

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."
2 Timothy 3:16

YEAR 2 BOOK 3

Junior 2 Year 2 Book 3

YEAR 2 BOOK 3

JUNIOR 2

Teacher's Guide

Christian Living (2)

G.A. of the True Jesus Church

U.S.A



THEME:

Christian Living (2)

General Assembly of the True Jesus Church

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“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its favor, how shall it be seasoned then? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Not they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your

Father in heaven.”

(Matthew 5:13-16)



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

JUNIOR 2

Teacher's Guide



THEME:

Christian Living (2)

THEMES

Christian Living (2)

Unit 1: Spiritual Matters (1-2)

With the busy lifestyle that most of us have today, we often find ourselves not having time to quiet our spirit and to have good quality time to read the Bible and to talk with God. Prayers are often short and ritualistic. Bible reading becomes like a chore and is sometimes skipped over. In all these, we do not realize that the key to having control over our lives is to rely on God's help and grace. "For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength'" (Is 30:15).

Lessons in this section will serve as a reminder to both teachers and students about the importance of maintaining a healthy spiritual life amid all other things we have to attend to.

Unit 2: Love Issues (3-5)

Love is something we all seek. Many people in this world never find true love. One of the many reasons could be that they do not have a pure attitude towards love relationships. Many people in the world approach love with the mentality of simply having short-term fun. Hence, they move on from one relationship to another. They cannot commit themselves to one relationship

for life.

As children of God, we must be careful not to be swayed by the trends of the world. God meant for His creation to enjoy love on earth. True love can be found, and it is a blessing from God. So, when dealing with issues of dating and marriage, we must maintain purity in our relationships with members of the opposite sex. By trusting in the Lord, we can hope to find true love and a beautiful and stable marriage that is blessed by God.

Unit 3: Culture and Media Issues (6-9)

We are bombarded daily by controversial issues. Our students are bound to have questions like the following: How should Christians view homosexuality? Can a Christian ever drink alcohol? What kinds of pop music are acceptable in the eyes of God? These are the issues that need to be thought through and resolved. The Bible does not give us a list of do's and don'ts. But, through basic principles about God's requirement for us, the Bible does provide answers to these issues.

The lessons in this section will help the students think through some of the issues thrown at them by the

media and their social surrounding. It is important that the teachers deal with these topics in a sensitive way and provide guidance through prayer.

Unit 4: Life Issues (10-12)

There are certain behavioral issues that we often take for granted or do not pay attention to. These are very basic but essential aspects of our lives as Christian: honesty, dealing with greed and anger-management. At the very least, we have to be good examples and a light to the world concerning these issues. More simply, as Christians who bear the special status as God's children, we have to glorify His name and uphold certain biblical principles.

It is important to let our students know that these issues, albeit fundamental, are important to our lives, before God and men. The lessons will give them a peek into what the Bible teaches about these issues. But ultimately, the teacher's support and guidance must be present to help the students live out these principles.

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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

Sample

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 continue to serve Him.

BIBLE READING FOR THIS QUARTER

1. Proverbs 1-3
2. Proverbs 4-6
3. Proverbs 7-9
4. Proverbs 10-12
5. Proverbs 13-15
6. Proverbs 16-18
7. Proverbs 19-21
8. Proverbs 22-24
9. Proverbs 25-27
10. Proverbs 28-30
11. Proverbs 31-
Ecclesiastes 2
12. Ecclesiastes 3-5

MEMORY VERSES FOR MARCH APRIL & MAY

1. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess 5:16-18)
2. "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)
3. "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Cor 13:4-8)
4. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb 12:14)
5. "This is now the bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh." (Gen 2:23)
6. "Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant." (Ps 135:3)
7. "See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise . . . and do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." (Eph 5:15, 18)
8. "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Tim 2:22)
9. "The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever." (Ps 119:160)
10. "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." (Rom 8:5)
11. "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness." (1 Tim 6:10)
12. "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil." (Eph 4:26, 27)

Goals

With the busy lifestyle that most of us have today, we often find ourselves not having time to quiet our spirit and to have good quality time to read the Bible and to talk with God. Prayers are often short and ritualistic. Bible reading becomes like a chore and is sometimes skipped over. In all these, we do not realize that the key to having control over our lives is to rely on God's help and grace. "For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength'" (Is 30:15).

Lessons in this section will serve as a reminder to both teachers and students about the importance of maintaining a healthy spiritual life amid all other things we have to attend to.

unit 1

Teacher Devotional

Human beings are very limited creatures. Whether it is the mind or the body, we are constrained in many ways. Hence, it is not possible to do all the things we wish we could do given the limited capacity of the physical, intellectual and emotional energy we have. Added on to these constraints is the limited amount of time we have. Knowing how to prioritize is therefore a crucial lesson to learn, in order that we can accomplish what we have to. Life in modern societies is packed with activities and commitments. There are just so many things to do - work, family, friends, church. As Christians, we have to realize that in the midst of a busy lifestyle, it is often easy to forgo spiritual contact with God at the expense of pursuing other commitments. That's because with God, there are seldom any deadlines to meet. It becomes so easy to put spiritual matters aside. Therefore it is really important to allocate our spiritual pursuits a place in our life so that they are not replaced.

