through baptism of the spirit, we are given a seal to our heavenly inheritance (Eph 1:13-14). Also, the Holy Spirit is our personal counselor who helps us to transform from a sinful and depraved life to being a true believer.

D . Lead a New Life

While Jesus Christ was on earth, His mission was not simply to heal the people of their sickness, bestow physical blessings or resolve their problems. The Lord came to be the Savior of men's souls. He came to save us from death and sin. Today, if we seek the Lord Jesus only as a Savior of this life and not eternal life, then we are, as Apostle Paul says, "of all men most pitied" (1 Cor 15:19), for we have missed the whole message. When we clearly understand that the Lord came to save us from the horrors of sin and death, our lives should reflect this understanding. Our lives and inner beings change as we obey His commands and do His will.

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



- 1** What does the Lord teach us regarding our attitude towards other races and cultures, particularly those we may have ill feelings towards?
- 2** Suggest ways to spread the gospel to different races and people.
- 3** How have we tried to open ourselves or the church up to enable people from other races to feel more at home?
- 4** The Pharisees separated themselves from impurity and impure people. How do we regard people whose ways are sinful and wicked?
- 5** What can we learn about the heart of the Lord Jesus with regards to sinners?
- 6** Does status, wealth or fame easily impress us?
- 7** Are we partial to those who are materially well off while we ignore those who are less fortunate?
- 8** What does the Lord Jesus teach us about salvation and material wealth?
- 9** In what ways have we treated others or have been treated as second-class citizens? How did you deal with the situation?
- 10** What changes do we need to make to treat someone like the Savior did?
- 11** What steps do we need to take to make Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior?
- 12** Do our speech, thoughts, and actions reflect Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior in our life?
- 13** Share with each other how our lives have changed since knowing the Lord.



The Watermaster

Years ago there was a village in a desert. Water was scarce, and the people treasured what little they had. It seldom rained, but when it did, people scurried about to capture it in buckets and pots. Every drop was a treasure, every cup was precious.

One day, a farmer was digging holes for fence posts. A few feet below the surface of the ground, he found a cavern – not large, but full of water. He immediately lowered a bucket, pulled it out and tasted, to his delight, cold, sweet water. He was so excited he filled all his buckets, loaded them in the back of his wagon, and hurried into the village.

“I have water! I have water!” he shouted. The villagers came running out of their houses. As the people gathered, the farmer explained how he had come upon the treasure. He joyfully announced that there was enough for everyone. “Drink all you want. There is plenty! Enjoy it!” The people rejoiced for the first time as long as anyone could remember, there was enough water for everyone. The farmer then announced his plan. “I’ll bring some water in every morning so each of you can have what you need.”

And that’s exactly what he did. The farmer became the watermaster. Every morning he loaded the buckets into his wagon, rode into town, and gave some water to the people. It was great. The water was free. The farmer was willing and the villagers were grateful.

This continued until the farmer had a dream one night. In the dream, he saw the people taking the water and not being thankful. They would walk up to the wagon, snatch the bucket and march away without a word of appreciation. When he awoke he was troubled. As he rode into town, he resolved to give the water only to the grateful. He announced to the people, “From now on, I will not give water to those who aren’t thankful.” The people were surprised. Each person thanked him when he or she received the water.

All was well until the farmer had another dream. In this dream, some of the people who were drinking the water were unkind to their neighbors and mean to their animals. The next morning, he decided he would give the water to worthy individuals

only. “If you are mean to your animals or unkind to your neighbors, you will get no water,” he decreed. The people looked at each other and were silent. They knew the bad people among them. When the watermaster saw the looks of distrust, he had an idea.

“Each of you come and tell me who is unworthy so I will know who is mean and unkind.” So one by one they came with their names, and he made a list. The list grew and grew. Finally after every villager had spoken, the farmer read the names. He was shocked. Every person in the town was on the list except one. The farmer.

So he stood on the wagon and announced that since few were grateful and none were worthy, he would bring no more water into the village. And with that he turned his wagon of water around and rode off.

Questions to think about:

1. How does this story teach us about the difference between giving what a person needs and what a person deserves?
2. Have we changed the way we treat others based on external factors, or based on whether a person is considered “good” or “bad”?
3. When we share the gospel with others are we selective about whom we speak to? Do we speak to those who appear to be deserving of the gospel, and ignore those who do not fit our personal views? How can we have the attitude of the Lord, who chose indiscriminately, no matter how insignificant that person seemed to be?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



The good news about Jesus Christ is that He comes to all types of people, including the unlovable, the plain, the outcasts and the despised. He comes to anyone with a heart humble enough to accept Him. Jesus Christ accepts them for who they are. Let us pray and ask the Lord to help us have an all-embracing heart, a heart of compassion and concern for the people around us and a heart to share the wonderful gospel to the world.

Goals

In the following lessons, our students will evaluate their belief in the Lord Jesus. They will question how much they truly believe in God despite attending church regularly, reading the Bible, and praying. Believing and knowing the Lord Jesus involves much more than a mental assent to the truth. It means turning from sin, living a life of obedience and love, keeping God's word, walking in His likeness and loving our brothers.

Our students will also learn that to know the Lord Jesus, we need to have experiences of the Lord in our everyday lives. Through recognizing the divine attributes of our Lord Jesus, they will discover that regardless of what they face in life, they need to trust in Him, for He is the answer to all of life's problems.

unit
4**Teacher Devotional**

The Christian life basically comes down to an ongoing series of choices. Godly living may seem impossible until we approach life one choice at a time. Then godly living becomes abundantly possible.

As someone once said, "The key to victorious Christian living comes down to this—whatever you're doing that's right, keep doing it; whatever you're doing that's wrong, knock it off."

The Greatest Command

So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'"

(Luke 10:27)

Lesson 10

The Gospel of John
**Jesus Christ,
the Son of God**Listed Scriptures

Jn 1:1-14; 1:29-51; 4:1-26; 10:22-39; 11; 17; Jn 11:17-44; Lk 7:11-23

Lesson Aim

To enable students to recognize that Jesus Christ is God manifest in human form

Memory Verse

"who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb 1:3)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

John 1-7

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



The Gospel of John is the fourth gospel book. The first three books are known as "the harmony of the Gospels," for their materials about the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus are similar, and the arrangement of the contents are almost identical. However, the gospel of John differs greatly from the other three in content and approach. John selects key events and takes the time to explain them. He uses simple vocabulary but chooses special words with deep meaning such as word, truth, light, darkness, life and love. John's main focus is on the true identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Author:

While the gospel does not specifically designate its author, many factors support the long-held belief that he was John the apostle, the brother of James. John lived in Bethsaida of Galilee but also had another house in Jerusalem (Jn 19:27). His father was Zebedee and mother was Salome. John and his brother James were fishermen (Mt 4:21, 22). They were called by the Lord to follow Him. They were later

appointed as apostles (Mt 10:2), and among the twelve disciples, they were two out of the three disciples closest to the Lord (Mt 17:1). John is often believed to be the beloved disciple of the Lord Jesus (Jn 13:23-28). He was the youngest of the twelve apostles and the only apostle who followed the Lord to the cross (Jn 19:26). At the crucifixion, Lord Jesus commended His mother to John's care. After the Lord's ascension, John became a pillar of the church and was made an elder (Gal 2:9; 2 Jn 1). He died at the age of ninety-eight, making him the apostle who lived to the most advanced age.

Time of writing:

The Gospel of John was written between AD 85-90 from Ephesus after the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) and before John's exile to the island of Patmos. According to some historical recordings, John stayed in Ephesus after the death of Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. There, John completed his gospel and his other epistles till the last years of the Roman emperor Domitian, who exiled him to Patmos Island. There, he wrote the Book of Revelation.

Purpose of writing:

John explains his purpose of writing very clearly in Jn 20:31, "but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." The important purpose of this book is to let the Gentiles, who had no correct view of the knowledge of God, learn of the truth about Christ. John also wrote to Christians to strengthen their faith. The book introduces God as the Word (Jn 1:1). And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among men. The Lord Jesus, the incarnate word, came full of grace and truth. Whoever believes in Him will gain eternal life (Jn 1:14, 18; 20:31).

W A R M U P



If you had to introduce yourself, what facts about you would allow others to know you better?



Part 1

Son of God

History is crowded with men who claimed to be gods, or who were given such adulation after they died. Men such as King Tutankhamen, Siddhartha Gautama, Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Vladimir Lenin are some examples. However, only the Lord Jesus backed up His claim. In this gospel, John presents evidence and facts to convince the people that Jesus Christ is no ordinary man. He is God Himself. The other gospels begin with the birth of the Lord Jesus or with an account of His human ancestry. John, on the other hand, tells us immediately that the child born then is the eternal God (Jn 1:14). His origin was not at His physical conception, but, as Micah said, His "origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Mic 5:2). Prophets of old had predicted long ago the coming of the Son of God. The prophet Isaiah foretold, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given..." (Is 9:6-7; Is 16:5). Jeremiah tells how the Lord will raise up for David a righteous Branch (Jer 23:5). And in Deuteronomy 18:18, God appeared to Moses saying, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

Now, John presents without a doubt that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the one who had been promised long ago. In the gospel, the Lord Jesus is often referred to as "The Son" or "His own Son" or "Son," all of which is to be understood as "the Son of God" (Lk 10:22; Jn 5:19; Lk 1:35b; Jn 20:31).

But does this mean that He was God's son? During the baptism and transfiguration of the Lord Jesus, a voice from Heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:16-17; Mt 17:5). The word "begotten" does not imply, in any way, the sense of being born or generation as in the case of man. It means unique, only one of its kind. It does not denote the beginning of the Son. The "Son of God" is actually a term to describe how God Himself came assuming a human body and human nature. Although God came in the form of the man Jesus, God continued to be God at the same time. Although He was living in the world, He was also in heaven. From the prophecy of Isaiah, the Son is the everlasting Father, (Is 6:9) meaning that the Lord Jesus is the Father Himself. Many times throughout His ministry the Lord would reveal His true identity. In John 10:30 the Lord states, "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30). And when asked if He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, Lord Jesus replied, "I Am" (Mk 14:61,62). When Phillip asked

the Lord to show him the Father, the Lord told him that He was the Father. "Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known Me, Phillip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father....." (Jn 14:8ff). We see from here that Jesus Christ is in fact the Heavenly Father, the Creator of the universe. God did not give up His deity to become human, but He set aside the right to His glory and power. He came as a Son who was obedient to the Father's will, to accomplish the divine plan devised for man's salvation. By coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, God destroyed sin in the flesh. In all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest, to be the propitiation for the sins of the people.



Part 2

The Lord Jesus is God



A. Jesus Christ is Without Sin

a. The Lord Jesus was born through the Holy Spirit

The birth of the Lord Jesus is one of the greatest miracles that ever occurred. Although He came as a human, His birth sets Him apart from all other human beings. Ordinarily, individuals are conceived through the union of a man and woman. Jesus Christ, however, was conceived through the Holy Spirit. He was born of God and is called the Son of God. Through His miraculous birth, the Lord was free from the sinful nature passed on to all other men from Adam. Jesus Christ is therefore without sin or blemish. He is the only sinless person; He is qualified to be the Lamb of God and to die for the sins of mankind (1 Jn 3:5).

b. Jesus Christ did not sin

As we live in this world, we are bombarded with temptations and worldly pressures that cause us to sin each day. The Lord Jesus too met with all kinds of temptations, yet He was able to overcome them all. He did not sin on account of these. Even when He was at His physical low after fasting for forty days, the Lord did not succumb to the wiles of Satan. At times, when the multitude pressured Him to become king, He was able to resist the temptation to bring glory upon Himself (Jn 6:15). When the Lord was standing trial before His accusers, they could not make a case against Him. Even when Pilate tried the Lord three times, he could not find any grounds for charging Jesus Christ with

the death penalty (Lk 23:4, 14, 22). Unlike all men, Jesus Christ is the only human who was able to resist and overcome sin throughout His entire life (1 Pet 2:21-23).



B. Jesus Christ Has the Power to Overcome Death

It is a sad and inevitable truth that death is the end of every life. Because of sin, death calls upon each person (Heb 9:27; Rom 6:23). Like all human beings, Jesus Christ too lived and died. But what makes Jesus Christ different is that He was able to resurrect from the dead. This proves that He was not only a man, He was also God, the Lord of Life. Death could not confine the Lord, and He rose from the dead three days after His burial. Not only did the Lord overcome His own death, but He was also able to bring those who had died to life (Jn 11:17-44; Lk 7:11-17; 8:41-42, 49-56). In John 11:25, the Lord proclaimed that He is "the resurrection and the life." He gives to His believers a beautiful promise that, "because I live, you will live also," and "I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). In the future, the Lord will save our souls from the second death. He will cause our physical bodies to rise from the dead and transform them into spiritual bodies that will enter the heavenly kingdom (Jn 6:54; 11:26; Rom 8:11; 1 Thess 4:13-18).



C. Jesus Christ is All-Knowing

During His ministry, the Lord often surprised the people around Him with His ability to know everything.

a. Jesus Christ knows a man's past

While talking with the Samaritan woman by the well, the Lord revealed her past to her (Jn 4:16-19). In John 1:45-49, Jesus Christ knew Nathanael even before they met. He knew Nathanael to be "a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile." He also unveiled His omniscience to Nathanael by telling him of his exact location before Phillip called him.

b. Jesus Christ knows a man's heart

Jesus Christ is the omniscient God who knows the deepest thoughts and intentions of the heart. On occasions when the Pharisees or scribes tried to test the Lord, the Lord knew their thoughts and the hypocrisy of their hearts (Mt 9:4; 22:18; Mk 12:15; Lk 11:14-17ff). After the Lord forgave the sins of the paralytic in Capernaum, He knew that the scribes were inwardly questioning His authority to forgive sins (Mk 2:5-8).

c. Jesus Christ knows a man's future

Man has no way of knowing his future or even what will happen in the next second. Only God can see and is in control of future events: The Lord Jesus predicted His death and resurrection three times (Mt 16:21; Mt 17:22; Mt 20:17); He predicted how the disciples would flee and depart from Him (Mt 26:31, 56); He predicted how Peter would deny Him three times and what would eventually happen to Peter (Mt 26:31-35, 74, 75; Jn 21:18-19); the Lord foretold the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt 24:1-2); He predicted how Peter and John would find the man who would bring them to the room that was to be used for the Passover (Lk 22:7-13); He predicted how the two disciples would find a donkey in the next village (Mt 21:1-7). From this, we see that Jesus Christ was no ordinary man. He is God Himself, who is all-present, all-powerful and all-knowing. Since the Lord Jesus is God, our ways cannot be hidden from Him (Ps 139:3; Prov 15:3). God knows our words, our deeds, our thoughts and our innermost hearts (1 Chron 28:9; 1 Jn 3:20).

D. Jesus Christ Performed Many Signs and Miracles

Being God Himself, Jesus Christ manifested God's nature in its fullness through His speech and deeds. In Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (Col 2:9). Throughout His ministry, the Lord demonstrated divine power and authority. He healed those with all kinds of diseases and pains (Mt 3:23-24). He performed many signs and miracles that caused the people to wonder in amazement, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel" (Mt 9:33). The Lord did not use traditional human methods of healing. He used His almighty power. Sometimes sicknesses were healed through a touch, leading by the hands, or laying on of hands (Mk 1:41; 5:41; 8:22-25; 9:27). Other times, He healed the sick with a single word or command (Mk 2:11-12; 3:5; 10:52; Lk 4:39; 5:13; Jn 4:50-51; 5:8-9). The Lord performed these miracles to let the people to know who He truly was and to bring them to believe in Him (Rom 15:18; 10:13; Mk 16:16; Jn 3:1-2; Jn 5:1-38).

E. Jesus Christ Taught With Authority

To teach in a school, college, or university usually requires specialized teacher training and a teacher's license. Similarly, in the Lord Jesus' day, rabbis and scribes had to receive schooling in the laws before they could teach. The Lord, however, did not receive any such training. He did not carry any human certification, degree or license. Yet, when He taught, the Lord spoke with such authority and revealed truths that the people questioned where He got His wisdom (Mt 13:53-54; Mt

21:23; Mt 22:15-22, 23-33, 34-46). Christ was able to teach effectively, to correct erroneous attitudes, thoughts and conduct; and to give exactly what a person needed most. The people could perceive that He taught as one who had authority and not as their scribes (Mt 7:28-29; Lk 4:31-32). Was He not the carpenter's son? Where did the Lord obtain this authority? How could He teach with such power? The truth is that the Lord Jesus is not just a man, He is God, and in Him is the perfect embodiment of the truth.