Our Priorities

"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col 3:2)

Lesson 1

Too Busy to Pray

Listed Scriptures

Ps 103; Is 59:1-3; Ps 66:18; Num 11; Mt 26:36-44, 7:7

Lesson Aims

- 1) To help our students slow down in order to grow closer to God.
- 2) To encourage our students to develop a lifestyle of prayer (P-praise, R-repent, A-ask, Y-yield).
- 3) To help our students organize their day so that they are able to spend time with God.

Memory Verse

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess 5:16-18)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 1-3

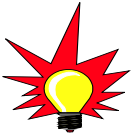
B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



From the very beginning of creation, people of God have offered prayers to Him. After the flood, Noah offered a burnt offering of every clean bird and animal (Gen 8:20, 21). We also see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offering sacrifices. This is a type of prayer to God. During the time of Moses, God instructed the Israelites as to how to build the tabernacle. That became a place of worship, and also a place where they could come forth to offer sacrifices to Him. The high priest would also go into the Holy of Holies once a year to offer the sacrifice of atonement for the people. Offerings and sacrifices remained the way the people could reach out to God. Of course, God hears the cries of all who turn to Him. For example, when Hagar was desperate that her son Ishmael was going to die, she sat down and wept and God heard her cries (Gen 21). In later periods, people of God have always turned to God in prayers, in one way or another. There are many psalms that are actually prayers of the psalmist.

In the New Testament period, when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was torn into two (Mt 27:51). This symbolizes that a new and living way has been opened for us, that we can now approach God directly. For the Lord Jesus is the veil that has been torn so we can be reconciled with God (Heb 10:19-22). Today, we should cherish this wonderful opportunity to be able to have direct access to God, and to always turn to Him and rely on Him through prayers. In fact, this is the promise of God, that if we entrust all to Him then we will have peace. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6, 7).

W A R M U P



Have you ever experienced points in life when you are too weak spiritually to pray? How does that feel? Do you feel that in the things you do, you can't be sure of God's approval or guidance, simply because you didn't consult with Him? Do you feel you don't have power to shine for Him, to preach the gospel or to see His power in the church work you participate in?

Many have compared prayer to the breath of life for Christians. A Christian who does not pray to God, talk to Him and listen to His voice, is a Christian who does not have life in Him. He may claim to be a Christian, but the way he lives his life, the decisions he makes and everything else about his life is disconnected from God. How then can he call himself a Christian?

Today, we'll study this important topic. May God guide us so that we have a refreshing perspective about the role of prayer in our lives.



Part 1

Moses' Deep Prayers

The Bible is replete with models of prayerful men. Can you name a few? Why do you think these are great men or women of prayer? In what ways are their prayers powerful? (Let students respond.)

Today, we'll take a close look at two of the prayers of Moses. Moses always communicated with God. This is what God said of Moses, "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord make Myself known to him in a vision. I speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak to him face to face, even plainly and not in dark sayings" (Num 12:6 – 8). Indeed Moses was a very special person in the eyes of God. The primary reason is that he was one who always prayed deeply and talked to God at length. From his exemplary life of prayer, we can see that prayer indeed does make a difference in one's relationship with God.

Read the biblical references and answer the questions that follow.



A. God Showed Himself to Moses (Ex 33:15-23)

a. vv.15 & 16 – Who and what were Moses praying for? What does that say about his character?

Moses was praying that God would go with the Israelites on their journey into the land of Canaan. God had said that the Israelites were a stiff-necked people and He would not go with them. Here, we can see that Moses is a man who shares a very intimate relationship with God, because he knows God enough to trust in His love and mercy, and negotiate with Him.

b. v. 17 – What do you think it means to find grace in the sight of God, and to have God know us by name?

To find grace in the sight of God can include the following:

- *God's blessings are with us
- *God is pleased with us and will hear our prayers
- *God hears our prayers and has mercy on us

To have God know us by name can include the following:

- *We are so close to God, by our obedience and constant interaction with Him, that God becomes like a very close friend.
- *God is pleased with us and especially pays attention to us and all aspects of our life.

c. v. 18 – What was Moses asking for? Do you think he was too arrogant to ask for such an (almost) impossible blessing? What does that say of his relationship with God?

Moses asked to see God's glory, which is to see God face to face (ref. verse 20). This seems like an arrogant or even dangerous request because no one can see God's face and live. However, Moses was such a faithful man that he had experienced God in a very intimate relationship. He felt close enough to God to ask for such a blessing. This request also shows that Moses sought after God.

d. vv. 19-23 – Describe in your own words what exactly happened here. What does this incident tell us about Moses' status in the eyes of God? Is there anyone else in the Bible who has a similar experience as Moses?

God told Moses that no one could see His face and live. But, God agreed to grant his request in a special way. God walked past Moses, so Moses could see His back and not His face. But He first placed Moses in the cleft of a rock, and used His hand to shield Moses. We can see how much God values and loves Moses.

No one else in the Bible has come so close to seeing God, as far as we know. God often appears in different forms when He is seen by His servants. For example in Genesis 17, God appeared to Abraham, but we are not told if Abraham actually saw God face to face. Elijah also saw God in a still small voice (1 Kgs 19:12).

e. Do you see God in your prayers? Even if you don't literally see God in your prayers like Moses, what do you think would be a similar experience?