F. Jesus Christ Has Power and Authority Over Satan

Luke 4:18-19 records the Lord's mission in coming to the world. He came to "proclaim release to the captives, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed." People are not only made captives by sickness, anxieties and problems, but they are also made captives of Satan and sin. Such lives are wretched and full of darkness. But Jesus Christ came to break the bonds of Satan, "to open the eyes of the people, so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God..." (Ac 26:18). In the Gospels, there are many occasions where the Lord set free those who were under the bondage of Satan. He was able to cast out demons from the two men in the country of the Gadarenes (Mt 8:28-34); He healed the Canaanite's daughter who was possessed (Mt 15:21-28); He healed the blind and dumb demoniac (Mt 12:22). However, Christ came not only to cast out demons then, but He came to break the bonds of sin and Satan forever. Through the shedding of His blood, the Lord has freed us from this terrible bondage. No one but Christ can set us free, as He has complete and absolute power over the physical and spiritual realms. All things are subject to the authority of God. It is written in Colossians 1:16, "In Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him."

G. Jesus Christ is Lord of Nature

How many of us have planned a trip only to have to cancel or postpone it due to bad weather? How many of us have gone fishing only to return home without a single catch? Indeed, the weather and the forces of nature are beyond human control. However, in the Gospels there are a total of nine miracles that demonstrate how Jesus Christ has total control over the forces of nature:

Water turned to wine in Cana (Jn 2:1-11); catch of fish near Capernaum (Lk 5:1-11); another catch of fish (Jn 21:6); tempest stilled (Mt 8:23-27; Mk 4:35-41; Lk

8:22-25); the five thousand people fed with five loaves of bread and two fish (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-14); the Lord Jesus walked on the sea (Mt 14:22-36; Mk 6:45-52; Jn 6:15-21); the four thousand people fed (Mt 15:32-39; Mk 8:1-10); money for the temple tax taken from the mouth of a fish (Mt 17:24-27); a fig tree cursed (Mt 21:18-22; Mk 11:12-14, 20-25).

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



- 1** What is the definition of "Son of God"?
- 2** What is His relationship with God?
- 3** What is the difference between us as "sons of God" and Jesus Christ as the "Son of God"?

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



God and His Attributes

Psalms 105:1-5 says, "O give thanks to the Lord, call on His name, make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing praises to Him, tell of all His wonderful works! Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice! Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His presence continually! Remember the wonderful works that He has done, His miracles, and the judgements He uttered, O offspring of Abraham His servant, sons of Jacob, His chosen ones!"

Read the following testimonies and then relate a personal testimony or incident that allowed you to experience God and His attributes. Start to keep a journal, if you haven't already done so, of all your personal encounters with God and His doings. With each entry, you will begin to realize how great and wonderful our God is, and how He takes care of every aspect of our lives.

God has control over nature

A brother once owned a fish farm. One day, he woke up to find that all his fish had died and were floating on top of the water. When his neighbors saw this, they laughed at him, saying, "What is the use of believing in God?" Apparently, only his fish died whereas nothing had happened to their fish. The brother was sad-

dened to see this, and wondered why God had allowed this to happen. He gathered up all the dead fish and sold them that day at the market for a cheap price. Not long later, a huge tidal wave swept over the fish farm. The wave was so huge that it carried all the fish in the farm out to sea. His neighbors found that they had lost all their fish because they had been swept out to sea. The brother immediately realized God's good will for causing his fish to die. Although he had to sell his fish, he did not end up with nothing like his neighbors.

God knows our thoughts and intentions

An elderly brother and his wife had been believers in another church that worshiped on Sundays. While grocery shopping one day, a sister from the True Jesus Church preached to him and invited him to attend an evangelical service. During the seven days of spiritual convocation, the brother experienced many wonderful visions and blessings from the Lord. He decided to get baptized, and during the Holy Communion, he saw a vision. He saw the Lord Jesus appear to him in a white garment, holding a big sheet of yellow paper with the Ten Commandments written on it. When the Lord came before him, the Lord asked if he could recite the Ten Commandments. Usually the brother could recite them easily but this time he could not remember the 4th Commandment. Then a miracle happened at that instant. The 4th Commandment blinked three times, "Remember to keep the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." God is a God who knows and searches the heart. Deep in his heart, the brother was intending to go back the day after the Sabbath to his old church where he attended Sunday worship. The Lord saw this and warned the brother in the vision of the importance of obeying completely the teachings of the Bible.

God has the power to heal sickness

Since the birth of her youngest daughter, a sister - who at the time had not yet come to know the Lord - suffered constant bleeding. This sickness continued for twelve years. Despite the fact that her husband was a well-renowned physician, had contacts with the best physicians and the best hospitals, he could not find a cure for her. One day, the sister's sister persuaded her to go to the True Jesus Church. When she went, she received the Holy Spirit. During the prayer, she felt a force like a bolt of lightning come upon her and she began to vibrate strongly. She started to worry that the vibrations would cause her to bleed even more. However, she later discovered that she was healed of her bleeding at precisely the moment she received the Holy Spirit.

God can cast out demons

In one village, there lived a renowned sorcerer who had such power that, if he

willed, he could curse a person to death. As such, the entire village feared him and came to him to seek his healing power through witchcraft. On one occasion however, he passed by the TJC and stopped to look. As he stood there, he saw a white figure descending from heaven into the church. The next time he passed by, he saw in another vision the radiant man laying hands on the believers who were praying. There was light everywhere except the spot on which he stood. Not long later, he fell ill. He contracted a disease similar to arthritis. His whole body stiffened and it was difficult for him to move or bend his body. Almost every night, three devils came to disturb him, the very same demons whom he worshiped and depended on to practice witchcraft. They commanded him not to believe in Christianity. They would then beat him up, strangle him or take his blanket away so he could not sleep peacefully. He stayed in bed for more than two months. After this, members from the True Jesus Church visited him and told him of the truth. One night when the three devils came again, he shouted, "Hallelujah!" as he had been taught. The three devils disappeared. From this incident, he understood God's power better. Later, he was baptized. He had to be carried on a wooden stretcher, and it proved to be a difficult task baptizing a man who could not bend his body. After the baptism, he was miraculously cured of his sickness.

Question to think about:

Write about an incident or event in your life that attests to the mighty power of our Lord.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



1. *What aspect of God's divine nature have we experienced in our lives?*
2. *How much have we allowed the Creator of the heavens and earth to dwell within our hearts and be in control of our lives?*
3. *How much have we appreciated the opportunity of knowing God and His word?*

L e s s o n 1 1

The Gospel of John

Knowing and Believing in the Lord Jesus

Listed Scriptures

Rom 1:24-28, 10:14-17; Eph 1:15-23; 2 Thess 2:9-12; Heb 4:2; 1 Jn 2:1-6;
1 Jn 4:7-12

Lesson Aim

To enable students to learn about the importance of "knowing" the Lord as our personal Savior

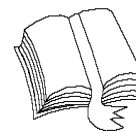
Memory Verse

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.." (1 Jn 5:20)

Bible Reading For This Week *(for students and teachers)*

John 8-14

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



Please refer to the Bible Background section in Lesson 10 for additional information on the Gospel of John (Lessons 10, 11 and 12 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of John).



What does it truly mean to “know” someone? What is the difference between “knowing of” someone and “knowing” him/her personally?

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Knowing the Lord Jesus

A. The Importance of Knowing the Lord

The Gospel of John is unlike the other Gospels, which were written to present the Lord Jesus to certain cultural groups. The Gospel of John was written as a universal gospel so that people of all times “may believe that the Lord Jesus is Christ, the Son of God.” In the OT, the Lord, through the mouth of the prophets, told the people that they must strive to know Him (Ps 100:3; Hos 6:3, 6). But though He continually called, exhorted and chastened His chosen people, the Israelites failed to know and recognize God (Is 1:2-3). Therefore, in his gospel and epistles, John stresses the importance of knowing and believing in the Lord. According to John, true knowledge is a mark of believers. This knowledge refers to acknowledging Jesus Christ as God’s Son and our Savior and understanding the things of God (1 Jn 2:13,14; 5:20; 2:4; 4:7,8). Today we realize that knowledge of Jesus Christ is life (1 Jn 1:3). He is “the way the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). Only through knowing the Lord can we obtain blessings in this life as well as eternal life. However, to “know” God is not simply an intellectual exercise or discussion. It is an active, continuing trust and fellowship with God that brings eternal life. It involves living a life of obedience and love, keeping God’s word, walking in His likeness, and loving our brothers.