To see God in prayer means that your prayers are answered. Having our prayers answered does NOT mean all our requests come true. It means we learn more about God's ways, that He gives us according to our needs and His wisdom, not according to our desires. To see God in prayer also means we experience joy, peace and comfort, and we are able to deal with life's

problems with a different perspective, according to God's teachings.

f. How can one experience being "face to face with God" in prayers?

"For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Mt 7:7). If we seek God, we will surely find Him. Sometimes, when we are confused and weak, the best way to get aligned with God again is to go to church and receive His words through sermons and bible studies. We can also interact with brothers and sisters. From there, we will gain strength to pray, and through prayer we can draw closer to Him.

 **B. Moses' Face Shone (Ex 34:27-35)**

a. vv. 28 & 29 - Where was Moses? What was he doing?

Moses was up on Mt. Sinai, receiving the Ten Commandments again, with God writing them on new stone tablets. (The first set of tablets containing the Ten Commandments was shattered when Moses threw them on the ground upon seeing how the people had made for themselves a golden calf while he was up on Mt. Sinai. See Exodus 32:19.)

b. vv. 29-35 - For how many days was Moses up on the mountain, alone with God? What is the teaching for us today, with regard to prayer?

Moses was up on Mt. Sinai forty days and nights. The teaching for us today is that our prayers with God cannot be a rushed, hasty process. We cannot communicate properly with anyone if we are in a hurry and have only a few minutes for that person. It is the same with prayer. We need to settle our hearts down and really talk to God.

c. Why do you think the face of Moses shone when he came down from the mountain?

Moses was so close to God that his face shone. We learn the mannerisms and even words of those we spend a lot of time with. If we're always close to God, we can be godly like Moses, with God's glory reflected on our faces. And, we can shine for Him as we interact with others around us.

d. Do you know of any prayerful men? Do you see their faces shining like Moses' did? (Students answer.)

e. What would be some daily manifestations of “shining faces” in the lives of Christians today?

One who has a “shining face” reflects God’s qualities like gentleness, kindness, peacefulness, love etc. It is seen in his/her words and actions towards others.



Part 2

P-R-A-Y

Do you sometimes feel that you do not have much to say to God in prayer? Although it can’t be true that one does not have anything to say to God (just think of how you can chat with friends for hours!), it is true that many people are often spiritually so weak that they do not discipline themselves to pray. But it is when we are weak that we need to talk to God.

Today, we will think of “PRAY” as an acronym that will help us to think of things to pray to God about. We will study the 4 letters of “PRAY” and see what the Bible says about them. After that, you can come up with your own ideas about what the acronym P-R-A-Y can stand for!

A. P-Praise

a. There is a lot in our lives to give thanks to God and praise Him for. As a class, read through the whole of Psalm 103, which is a psalm of thanksgiving.

- i. List all the things that the psalmist praised the Lord for. (forgiving his sins, healing his diseases, redeeming his life (saving his life, physically as well as spiritually), filling his life with love and compassion, filling his life with good things, giving him strength)
- ii. Do you see any modern-day equivalent or relevance of these things in your life? For each of the things you have listed, find a modern day example that matches it. (students’ answers)

b. As the memory verse of this lesson says, we should give thanks in everything. Is it possible to praise God even when there does

not seem to be a reason to give thanks? Let us look at the verses in hymn 394 to help us answer this question.

- i. What does this hymn say about the things to thank God for?
(In this hymn, we are taught to give thanks for:
The Lord Jesus for He saves/redeems us
All that God has provided for us
The good or bad times
Jesus Christ who abides with us
Pleasant springtime but also dreary fall
Hard times, and our tears which have now passed
Peace inside our souls
Prayers answered as well as prayers not answered (for good reason)
Difficult times but during which God takes care to provide
Pain as well as pleasure
Comfort in despair
Grace and love from Him
Roses, even though they have thorns (nothing is perfect in this world)
Home, family
Hope
Joy as well as sorrow
Heavenly peace, and hope for heaven and eternity.

This hymn teaches us that in life, there are a lot of difficult times, but in difficult times, we have God’s mercy that sees us through. Most importantly, we have peace from within. We also have hope of salvation, and that’s the most important.)

- ii. Do you think it is difficult to give thanks for some of the things listed in the hymn? Why? Or, why not? (students’ answers)

B. R-Repent

Repentance is a pre-requisite of effective prayers. That means that for our prayers to be answered by God, we need to repent of all our sins first. Let’s see what the following Bible verses say about the relationship between repentance and having our prayers answered.

a. Summarize in your own words what the verses mean: Isaiah 59: 1-3 and Psalm 66:18.

(Sometimes, when our prayers are not answered, it is because we have sinned, and sins have separated us from God. So, we need to repent and turn from our ways first before we expect God to hear us.)

b. Why do you think repentance is so crucial to having our prayers answered?

(Heb 12:14 – when we have sins, we are not holy. Hence, we cannot approach God. So our prayers cannot be heard in that sense. When we repent, God is faithful and just and He will forgive our sins, as stated in 1 John 1:9. We are then clean to approach His throne of grace again.)



C. A-Ask

a. Many of us do not dare to ask God for the desires of our hearts. Actually, God is our loving Father so we can share anything and everything with Him in reverence. Let's see what the following verses tell us about asking things of God: Matthew 7:7 and Psalm 37:5.

These verses tell us that as long as we seek God, He will answer our prayers. But, we have to totally entrust things into His hand and trust that He will do what is best for us.

b. While we know that we can ask anything of God, we have to understand that God is not going to grant us everything we wish for. He will grant us what is good for us. Read the following verses and summarize what they are saying: James 4:2, 3 and Romans 8:32.

Romans 8:32 tells us that God has given of Himself to die for us, so how much more will He give us things that we need? If we do not get something we need, it is because we do not ask, as James tells us. If we have asked and not received, it might be that we have desired something for the wrong reasons (and that we do not really need those things)!

c. Read the following poem. It reminds us of the importance of asking for God's abidance every day of our lives.

The Difference

*I got up early and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to pray.*

*Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came each task.
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered.
He answered, "You didn't ask."*

*I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, gray and bleak.
I wondered why God didn't show me.
He said, "You didn't ask."*

*I tried to come into God's presence;
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
"My child, you didn't knock."*

*I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray.*

Questions:

1. In the course of the day, what were the things the poet wanted but failed to obtain? (The poet wanted to have a joyful and beautiful life. He wanted no problems. He wanted to be in God's presence.)
2. What are some of the daily needs that you have or things that you desire to have in your daily life? Do you ask these things of God? Why, or why not?
3. "I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray." Describe your reaction to the last two lines of the poem. Think about their relevance to your life.



D. Y-Yield

A very important thing to remember about prayer is that we have to submit to God's will. To ask is our duty but to grant is entirely the prerogative of God. We now look at two contrasting examples about prayer requests – one that is not in accordance

with the will of God and the other, a great lesson in submission to God's will.

a. The Israelites asked to have meat (Num 11:1-14, 31-34)

- i. What was the complaint of the Israelites?
(They missed the good food they had in Egypt – fish, cucumbers, garlic, leeks, melons, onions.)
- ii. Why were they not satisfied with the manna from heaven?
(They ate only manna everyday and they wanted something different to boost their appetite.)
- iii. Did God grant them their desires?
(Yes, God granted them their desires. But, having prayers answered does not mean God is pleased with them. God gave them what they wanted but God's wrath was against them. In the same way, we may sometimes force things to happen, but that does not mean we have God's blessing or approval.)
- iv. Do you think God was pleased with their requests, since their desires were fulfilled? Explain your answers.
(Having our prayer requests granted does not mean our requests are according to God's will. The punishment of God came upon the Israelites even as the meat was between their teeth. There is a difference between forcing things upon God and actual requests that are according to His will, which please Him. A recent article in Issue 36 of *Manna* entitled "Praying in the Holy Spirit" deals with this topic. It is highly recommended for both teachers and students alike.)
- v. In the end, what happened to the Israelites who craved for meat? What is the lesson you learned from this ending?
(God struck them with a severe plague and those who were eating the meat died in the middle of eating. One of the lessons we can learn is not to insist on our own desires. God may grant us what we wish, but that may not be for our good. It is more important to please God than to have our prayers answered. Another lesson to gather is that we need to be wise, to know what our requests to God really mean—whether they are in accordance with God's will. A lot of times, we are so focused on worldly things (like food, or wealth), we forget that God's purpose of being our God is to save us, and for us to glorify Him, not for us to become rich on earth or to enjoy earthly pleasures.)

b. Jesus Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36 - 44)

- i. vv. 37, 38 – Why was the Lord Jesus sorrowful and distressed?

(The Lord Jesus knew that it was time for Him to be crucified and suffer a lot of pain even before He was to be put on the cross. Even though He was God who came in the flesh, He was in an earthly form, and hence suffered pain like any human being would.)

- ii. v. 39 – What was "this cup" referring to?
(The cup refers to the suffering on the cross and the death He would taste for us.)
- iii. How can we tell that the prayer of the Lord Jesus is one that is in accordance with the will of God? (See also Luke 22:43)
(He did not insist on His own will to have the cup taken from Him. He left it to the Father's will. We know that an angel was sent to strengthen Him.)
- iv. What happened after the three prayers that the Lord Jesus made?
(The Lord Jesus was strengthened and determined to suffer for us. He would go along with God's will and not submit to His own earthly fears.)
- v. What does the example of our Lord Jesus teach us about prayer?
(To know God's will when we pray, and not think that prayer means God has to do things according to our ways.)

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



- 1 Why is repentance important to our prayers?
- 2 Is it true that God will grant us everything that we ask for?
- 3 What are the two important things to remember about prayer?

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



Praying Hands

Part A- Read the following letter. Then discuss the questions that follow.

*My dear one,
As you got up this morning, I watched you, and hoped you would talk to me, even if it was just a few words, asking my opinion or thanking me for something good that happened in your life yesterday.*

But I noticed you were too busy, trying to find the right outfit to wear. When you ran around the house getting ready, I knew there would be a few minutes for you to stop and say hello, but you were too busy.

At one point you had to wait, fifteen minutes with nothing to do except sit in a chair. Then I saw you spring to your feet. I thought you wanted to talk to me but you ran to the phone and called a friend to get the latest gossip instead.

I watched patiently all day long. With all your activities I guess you were too busy to say anything to me.