B. Biblical Characters Who Came to Know the Lord

The Gospel of John records certain individuals who progressed from a state of disbelief to total belief and submission in the Lord Jesus. Through their faith and expe-

riences, they came to know Jesus Christ and confessed that He is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

a. Nathanael

When Philip told Nathanael about how he found the Messiah and that He was Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael was initially skeptical. The prophets had said nothing of anyone great coming from the Galilean town of Nazareth. However, Nathanael was stunned when the Lord Jesus greeted him saying, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile.” But when the Lord manifested His omniscience by revealing to Nathanael his exact location before they met (which was far out of the Lord Jesus’ sight), Nathanael immediately exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (Jn 1:43-49).

b. The Samaritan woman

The Samaritan woman, whose painful past led her to shun society, met the Lord Jesus by the well. During the course of the conversation, the Samaritan woman progressed from rejecting the Lord Jesus to believing in Him because of His knowledge of her past and her thirst for the Messiah (Jn 4:1-30, 39-42).

c. Martha

The Lord Jesus had been a guest in Martha, Mary and Lazarus’ home in Bethany on previous occasions (Lk 10:38). As Martha came to know the Lord, her knowledge and faith grew also. However, only after the Lord told her that He was the “resurrection and the life” and resurrected her brother and Lazarus from the dead did she fully believe that the Lord was “the Christ, the Son of God, He who is coming into the world” (Jn 11:25-27).

d. Thomas

Although Thomas had been a follower of Christ, he only came to a complete realization that the Lord was the Son of God after the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to him and showed him His nail-pierced hands and side. What prevented Thomas from seeing and knowing God? Thomas lacked the faith. He needed to base his belief on concrete proof and evidence. He needed to see and touch the Lord before he believed. After the Lord Jesus showed Himself to Thomas, Thomas wholeheartedly believed, saying, “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:26-28).

e. John the Baptist

John the baptist and the Lord were second cousins, so John knew who He was,

but he did not know that Jesus Christ was in fact the Messiah. Twice, in John 1:31 and 1:33, John says, "I myself did not know Him." So, although John had been sent by God to announce that the promised Savior of Israel was to appear and was called to "testify concerning that Light," it wasn't until the Lord's baptism that John truly understood that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. When the Lord Jesus came to be baptized by John, John saw the Spirit of God come down from heaven and descend on the Lord Jesus like a dove. John saw and believed and testified that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Jn 1:29-34).

f. Simon Peter

One time the Lord Jesus asked Peter who he thought the Lord was. Peter declared, "You are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:69). Peter's knowledge of Christ was real but limited. Although Peter knew who the Lord was, he did not have a complete understanding of the Lord's purpose and mission on earth. He saw the Lord from a worldly perspective, thinking that He would soon restore the Kingdom of Israel and become its earthly King. However, Peter's understanding of Christ expanded over time. As he went through the pain of denying the Lord, witnessing His death and resurrection and experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter's awareness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior grew and deepened.

g. The Jews

One time the Lord was asked to go to Bethany because Lazarus had fallen sick. When He got there, Lazarus had already died and had been dead for four days. During this time, some Jews went to the house of Mary and Martha to console them. When the Lord arrived at Lazarus' tomb, He prayed and asked Lazarus to come out of the tomb. When Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, came out of the tomb, many of the Jews, who had come with Mary and saw what He had done, believed in Him. The Jews were followers of the scribes and the Pharisees, who resisted Jesus Christ and rejected Him. But now after witnessing this miracle, they came to understand and believe in the Lord Jesus (Jn 11:1-48).



Part 2

The Process of Believing and Accepting God

Believing and accepting the Lord Jesus involves a long and complex process. What are some of the usual stumbling blocks that prevent people from accepting Christ? What are the sources of faith and belief in the Lord Jesus?

A. Stumbling Blocks

a. Preconceived ideas and prejudices

Often, preconceived ideas and notions regarding Christ and Christianity are major stumbling blocks. Nathanael's attitude towards Nazareth made him think that nothing good could come from there. Some people from Far-Eastern countries would never accept Christianity because they consider it a Western religion or a religion foreign to them. In Christ's time, the Pharisees' and the scribes' preconceived thoughts prevented them from seeing the truth. In Matthew 9:17, the Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees and scribes, "No one puts new wine into old wineskins, if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed." The Lord Jesus came to the world to establish a new covenant between God and His people. He came to offer forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God through faith. But this was very different from the old religious system of Judaism, with its rules and traditions that the Pharisees were used to. The Jews clung to the old traditions. The old is good, they said. And even though they heard the authoritative teachings of the Lord Jesus and saw His miracles, they rejected the truth and refused to see it, thus preventing them from believing and knowing Jesus Christ as Israel's long awaited One, the very Son of God (Is 53:1-3; Lk 24:21). Do we have any preconceived notions or prejudices that blind us to the truth or prevent us from walking out our faith?

b. Lack of faith

When Jesus Christ was preaching, many people followed Him merely for physical food and blessings. They were caught up in the life of this world and failed to see what the Lord was offering. People without faith put their hope on things that are seen and are temporal. They cannot see the things that are eternal. Their faith exists only as long as it fits their expectations. The multitude that followed the Lord Jesus lacked faith. They "believed" in Christ only superficially and turned away when He did not offer what they expected. Their faith was not sufficient for them to abandon their own notions and submit themselves fully to God and His word (Rom 11:20; 2 Cor 1:24). The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb 11:6). Faith is therefore an indispensable factor of salvation. "For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers" (Heb 4:2). A person with faith will not lose sight of eternal life for the things of the world. They have the faith to see beyond the trials and temptations of life and to accept and obey God's words fully.

c. Hardened heart

People in the Lord Jesus' time, like those in the time of Isaiah (Is 6:10), would not

believe despite evidence. As a result, God hardened their hearts. In Romans 1:24-28 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, it records how the people of the world have become futile in their thinking, their senseless minds darkened. For those whose hearts are hardened, even the most compelling reasons for faith become obstacles. The Lord Jesus performed enough miraculous signs to cause people to believe in Him. The greatest of all signs – raising Lazarus from the dead – should have been enough to elicit faith from all those who saw it or even heard about it. Yet the Jews continued in their stubbornness and refused to believe that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. Let us examine and make sure our hearts are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13).

Teaching Tip:

You may wish to create a table like the following to help organize the information.

| Person | What were the obstacles to their knowing the Lord? | How were those obstacles removed? | Result |
|--------|--|-----------------------------------|--------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

B. Sources of Faith

a. Hearing God's Word and being enlightened by the truth

Paul says, "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom 10:17). Faith is stimulated by hearing of the good news, the word of God. On the day of Pentecost, Peter rose up and addressed the multitude. In his speech, Peter introduced the good news and the way of salvation to them. When the people heard it, they were cut to the heart. Was it Peter's eloquence or power of persuasiveness that caused them to say this? No indeed. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). Through the word of God, "arguments,

every proud obstacle and stronghold can be destroyed to the knowledge of God, and every thought taken captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:3-5).

b. Seeing God's power

In John 10:37-39, the Lord Jesus said to the people, "Even though you do not believe in me, believe the miracles." The Lord recognized that the people who could not accept Him through His teachings might believe through other channels. He invited His listeners to consider His miracles if they found His words too difficult to believe. After all, it was prophesied that the Messiah would do great works (Is 35:4-6). Today, God may use miracles to help us respond to Him. God's miracles may be spectacular public miracles or small personal ones. But in some way, God lets us know that He is speaking personally to us. Many people come to the Lord after witnessing miracles such as a sickness being healed, being delivered from an evil spirit and many others (Mk 16:17-20; 1 Sam 2:6-7). The miracles are not an end in themselves. The Lord performs them so that the people could know and understand that the "Father is in Me (Jesus), and I (Jesus) am in the Father" (cf Jn 14:10-11). In the same way, God may use miracles to convince people to believe in Him and to confirm the true message.

c. Humbling oneself

At that time the Lord declared, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes" (Mt 11:25). Why is the gospel hidden from the wise and learned? These are people who are arrogant in their own knowledge. They are already full of learning. The babes are those who humbly and openly receive the truth of God's word.