I noticed that before lunch you looked around; maybe you felt embarrassed to talk to me, which is why you didn't bow your head. You glanced three or four tables over and you noticed some of your friends talking to me briefly before they ate, but you didn't.

That's okay. There was still more time left, and I hoped that you would talk to me yet. Then you went home and it seemed as if you had lots of things to do.

After a few of them were done, you turned on the TV. I don't know if you like TV or not. Just about everything goes on there and you spend a lot of time each day in front of it, not thinking about anything, just enjoying the show. I waited patiently again as you watched the TV and ate your meal, but again, you didn't talk to me.

Bedtime. I guess you felt too tired. After you said goodnight to your family, you plopped into bed and fell asleep in no time. That's okay because you may not realize, but I'm always there for you. I've got patience, more than you will ever know. I even want to teach you how to be patient with others as well. I love you so much that I wait everyday for a nod, prayer or thought or thankful part of your heart. It is hard to have a one-sided conversation.

Well, you're getting up once again. And once again, I will wait, with nothing but love for you. Hoping that today you will give me some time.

Have a nice day!

Yours, _____

Questions to think about:

1. Who do you think the writer of the letter could be? Explain your answer.
2. Were there times in your life when you felt rejected or ignored? Describe how that felt. Do you think the feelings of the writer of the letter are the same as what you have experienced?
3. If you have not already guessed, this letter can be seen as a letter from God to His children, who often neglect to pray. Do you see similarities in your life – where you also fail on many occasions to talk to God?
4. Draft out a routine of a typical day in your life, from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. Note down the points during the day where you make your prayers to God.
5. Share your daily routine with a partner in your class. Your partner will make suggestions to you about certain times of the day when you should pray but often fail to do so. You will do the same for the routine drafted by your friend. Here's a sample:

Period of Day	Activities	Times When I Prayed	Suggestions From My Partner/ Times When I Should Have Prayed
Morning	Got out of bed and rushed to the shower, grabbed a granola bar as I rushed to catch the school bus.		
Mid-Morning	In school, a classmate said something nasty. I tried to control my anger but I failed and returned his comments with some sarcastic remarks. We ended up being mad at each other.		
Afternoon	Student's own additions		

6. Consider the suggestions of your partner. Then, between the two of you, make a pact to encourage each other to pray every day. If your schedules permit, you might even want to arrange to pray together at a specific time, each one in his/her own home.

Teaching Tips

Every week, for about 15 minutes, either at the beginning or end of the class time, have a class sharing of this daily routine. Encourage the students to keep up with this schedule and to share it every week.

Part B- The following is an inspirational piece of prose. Let us read it and meditate upon it in our hearts; and when we pray, let it be a reminder to us as to what to pray for. After reading, write a list of items for prayer. This will be your personal prayer list. You don't have to share it with anyone if you don't want to. But, let this list be your guide each day as you pray. With the passing of time, you may have to modify certain items on the list.

1. Your thumb is nearest to you.
So, begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest ones to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C.S. Lewis once said, "a sweet duty."
2. The next finger is the pointing finger.
Pray for those who teach and instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors and ministers. They need support and wisdom for pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.
3. The middle finger is the tallest finger.
It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God's guidance.
4. The fourth finger is our ring finger.
Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger (as any piano teacher will testify). It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.
5. And lastly comes our little finger, the smallest finger of all.
This is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others, as the Bible says, "the least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

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



Sing hymn 405. (Go through the lyrics with the students.) This hymn tells us about many things that we can pray for. Whether we are in sorrow or in gladness, we can pray to God. In times of temptation, in moments of anger and even in times of great trial and difficulty, we should always pray. If only we would give it a try, and discipline ourselves to talk to God, we would surely experience that prayer really makes a difference in our lives!

Lesson 2

Getting Your Spiritual Life in Shape

Listed Scriptures

Eph 6:13-18; Ex 33:17-23, 34:28-33; Num 12:6-8; Deut 34:1-12; Dan 6; Acts 2:43-47, 4:31-33, 6:2-4

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)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

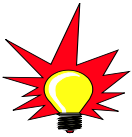
Proverbs 4-6

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



There is no Bible background information for this lesson.

W A R M U P



The society we live in today has much talk about staying healthy and keeping fit. Go on the Internet and you will find a myriad of websites with health related content, with topics ranging from how to eat well and how to keep fit to various types of health programs and products. Do we ever think about what it means to be healthy and fit in our spiritual life? If you had to define spirituality in terms of how healthy one is, how would you characterize a “spiritually fit” person? (Allow students to list some qualities that come to their minds.)

There can be many answers to this question. One lesson may not be enough to exhaust all the possible qualities to be found in a “spiritually fit” person, but we shall attempt to look at some important elements of spiritual health and growth.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Aims in Spiritual Cultivation

What do you think are the fundamental aims of spiritual cultivation? (Let students respond.) As we’ve learned in the memory verse for today, one of the important things we as children of God ought to pursue is to be lights of the world in this wicked and perverse generation, and to be found blameless and harmless. We should also actively carry out the commission from the Lord Jesus to preach the gospel to all the nations and to tend to His sheep (Read Mt 28: 19, 20). That way, we can glorify God and bring benefit to those whom we come into contact with on earth. Let us now look at some verses from the Bible that tell us about spiritual growth and cultivation.