In the Bible, there is an account of an Ethiopian eunuch, an official of the Queen, who was in charge of the treasury. He had just returned from worshiping in Jerusalem and was reading a passage from Isaiah. When asked whether he understood it, the eunuch did not let pride or status get in the way of understanding the word of God. He let down his guard, and asked Philip to sit with him and explain the passage. Although he held a powerful position, he understood that there were some areas where he needed help, and he was not afraid to ask for it. Because of his humility, the eunuch was able to understand God's word and receive the gift of eternal life (Rom 10:9; 1 Tim 1:15; 4:8-9; Rom 4:20-21). Those with pride and arrogance, on the other hand, will be prevented from hearing or seeing the truth. It is not worldly knowledge, power or status that allows us to know the truth, but a humble attitude in learning. If we study the Scriptures with a trusting and humble spirit, we will receive many fresh insights and understanding.

d. God gives the understanding and opens our heart to accept Him

No matter how much we may try, we cannot come to understand Jesus on our own, for that of the flesh cannot expound on the mysteries of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:11). The people too, tried by their own reasoning to identify the Lord Jesus, but failed (Mt 16:13-14). The people of Nazareth, Lord Jesus' hometown, thought they knew Him, but their understanding of Him was limited to the Lord Jesus as the carpenter's son (Mt 13:55-58). The world through its wisdom cannot know God (1 Cor 1:20-21). It is only God who can reveal to man who He really is (Mt 11:27; Ac 16:14). In Luke 10:22, the Lord tells the disciples, "'All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' Then turning to the disciples he said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.'" Indeed, it is not by our own doing that we come to know Him, but through His choosing and His saving grace (Jn 15:15-16; Eph 2:8). May the Lord grant us the Spirit of wisdom, revelation, and knowledge to know Him more fully (Eph 1:17).

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



1

According to John, what does "knowing" God mean?

2

What are the obstacles that hinder a person from believing in God?

3

What are sources of faith and belief in God?

4

From our study of certain characters that came to believe in the Lord, is there one that you can identify with?

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



Take a Step Closer to Following Jesus Christ

We live in a world where most people do not believe that something is true simply because we tell them. This is especially true when it comes to believing in God. People need to see and experience God Himself. People come to a belief and understanding of the Lord Jesus through var-

ious ways. There are times when God sends thunder to stir us. There are times when God sends grace and blessings to let us see His presence. We may have experienced God through healing, through receiving the Holy Spirit, through simple faith in His words or through the love of those around us. God will use different ways to enable us to know Him, but we need to open our hearts and be sensitive to His divine calling.

Read the following excerpt from a letter written by a sister to a good friend whom she has known since junior high school. Through the letter, we can journey with her as she begins to know God and experience a transformation in her life.

Dear Friend,

I thank God for you and our friendship all these years. I also thank God that you took time out of your busy schedule to attend the Saturday evening service of our biannual Spiritual Convocation at Garden Grove.

I understand how you felt that night because I felt the same way the first time I saw people pray in tongues at a family service that I attended with my parents and younger brother (he was about nine years old, and I was about ten). The prayer wasn't 30 minutes, but about 10 minutes long. Even so, I felt a little startled and uncomfortable. I thought it was such a weird way to pray. My brother and I even laughed, not out of malice, but out of nervousness, as we looked around during the prayer. Later on, when I attended a spiritual convocation at Garden Grove, I felt that the long 30 minute prayers were unbearable because I didn't know what to pray about, and my knees remained sore even long after I got up.

I remember the first time I went to the True Jesus Church in El Monte. I wandered around the premises and found an empty room across the hall from the main chapel. As I sat on one of the wooden chairs, I felt as if I had arrived "home." It was a distinctly warm, peaceful feeling (which, as you know, were not the feelings that I felt at my actual home).

I also remember the day I received water baptism. (The river was freezing cold!) I simply did what the preacher instructed me to do in accordance with the Bible. I knelt in the water, bowed my head, clasped my hands, closed my eyes and repented (I sincerely apologized to God for all the bad things that I had done and asked for forgiveness) while he baptized me in the name of Jesus Christ. After I dried up and changed clothes, we headed back to El Monte for foot washing and Holy Communion. As I sat in the back seat to the left of my brother in the burgundy-colored car and looked out the window, I suddenly felt as if a huge and extremely heavy burden had been lifted off my shoulders. I was only ten years old.

What “burden” could I possibly have had?

I praise God that the person I am today is very different from the pitiful little girl I am about to describe to you. The “burden” that was lifted off my shoulders was the burden of countless sins I had committed.

I had a very bad temper and was easily angered. I took out my anger and frustrations in a violent, physical manner similar to my dad’s. Like my dad, I justified my actions and my right to be angry. I couldn’t control my temper. I often ruthlessly punched and kicked my poor, helpless brother whenever he irked me. As if that wasn’t bad enough, I was so mad at him one time that I scratched the entire length of his forearm and made him bleed. I knew I had a bad temper, but I couldn’t correct myself. I became immensely aggravated, steaming mad, and at times I even threw tantrum whenever my mom or other relatives told me what a bad temper I had. I just couldn’t handle the truth about myself and was too proud to admit my shortcomings.

I had a filthy mouth (I picked up the habit from neighborhood kids). I casually and frequently used the “F-word,” “s-word,” “a-word” in my speech as well as in my school assignments.

I was extremely stingy and self-centered. I didn’t like to share my belongings – I hoarded them. With regard to food or other material things, I always took the better portion for myself and didn’t care about or consider other people’s needs and wants.

I stole money from my parents and enlisted my brother as my accomplice so that we could play arcade games at the donut shop next to our parents’ seafood restaurant. One time, my brother got caught and was severely punished by my parents while I remained silent.

On top of all that, I had very low self-esteem. It was so low that I hated myself. Actually, “hate” does not fully convey how much I loathed and despised everything about myself. At school, I always felt left out – I didn’t fit in anywhere. I was always one of the last to be picked on a team. My schoolmates mocked me because of my ethnic features and the unfashionable clothes I wore. Some boys even went so far as to trip me, cuss me out, throw stones at me, insult me, shove me. They cruelly beat me up without mercy and gave me cuts, bruises, and a bloody nose. At home, I was often brutally whacked on the face, beaten and punished by my father whenever he had to vent his anger and frustrations. I felt that I was a worthless reject

and a loner; whenever I looked at myself in the mirror, all I could see was an ugly, stupid, unlovable child who couldn’t do anything right or good. Therefore, I often walked with my eyes riveted on the ground and head hung low. I felt that I did not deserve anything good. I even thought that my mom, of all people, hated me. Although I was miserable and felt that life was not worth living, I was too chicken to run away from home or to take my own life.

I rarely smiled. In fact, one day, my classmate candidly asked, “How come you never smile?” I pathetically answered, “because I have nothing to smile about.”

What a contrast from the way I am today, huh? You and other people who know me would probably describe me as a fairly cheerful person. In fact, quite a few people have even given me the nickname, “sunshine girl.”

Of course, I didn’t change overnight nor by accident – it took many years. To this day, I still have many things to improve upon. As I grew up in the Lord, I discovered my depression, self-pity and self-hatred stemmed from the way I viewed everything. My ability to rejoice now (no matter what situation I’m in) is not due to positive thinking, nor is it due to optimism, but because of God’s words contained in the Bible. I didn’t merely listen to and read God’s words – I took them to heart and applied them to my life. I have never sought the help of a psychotherapist before, but I have some friends who have. Two of them told me that they actually got worse, while the other two remain either troubled or depressed. Why is it that they do not have genuine, lasting joy and peace in their hearts, while I do?

All I know is that God has provided me with the best therapy through His word, which is “living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow” (Heb 4:12). God’s words have molded me and shaped me over the years and will continue to do so until the day I die. Although the scars from my childhood will always remain, they don’t keep me from rejoicing in the Lord because I have a purpose in life and hope of eternal salvation. Moreover, I have experienced the love of God and the fulfillment of His promises to me as recorded in the Bible. The Bible is not an ordinary piece of literature full of historical accounts, stories and theories. God’s words are neither irrelevant nor outdated. They contain truth and life; I know from personal experience.

I have so much more to share with you, but I don’t want to overwhelm you or make you feel like I’m trying to convert you. I merely want to share this treasure that I have found. I wish I could have shared all this with you years ago, but I was too worried about what you would think, especially in this politically correct era of ours.

It goes without saying that I love and care about you. It would mean a lot to me if you could trust me enough to come to my church again to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8). You’re always welcome to come with me any time.

(Take A Step Closer To Following Jesus, Higher Ground, Spring 1998)

Questions to think about:

1. How did you come to believe in the Lord?
2. How did you first “see” God?
3. What is the level of your faith in God?
4. What are the things or events that convinced you that Jesus Christ is your Lord and personal Savior?
5. Were there any obstacles or doubts that you struggled with in your search for God? How did you overcome them?

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Through trials and suffering, Job was able to advance from “hearing about God” to “seeing” God. Today, have we merely heard about God or have we truly seen God in our lives? Let us press on to know and fully experience our Lord (Hos 6:3).