A. Galatians 5:22-23

To be able to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit is one indication of whether a person is spiritually fit and healthy. Explain how bearing the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit is related to the fundamental aims of spiritual cultivation.

(Two of the fundamental aims of spiritual cultivation are: 1) for us to glorify God’s

name by obeying His teachings, and 2) to have good relationships with people around us. If we have these, we will have true happiness on earth, and hope of heaven. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are essential virtues in our relationships with people and with God. For example, we need to have love for people to treat them well. Also, if we love God, we will love His church and do our best for our brothers and sisters and contribute our best to the work in the church.)

B. Ephesians 4:13-14

An important aspect of spiritual cultivation is to arrive at “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” What are the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Bible has shown to us? Each student should list at least three characteristics. For each of the characteristics listed, explain how we can strive towards attaining that spiritual virtue.

(Love, mercy, kindness, compassion, wisdom, gentleness, forgiveness, purity, holiness, righteousness)

C. Colossians 1:9-10

Knowing God’s will is important. Without wisdom to know God and His will, it is easy to do the wrong things, even if we do it with zeal. How do you think one can increase spiritual understanding so as to know God’s will?

(Bible reading and Bible study, fellowship and mutual learning from brothers/sisters/pastors in church, prayers, sermons, meditating upon God’s words in every moment of our lives and in every decision we have to make)

D. 2 Peter 1:5-8

a. Peter listed eight very important elements of spiritual cultivation. List these elements.

(Faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love)

b. What is the result of working towards and possessing these virtues?

(These eight virtues will lead us to true knowledge of God. Verse 10 says if we do these, we will never fall, and we will be welcomed into the eternal kingdom of our Lord.)

- c. For these eight items, explain how you can improve on each area and practice that virtue in your daily life.
(students' answers)



Part 2

Spiritual Cultivation of the Saints of Old

From the Bible, we know of many spiritually successful people. They had a very close relationship with God and at the end of their lives, we know that they were confident of their salvation and returned to God. We will take a look at a few of them so that from their walk with God, we can glean some tips about how we ought to practice our spiritual cultivation today.

A. Moses

- a. Read Deuteronomy 34:1–12. Describe in your own words what the last moments of Moses' life were like.
(Moses was all alone but with God as he neared his death. He looked towards Canaan, and knew that although he would not see the physical Canaan, God would take him to the real land that flows with milk and honey – heaven.)
- b. In what way(s) can we say that Moses was the most special of all the prophets in the history of the Israelite nation?
(He was the only one that God buried.)
- c. Read Exodus 33:17–23, 34:28–33 and Numbers 12:6–8. Would you say that Moses' prayer is one of the greatest level of intimacy with God? How can you tell?
(God let Moses see Him and His glory. Moses stayed with God at the top of Mt. Sinai for forty days and nights (twice). God Himself said that other prophets see Him in visions and dreams but with Moses, He speaks face to face.)
- d. What are some of the characteristics that God saw in Moses and therefore wanted to speak to him face to face?
(Moses desired to be close with God, for he asked to see God. Moses was

also faithful and obedient to God in all things.)

B. Daniel

- a. Read Daniel 6. Daniel 6:3,4 tell us that Daniel had an "excellent spirit" in him and that no fault could be found about him even by his enemies. Can you say the same about yourself? What do you think contributed to Daniel's beautiful character? What are the things one has to watch out for in one's spiritual cultivation in order to be as virtuous as Daniel?
(Daniel obeyed God in all things. He prayed to God at least three times a day even in the midst of people who did not worship God. In our spiritual cultivation, it is important to obey God in all things. That includes the thoughts we have, the things we do, the way we interact with people.)
- b. Daniel did not simply obey the king without wisdom and reverence for God. How can we tell from this chapter? What does Daniel's obedience to God over the king teach us about how we ought to conduct our lives?
(In things that did not interfere with his worship of God, Daniel fulfilled his duties well, towards the king. But, as far as God's matters were concerned, God was always number one in Daniel's life. Hence, we see that he prayed to God even though a decree was set against anyone who worshipped or bowed to anyone else but the king. The same principle should apply in our lives. We do whatever we have to, to the best of our ability, but in all we do, we must abide by God's teachings and not allow anything to interfere with Him as the most important one in our lives.)

C. The Early Believers

- a. Read Acts 2:43–47 and 4:31–33. Describe in your own words the type of life that the early believers led.
(Devotion to God's teachings, fellowship with one another, prayer, sharing of possessions, of one mind.)
- b. Read Acts 6:2–4. The apostles were the pillars of the church. What were the key elements of their lives according to these verses?
(The apostles' priority was on prayer and ministry of the word.)

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 fundamental aims of spiritual cultivation?
- 2 What are the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit?
- 3 Why is it important to know God's will and have wisdom and spiritual understanding? How can a child of God gain greater spiritual understanding?
- 4 What are the "secrets of success" behind Daniel's political life?
- 5 If you had to summarize the lives led by the early believers in four descriptive words, what would those words be?

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



My Daily Spiritual Workout

Part A- The whole armor of God (Read Eph 6:13-18)

1. Ephesians 6:13 explains the end result if we were to take up the whole armor of God. What is this end result?
2. Identify the six components of the full armor of God. (Girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit [word of God])
3. For each component, discuss how you can build yourself up in that area as far as (a) family (b) school and (c) church are concerned.