Lesson 12

The Gospel of John

Jesus Christ, the Answer to Everything

Listed Scriptures

Jn 6; 8:1-12; 10:1-18; 11:1-44; 14:1-7; 16:33; Eph 1-2:8; Ps 103:1-5; 13

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable students to know that Jesus Christ is the almighty God who can solve the problems in our daily lives
- 2) To enable students to learn to trust and turn to the Lord regardless of what we face in life

Memory Verse

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Mt 11:28-29)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

John 15-21

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



Please refer to the Bible Background in Lesson 10 for additional information on the Gospel of John (Lessons 10, 11 and 12 are Bible studies based on the Gospel of John).



When we encounter problems, who is the first person we usually turn to? Why?

B I B L E S T U D Y



Due to the nature of this Bible study, the Check For Understanding questions can be found after each "I Am" section.

In the book of John, the Lord often used the phrase, "I Am" (ego eimi) to introduce Himself. In fact, Jesus Christ uses the phrase "I Am" seven times to show that He is the almighty and everlasting God. The first appearance of "I Am" occurred in the Old Testament, when God revealed Himself to Moses (Ex 3:13-14). "I Am" represents the very essence of God and was used absolutely by and for God. It referred to the eternal One, the true God, the Creator of the universe and the redeemer of Israel (Is 43:13; 44:6; 46:9; 48:12; 52:6; Deut 32:39; cf Ac 7:32; Mt 22:32). In adopting "I AM" (Jn 8:58; Mt 18:20; Jn 8:23), the Lord confirms that He is the eternal and invisible God who was manifest in manhood. Each time an "I Am" statement appears, the Lord Jesus reveals a unique aspect of His divine nature. Each of the seven phrases represents an aspect that the Lord fills in our lives.

A. I am the true bread from heaven (Jn 6:27)

Upon witnessing the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, the people were drawn to the Lord because of physical benefits and blessings. Christ corrected their wrong perspectives by proclaiming, "I am the bread of Life. Anyone who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst" (Jn 6:35).

The Lord reminded the people not to focus on food and drink or physical blessings that are perishable, but on the things that are imperishable. He reminds them that besides a physical dimension of life, there is also a spiritual dimension that requires nourishment and satisfaction. Often, this spiritual hunger and thirst manifest itself in different ways, such as loneliness, boredom, meaninglessness and emptiness.

Today, we make the common mistake of trying to fill this spiritual vacuum with physical means such as food, pleasure, enjoyment and an eventful life. The more we try to fill this vacuum with the things of the world, the emptier we will feel. Such people are like a man who is adrift at sea. He becomes delirious with thirst and decides to drink the seawater to quench his thirst. The more he drinks, the thirstier he gets. Eventually, he dies of total dehydration. It is impossible to gain true inner satisfaction from the world. However, the Lord offers us a solution. He says, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4). The only solution for emptiness and meaninglessness in our lives is coming before the Lord Jesus, believing in Him and performing His word. Only then will we find satisfaction in our hearts and rest for our souls.

Check For Understanding:



1. Have you ever felt a void in your life?
2. Do you find that your life is weary, burdened or without meaning?
3. What have you done to try to bring meaning into your life?
Was it effective?

B. I am the light of the world (Jn 8:12)

In John 8:1-11, the scribes and the Pharisees brought an adulterous woman before the Lord for judgement. Christ, however, turned to them and said, "Let he who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." Everyone departed one by one from the eldest to the youngest. The Lord turned to the woman and commanded her to sin no more. He then proclaimed, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

From this incident we can see that Jesus Christ, the true light, had shone into the heart of the adulterous woman. When the light shines, it cuts through the darkness to unveil what is right and wrong, true and false. Once living in darkness and sin and without knowledge of God, the adulterous woman was now able to "see" and know the Lord. Lord Jesus showed her the error of her ways. He also showed the accusers that before God, they too were sinners and were not innocent. Those who live in darkness are confused, unable to see reality. Lost in a world of illusion, they make judgements based on mere appearances and are simply unable to grasp what is important and true. Only by acknowledging Jesus Christ and abiding by His word will we be able to truly "see" the direction of our life. With light, we can see the value of things clearly, and can see the world for what it actually is. By taking the word of God as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, we will not stumble or falter (Ps 119:105).

**Check For Understanding:**

1. How has the light of God shone into your life?
2. If the light of God shone on you what would it reveal?
3. Matthew 5:14-16 tells us to let our light shine on others. What does this mean? Reflect on whether your speech, conduct and your way of life have been a light to the gentiles.

C. I am the gate (Jn 10:7)

In the evenings in Palestine, the sheep were gathered into a sheepfold to protect them from thieves, harsh weather or wild animals. The shepherds themselves commonly slept in the single opening to the fold. The Lord uses this single opening to the fold to illustrate that only through Him can we receive eternal life. Today, there are many different forms of religion. Within Christianity alone, there are tens of thousands of Christian churches with different teachings about salvation. In today's pluralistic society, we are taught to accept all religions for they are basically the same; they teach us to do good and lead us to eternal life. But religions are not all the same nor do they all lead to eternal life. Only through the Lord Jesus can we obtain salvation (Ac 4:12). Jesus Christ is the one and only gate. Since there is only one Lord, there is only one way and only one gate to enter into this way that leads to eternal life (Eph 4:4-6). Therefore, two churches with two different beliefs about salvation cannot both be true, nor can both lead us to eternal life. Salvation is only obtained by believing in the Lord Jesus and finding the church that preaches the true gospel. This church will uphold and proclaim the truth that is taught in the Bible. In this end time, the Lord Himself has raised up the True Jesus Church to preach the only way of salvation.

**Check For Understanding:**

1. What does the gate refer to?
2. How do we enter this gate?

D. I am the good shepherd (Jn 10:11)

Shepherding was a common occupation in Israel, so when the Lord said, "I am the good shepherd," it was an analogy that people understood clearly. In the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the prophets castigated the false shepherds (false leaders) who perverted their spiritual role, "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture" declares the Lord (Jer 23:1). Ezekiel predicted that the true shepherd (the Messiah) would come and provide God's people with

care and leadership. Jesus Christ is the true shepherd of God's people.

How is the Lord Jesus the good shepherd?

- * The good shepherd will provide for his sheep (1 Pet 5:7; Ps 23:1). The Lord will lead us to green pastures and still waters (Ps 23:2). We can feast and live in abundance through the living word and spirit of God.
- * The good shepherd will walk in front of his sheep. The Lord has set us an example in every aspect of life so that we may follow in His steps—in word, love, conduct, virtue, spirit and suffering (1 Pet 2:21-24).
- * The good shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep know him (Jn 10:14). The Lord knows our conditions and needs. He knows our hopes and fears, our strengths and weaknesses. He knows us more than we know ourselves. He knows our entire person. He recognizes those who are strong and weak, sick and injured, and He will help us accordingly.
- * The good shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep. The Lord Jesus toiled and labored for us while on earth and eventually gave up His life for us. A true shepherd will do all he can to love and care for the sheep, whether it is night or day. He will love even to the point of laying down his life for the sheep. Unlike a hireling, a good shepherd does not serve because of personal benefits, but for the love of God.

Check For Understanding:

1. How has the Lord provided for you in your life?
2. In what ways have you experienced that the Lord, the good shepherd, knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him?
3. Give examples (without mentioning names) of people you have encountered who have shown the qualities of being a good shepherd.

E. I am the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25)

Before the Lord Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He assured Martha's faith in Him by saying, "I am the resurrection and the life," to let her understand that He has power over life and death. But what is the significance of the resurrection of Lazarus for us today? It proves that the Lord is the source of life and that life and death are in His hands (Jn 1:4). Jesus Christ is not only the source of physical life, but is also the source of spiritual life. He did not promise the prevention of physical death; He promised to give us abundant life, including resurrection and eternity with Him. Raising Lazarus from the dead proved that He had the power to retain

life. Only He can overcome death. So we have wonderful assurance and certainty that because Christ lived, we also will live.

The event is a further demonstration that His resurrection power is available to His people both now as well as in the future. Martha did not fully grasp the fact that the Lord could resurrect her brother then and there. Sometimes, we may also wrongly limit the Lord's life-giving power to the future. We may believe that in the future we will rise from the dead and be transformed into spiritual beings. But we can also experience Christ's power in this present life. There is no situation or problem in our lives that is beyond His power to transform. There is no weakness in us that is too great for Him to change.

Check For Understanding:



1. How much do we believe in the the power of resurrection of the Lord?
2. Have we ever experienced the life-transforming power of God in our lives?

F. I am the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6)

Before the Lord Jesus was crucified, He comforted the disciples saying, "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" Thomas then asked the Lord, "We do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" (Jn 14:1-4).

Jesus Christ is the way

Thomas asked a good question. How can the Lord Jesus be the way that people walk on to get to the heaven? It all seems very abstract. In concrete terms, a way is an actual path that takes us from one destination to the other. In abstract terms it refers to a method that would take us to a certain spot. Jesus Christ is the way to the heavenly kingdom, meaning He is the only method by which we can get to heaven. Why is Jesus Christ the only way? Why can we not be saved through Confucius or Mohammed or other such great men? The answer lies in the problem of sin. Only God, who is without sin can redeem us from the penalty of sin. He came to die and shed His blood so that a new and living way could be opened for us (Heb 10:19). So by believing in the Lord Jesus, repenting of our past sins, baptizing in the water and spirit, obeying His commandments and being sanctified, we can be saved (Ac 2:38; Tit 3:5).

Jesus Christ is the truth

According to Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, truth is defined as: "conformity with fact or reality; the true or actual state of a matter; a verified or indisputable fact." The definition of truth in the Bible, however, is drastically different. In John 1:1, 14 it reads, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." Also in John 14:6, Jesus Christ clearly reveals that He is the truth. The word of God is truth (Jn 17:17). The Lord Jesus is the word manifest in the flesh, so the Lord Jesus is the truth. By abiding in the word of God, we will be sanctified and set free from sin, and we will receive eternal life (2 Tim 3:15).

Jesus Christ is the life

How is the Lord Jesus the life? How can Jesus Christ save us and give us eternal life? The Lord Jesus is the eternal living God, who has no beginning or end (Jn 1:1-2; Heb 7:22-25). He is the "fountain of life" (Ps 36:9), the bread of life (Jn 6:35) and the Author of life (Ac 3:15). Because of this, Jesus Christ is in absolute control of life and can grant us physical as well as eternal life (Jn 10:28). Through His name, washing of regeneration and partaking of His blood and body, we can obtain everlasting life.

Check For Understanding:



1. How is Jesus Christ the way, the truth and the life?
2. In light of John 14:6, how would you respond to someone who says, "There are many ways to God"?

G. I am the vine (Jn 15:1)

In this statement, the Lord Jesus uses the analogy of a vine to describe the intimate relationship between the believers and Himself. The Lord Jesus said that He is the vine and we are the branches. When we abide in the Lord Jesus in the church, in His word and in His love, we are connected to the vine. When a branch is connected to the main trunk, it will receive water and minerals necessary for growth. Similarly, by being connected to the Lord we will receive spiritual food and drink which is the word and spirit of God. Through the word and spirit of God, our spirituality will live, blossom and bear fruit.

On the other hand, if we are not connected with the vine, we are like a grapevine branch which has been cut off from the main branch. Although it may continue to

survive and produce foliage, it is only for a little while. Soon, it withers away and dies. This tells us that a branch cannot fulfill its purpose of bearing fruit unless it remains in intimate connection with the vine. Many people try to be good, honest people doing what is right, but the Lord Jesus says that the only way to live a truly good life is to be connected to Him, as a branch to a vine. Often, we use our own standards to measure what is good or right, but they are not absolute. What is good in the eyes of men may not be good according to the truth. Only the word of God is the absolute truth, and righteousness needs to be measured according to biblical standards. As branches, let us therefore remain totally connected with the true vine, our Lord Jesus. Consider how empty our lives would be if we failed to remain in the Lord Jesus? As empty as that of a branch torn from the vine, with no potential to bear fruit and live.

Check For Understanding:



1. How can we test ourselves to see if we are connected to the main vine?
2. How can we bear fruit?

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

The questions can be found in the Bible study section, after each "I AM" segment.

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



Have students get into groups and examine the following scenarios carefully. Identify each problem and then match up each case with an aspect of the Lord Jesus' divine nature that will resolve the problem(s). For example, case 1 is the Lord Jesus, the

Bread of Life. Physical pleasures cannot satisfy the emptiness that we sometimes feel. Only the Lord Jesus brings meaning and satisfaction to the spiritual void that exists within us. After identifying each scenario, choose one scenario and suggest ways to remedy the problem.

Case 1

It's a Saturday night, and Emma finds herself alone in front of the TV. There is really not much on but there is nothing else that she feels like doing. With remote in hand, she switches from one channel to another and continues doing this for a couple of hours.

(The spiritual void within us manifests itself in different ways, such as loneliness, boredom, meaninglessness and emptiness. Emma is alone and bored and she makes the common mistake of trying to fill this spiritual vacuum with physical means as in this case, surfing the TV. The Lord Jesus is the bread of life. The only solution for emptiness and meaninglessness is to come to the Lord. Through His word and spirit we will find true satisfaction for our souls.)

Case 2

Mandy has a neighbor called Jan. One day the topic got around to religion, and they ended up having a heated discussion on Sabbath worship. Mandy had tried to convince Jan that Saturday, not Sunday is the Sabbath. Jan told her that worshipping God on Saturday or Sunday makes no difference. Every day is the same to God. Just as a thousand years is like one day to God, so is Saturday the same as Sunday to Him. It's not when we worship God that's important, but whether our hearts are right before Him. What can Mandy say to help Jan understand?

(A true follower of Christ would obey the true gospel and the teachings of the Lord Jesus. Unfortunately today, many churches and religions are "ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God. They seek to establish their own and they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Rom 10:3). Jan has been misled, and she tries to justify her arguments. The Lord Jesus is the way, the truth and the Life. Only by having complete submission to the commandments of God and walking in the way that Jesus Christ has paved can we obtain everlasting life.)

Case 3

Tracy is one of the leaders of the youth group. She often shows concern for the brothers and sisters by helping them out in various ways. One thing she likes to do is treat the youths by providing them with snacks and desserts after their weekly meetings. However, all this has begun to upset her husband, who feels that she is spending too much time and money on others. He feels the youths are capable of dealing with their own problems. If not, other brothers and sisters can help them out instead. He has even begun to restrict her from being too involved with the group. Tracy wonders what she can say to her husband to help him be more understanding.

(The Lord Jesus is the good shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. While on earth, the Lord toiled and labored night and day and eventually gave up His life for us on the cross. As shepherds of God, we need to do our best to care for

and love the sheep. This may mean giving up our wealth, our time and personal enjoyment. The Lord has set us an example in every aspect of life and as shepherds, we need to follow.)

Case 4

Jess has just gotten out of RE class where her teacher has been talking about the importance of preaching to people around her. She plucks up the courage to talk to a friend who is a Buddhist. Her friend tells her that all religions are the same, as they all teach us to do good and lead us to eternal life. No matter what religion we believe in, we can still experience God. Jess begins to wonder if there is some truth in what her friend says.

(Today, there may be many religions, but it is only through the Lord Jesus that we can obtain salvation and eternal life (Ac 4:12). Other religions may be able to experience signs and miracles, but that does not mean they have the truth and the way to salvation. The Lord Jesus is the one and only gate. Since there is only one Lord, there is only one gate to enter into the way that leads to eternal life.)

Case 5

Bob is thinking of settling down. Knowing that he should seek God's will in his choice, he prays and asks God, "Lord you know the kind of girl I like, big eyes, tall, slim and beautiful. Please help me find such a girl." Meanwhile, some brothers and sisters in the church try to help him find a suitable spouse. He turns them all down because none of the candidates meet his requirements.

(Bob's criteria and judgement are based on mere appearances and values of the world (1 Thess 4:4). He is unable to see the biblical qualities that are important in a spouse and fails to recognize what is valuable in God's sight. The Lord Jesus is the light of the world. With the true light, we can discern the value of things clearly, see things for what they really are, and therefore, we will make correct decisions and judgements.)

Case 6

Rick has just started university. There are many things that are new and fascinating to him—new faces to meet and clubs to join. He's also gotten himself involved in a Christian fellowship on campus. He finds the people there very nice and active in doing charitable works. He begins to wonder how members of his church are not even as devout or charitable as these people. His church talks a lot about love, but not much is being done. He wonders whether it's worth

going to church when a person can do just as much good or more without going to church.

(Rick needs to understand that we cannot depend on good deeds or good character to receive eternal life. People may try to lead good, honest lives, but our standard of what is good is relative. Our righteousness needs to be measured according to biblical standards. The Lord Jesus is the true vine. Only by remaining connected to the Lord and the church will we receive true nourishment through His spirit and His word.)

Case 7

Dave and his family were recently baptized into the church. They have been fervent believers since then. One day, however, Dave goes in for his medical checkup and discovers that he has cancer. Dave is emotionally devastated by the shocking news. Dave, who feels the news is as good as a death sentence, goes through a stage of serious depression. He begins to blame God for his misfortune. He decides that he will never go to church or worship God anymore.