Part B- A spiritual workout

Have you seen athletes competing in a sporting event? Many of them have very strong bodies with well-toned muscles. In most sporting events, stamina and endurance are needed. To become a competitive athlete, one has to go through years of training. That is not all. One has to be consistently undergoing training. It is a continuous process, not something one does sporadically. If one neglects to train for some time one will find that all his/her strength, skills and stamina would have deteriorated so much, that to get back in shape requires much effort.

It is the same with our spiritual cultivation. If we do not pray, read the Bible, or go to church services for a period of time, we will discover that we have drifted far away from God. And to get back to God may seem very difficult.

Next, you will read some thoughts shared by brothers and sisters about how they make sure they stick to a routine of keeping their spiritual self in shape. After reading their words, plan and write your own routine to keep your spiritual self in shape. Then, share your routine with the rest of your class.

1. I have missed many important moments in life. Sometimes, there is no turning back – you miss something and you miss it forever. That moment will never come back to you. So, I've learned to make use of important times in the day. Mornings are especially important. When most people are still sleeping, when the bustle of life hasn't quite kicked in yet, I make it my prayer time. To many people, it's a chore. But for me, it's a special moment, waking up early every morning to meet with my best friend. It's an appointment I set for myself with God. I've been doing this for years since my first year in college and I think morning prayers really help me put things in perspective and give me strength to handle all that come my way during the day.
2. I always wonder how some people can spend such a long time in the morning showering and getting dressed. It is as if smelling and looking good are more important than asking God to be part of your life for the day. To me, it is absolutely important that I ask God to participate in all my activities for the day. I can spend my entire morning getting dressed or eating a great breakfast. But, if I do not have God's presence with me for the day, I don't think I can have a good day, no matter how good I smell or how well I'm dressed.
3. I have to set aside quiet time during the day just for God and myself. For me, I find that time in the evening is the best time. I use it to read the Bible, and talk to God about all the issues of the day and things that are going on in my life. Before I began this routine, I usually wasted these early evening hours doing nothing important. So now before dinner, and before I get back to my books, I make sure I have a good session with God and read His words first. This has proven to be most helpful for me to reflect upon my weaknesses and transgressions. I find myself growing spiritually with this daily communion with God.
4. I find that nighttime works best for me. Usually, I read the Bible for fifteen to twenty minutes. Then I pray and talk to God about what went on during the day and also my plans for the next day. It's a time when it's usually not too noisy,

so I find that I can concentrate better and talk more deeply to God. I also use this time to meditate on how to apply God's words to what is happening in my life.

5. For half a year, I lived in a place where there are no church members or church. The first two weeks were okay, as I still read the Bible and prayed on my own. I listened to sermon tapes that I had brought with me. But soon, I realized how weak I had become. I no longer wanted to keep the Sabbath. Prayers got shorter and shorter. Then I realized the importance of having spiritual support through fellowship with brothers and sisters. I made it a point to stay in touch with church members and now I try not to miss church services, even though it is far away. Being part of some form of church work is also a good way to keep in close communion with brothers and sisters.

Based on the sharing by the brothers and sisters, identify some of the important factors that affect our spiritual health. If you have more ideas, include them in your spiritual cultivation routine below. When you write your spiritual cultivation routine, state how you want to do it, what activities you want to include and when you want to carry out those activities.

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



Sing hymn 399. Above all else, a true believer of God must be one who is true towards God and toward man. As the Lord Jesus Himself says, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (Jn 2:23). As we build up our spiritual lives, this is a vision that must be kept in mind all the time.

Goals

Love is something we all seek. Many people in this world never find true love. One of the many reasons could be that they do not have a pure attitude towards love relationships. Many people in the world approach love with the mentality of simply having short-term fun. Hence, they move on from one relationship to another. They cannot commit themselves to one relationship for life.

As children of God, we must be careful not to be swayed by the trends of the world. God meant for His creation to enjoy love on earth. True love can be found, and it is a blessing from God. So, when dealing with issues of dating and marriage, we must maintain purity in our relationships with members of the opposite sex. By trusting in the Lord, we can hope to find true love and a beautiful and stable marriage that is blessed by God.

unit
2**Teacher Devotional**

Love is a word that has launched a thousand poems, so to speak. Human beings across the millennia have been motivated by love in what they do. Artists write, paint and compose about love. Lovers lose their lives in the name of love. Many more live and work because of love. Love is a profound, multi-faceted feeling humans have been blessed with by God. Unfortunately, it is also in the name of love that people have done harmful things to others and to themselves. It is important that we understand what true love is and pursue love in accordance with the beautiful will that God had in mind when He granted love to the human race. God is the source of love. True love cannot be experienced without God and His blessings. As children of God, it is essential that we keep in close contact with God and His word, so we can always keep the right perspectives about love.

Live a Life of Love Through God

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."
(1 Jn 4:7, 8)

Lesson 3

Dating 101

Listed Scriptures

Gen 24, 29; 1 Cor 6:12, 7:13, 10:23; 2 Sam 13:1–19

Lesson Aim

- 1) To examine the purpose of dating from the biblical perspective
- 2) To understand the difference between love and infatuation and to resolve not to pursue infatuations at any time.
- 3) To help our students resolve not to date until they are ready for marriage.