(The Lord Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He is the source of life, and both life and death are in His hands (Jn 1:4). Jesus Christ did not promise the prevention of physical death, because we all will die at some point. But He did promise to give us abundant life, including resurrection and eternity with Him. However, the Lord's life-giving power is not just limited to the future. We can also experience the Lord Jesus' power in this life too. There is no situation or problem in our lives that is beyond His power to transform and to change, so long as He is willing.)

REFLECTION & PRAYER



In this life, there are endless problems. But where there is the presence of God, there will always be an answer to these problems. Isaiah 30:15 exhorts us to return to God for "in returning and rest, we shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be our strength." Have we come to Him with our doubts and fears?

Review

Lesson Aim

- 1) To understand that the central message of the four Gospels is the Lord Jesus and His salvation plan
- 2) To have a deeper understanding of who the Lord Jesus is, His divine and human attributes and His mission on earth
- 3) To enable students to know that they worship a God whom they can trust and turn to, for He knows and understands our weaknesses and has the power to transform and change us

R E V I E W

From the beginning of time, God's work of salvation has been progressing, but only with the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ was this plan fulfilled. The plan is that God should come as a man to die on the cross to redeem the souls of mankind. This is the central message of the four Gospels. Although each of the four Gospels speaks of the life, works and mission of the Lord Jesus, each book portrays the Savior from a different angle.

In Matthew, the author seeks to convince the Jews that Jesus was indeed Israel's long-awaited Messiah. However, contrary to their expectations, Jesus Christ was not sent to be an earthly king, but a heavenly king. He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly one. He did not come to reign over people's land, but to rule over people's lives and hearts.

In Mark, the author tries to reveal the Lord's true identity through what He did, not by what He said. Mark shows Jesus Christ not as a great king, but as a servant who came to serve and give His life for others.

Luke presents Jesus Christ as a real man who understands and feels for the plight of men. Luke shows the loving and merciful nature of the Lord Jesus who came to save not only the Jews, but the whole world.

In John, we see without a doubt that although the Lord Jesus was a man, He is in fact God from before the beginning. He is the creator and master of the universe and the author of life.

“Who is the Lord Jesus?” – that was a question asked by many centuries before and is still being asked today. Hopefully, through our study of the Gospels, we have gained deeper insights into who the Lord is and what He came to do. We should, in turn reflect upon who we are and what God wants us to do.

Q U E S T I O N S

1. Who did the multitude say Jesus Christ was?

They thought Jesus Christ was a. a prophet b. a teacher c. a provider

2. Who did the Pharisees and scribes think Jesus Christ was?

They thought Jesus Christ was a. a blasphemer b. a lawbreaker c. a threat

3. Name examples of people who truly knew the Lord Jesus.

- Simeon
- Anna the prophetess
- The wise men
- Demons

4. What were the various aspects about the Lord Jesus that prevented the Jews from accepting Him as their Messiah?

- Lowly background
- Without outward appearance
- Without status
- Not like a king

5. What are the characteristics of the kingdom of heaven?

- Christ is king
- From above
- Full of power
- Full of righteousness, peace and joy

6. Where is the kingdom of heaven?

The kingdom of heaven is wherever God is king and where the spirit of the Lord reigns. It could be the heavenly kingdom, the church or our hearts.

7. Who are the “poor in spirit”?

Those who are poor in spirit are those who recognize their inadequacies and pursue after spiritual fulfillment.

8. How do worldly and biblical attitudes on meekness differ?

Society today encourages us to fight for what is ours by right. We are taught to stand up for ourselves and not allow others to “push us around.” We need to develop a more self-assertive and aggressive approach to survive today. However, the Lord reminds us that it is the meek that are blessed, not those who seek revenge themselves. In fact, we do not need to retaliate or “get even.” It is considered a blessing if, because of meekness, we are disadvantaged or wronged, for in the end, God will give us more than what we have lost.

9. “Blessed are those who thirst and hunger for righteousness.” What does “righteousness” here refer to?

Righteousness here refers to doing God’s will and imitating Christ.

10. How can we be “pure in heart”?

To be pure in heart, we need to have a close relationship with God, with our speech, deeds, and thoughts washed clean with the truth and the spirit of God.

11. Why do we face persecution?

As followers of Christ, we do not belong to the world. Our faith, values and lifestyle are different from those of the world. Because of this, we stand out from the world and are hated by the world. Furthermore, as long as we are on earth, we will have tribulations, and we are destined to suffer.

12. In what ways does Jesus Christ fulfill the picture of God’s servant described in the Book of Isaiah?

- God’s servant obeys and fulfills the will of God
- God’s servant is humble
- God’s servant will undergo suffering

13. How can we cultivate humility?

- Realize that we are insignificant and mere sinners
- We have nothing to boast of since our gifts, abilities and opportunities are given by God
- Consider others better than ourselves

14. Why is spiritual cultivation important when doing holy work?

- Through spiritual cultivation, we can receive the wisdom and the power necessary to carry out the will of the Father.
- Through Bible reading and prayers, we can recognize our own weaknesses and try to be more Christ-like.

15. Name some of the reasons why we serve God.

- To repay the Lord
- Doing the work of God gives us spiritual satisfaction and inner joy
- Through serving God and others, our spirituality advances
- For the sake of the brothers and sisters

16. List some of the ways you can serve God and those around you.

- Offering what we possess, such as our talents, capabilities, wisdom, wealth, time
- Offering ourselves (ultimately, what God wants from us is not what we have, but US –with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul and all our strength. This is the offering that pleases God)
- Save souls
- Serve our brothers and sisters
- Offer intercessory prayers

17. In what ways did the Lord show that He was fully human?

- The Lord Jesus had human connections
- The Lord Jesus went through the process of growing up
- The Lord Jesus had human needs and emotions

18. The Lord Jesus is the “Son of man.” What does this mean?

On the one hand, the phrase “Son of man” refers to the glorified and exalted Christ who will come and judge the whole world. On the other hand, it refers to Christ’s full humanity and His redemptive work and mission. It implies servitude and suffering.

19. What is the definition of “Son of God?”

The “Son of God” is actually a term to describe how God Himself came to earth assuming a human body and human nature.

20. What is achieved through the death of the Lord Jesus?

- Forgiveness of sins
- Reconciliation with God (Rom 5:10; Eph 2:13)
- Victory over the power of sin and death

21. How do we make the Lord our Savior?

- Believe in the Lord Jesus
- Repent
- Be baptized by water and the spirit
- Lead a new life

22. How did the Lord Jesus show that He was God?

- The Lord Jesus is without sin

- The Lord Jesus has the power to overcome death
- The Lord Jesus is all-knowing
- The Lord Jesus performed many signs and miracles
- The Lord Jesus taught with authority
- The Lord Jesus has power and authority over Satan
- The Lord Jesus is Lord of nature

23. Name certain individuals in the book of John who progressed from a state of disbelief to total belief in and submission to the Lord Jesus.

- Nathanael
- The Samaritan woman
- Martha
- Thomas
- John the baptist
- Simon Peter
- The Jews

24. What are some of the usual stumbling blocks that prevent people from accepting Christ?

- Preconceived ideas and prejudices
- Lack of faith
- Hardened heart

25. What are the sources of faith and belief in the Lord Jesus?

- Hearing God’s word and being enlightened by the truth
- Seeing God’s power
- Humbling oneself
- Understanding given by God

26. According to John, what does “knowing” God mean?

Believing and knowing the Lord involves much more than a mental assent to the truth. It means turning from sin, living a life of obedience and love, keeping God’s word, walking in His likeness and loving our brothers.

27. In the book of John, there are seven “I am” statements. What do these statements refer to?

Each statement reveals a unique aspect of the Lord Jesus’ divine nature. And each of the seven phrases represents an aspect that Christ fills in our lives.

28. What does “the Lord Jesus is the true bread from heaven” mean?

The only solution for emptiness and meaninglessness in our lives is coming before the Lord Jesus, believing in Him and performing His word. Only then will

we find satisfaction for our souls.

29. What does “the Lord Jesus is the gate” mean?

Only through the Lord Jesus can we receive eternal life.

30. How is the Lord Jesus the “good shepherd”?

- The good shepherd will provide for His sheep
- The good shepherd will walk in front of His sheep
- The good shepherd knows His sheep and His sheep know Him
- The good shepherd will lay down His life for the sheep

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Henry Drummond

*“Whatever your task,
work heartily as serv-
ing the Lord and not
men.”*

(Col 3:23)

*“Be an example...of good deeds of
every kind. Let everything you do
reflect your love of the truth.”*

(Titus 2:7)