Memory Verse

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Cor 13:4 – 8)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 7-9

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

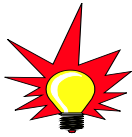


There is no Bible background information for this lesson.

Teaching Tips

This is a topic that students will love to talk about quite a bit. Much of this lesson is in the format of a discussion. Be sure to create an open and accepting ambience for the students so that there can be an exchange of ideas, views and questions. You can always bring in life experiences, both from your own life and examples you have seen, in addition to materials in this chapter. To the teacher: Go through with them each characteristic of love as mentioned here and discuss briefly why such is the essence of true love. There is a good article in Manna Issue 31 on this topic of match-making/dating (p.44 – 47: “From Isaac to Jacob to Courtship Today: Dating vs. Matchmaking”). Perhaps the teacher can print copies of the article for the students one week before the lesson and have the students read the article at home first. That article is a good base for the discussion of today’s lesson.

W A R M U P



Today’s topic is probably very interesting to many of you. Some of you may have some questions regarding this topic. What are some of the questions you have about dating? (Let students respond. Some other questions that may arise include: Is dating something that can be found in the Bible? Is it ever really approved by God? When can I start dating?) Perhaps not all of your questions will be answered at the end of this lesson. But surely you will learn more about the biblical perspective to dating. With more discussion with older brothers and sisters, prayers and study of God’s teachings, you will find the answers to other questions you may have.

B I B L E S T U D Y

Love relationships are a very fundamental aspect of life. Surprisingly, the Bible does not talk much about dating per se. Let us not get it wrong. God is definitely very concerned with the emotional aspects of our life and the Bible gives us a lot of insights into relationships with our fellow human beings and marriage.

While the Bible does not specifically tells us much about dating, it does give us many principles to guide us in dealing with life issues. It is on these guidelines that we should act wisely in all that we do in life.

We often hear people talking about dating or marriage in terms of whether it’s “Isaac-style” or “Jacob-style”. Are you familiar with the courtships of Isaac and Jacob? Read Genesis 24 and 29. So, when one talks about “Isaac style” and “Jacob style”, what comes to your mind? Write down some impressions and share your thoughts with the rest of your class.

Many of us tend to associate the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah with the notion of matchmaking. Jacob’s marriage to Rachel, on the other hand, is thought to be more liberal. So, to many young people, Jacob’s style seems more in tune with their modern ideas. It seems risky or even old-fashioned to simply be matched like Isaac. Most young people prefer to get to know the other person on their own.

We see that God does not disapprove of either Isaac’s or Jacob’s style of marriage. In fact, both styles share fundamentally very important characteristics that we can learn from, no matter how liberal a generation we are. Let us take a closer look at these two love stories.



Part 1

“Do the people of God date?”



A. Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 24)

- Who were the “match-makers” for Isaac and Rebekah? (The old servant of Abraham, Abraham himself, and of course God whom they relied on throughout the whole process)
- Where could we see God’s guidance during this process? (The old servant prayed for a sign—that Rebekah would give him and the camels a drink, and she did.)
- How can we tell that Rebekah is a good woman? (She was compassionate towards the old man who had traveled from afar. Even though it was physically tiring, she was willing to draw water from the well for him and his camels.)
- What do you understand about Isaac’s character from other events in Genesis? (Isaac was a very obedient child to Abraham. He was quiet and calm when

Abraham took him up to the mountain in Moriah to offer him as a living sacrifice. Later in life, he was also gentle and giving when his neighbors filled up his wells. He did not fight with them but simply entrusted everything to God.)

- e. Do you think his personality had a lot to do with his acceptance of a wife whom he had never met before, whom his father had chosen for him? What else is important in such a situation? Explain your answer.
(Faith in God has a lot to do with Isaac's acceptance of the marriage arrangement. It does not mean that we should be blind in our faith and accept any matchmaking. Faith in God where marriage is concerned is NOT about closing our eyes and leaving all responsibility to God.)

In this case, we see God's blessings. The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was built on Abraham's faith in God's words as well as Isaac's trust and obedience. Isaac trusted his father and his father trusted the old servant. The faith of the old servant is also very important here. The three of them had a very close relationship. Rebekah possessed certain important qualities that close kin can attest to. In other words, this is not an arrangement done hastily or blindly.)

B. *Jacob and Rachel (Gen 29)*

- a. What is one main difference between how Jacob and Isaac met their wives?
- b. What was Jacob's plan of action when he decided that he wanted to marry Rachel?
- c. How is his plan of action different from the conventional way of dating as we understand today?
- d. A lot of times, what is unsaid can give us clues to understanding a situation. From the case of the mix-up on Jacob's wedding night, what can we infer about the relationship between Jacob and Rachel (specifically, how close the two of them were before marriage)?
- e. Jacob's love for Rachel lasted until she died. How is this love different from the love of many dating relationships that you know of today?

(Jacob's style of courtship is actually not at all like what is commonly practiced today. First of all, he did not have the attitude of just trying it out with Rachel. He made the decision right from the outset to work seven years so as to be

with her. In a way, he had no plans to move on to other girls during these seven years. It was a commitment from the beginning, not a try-and-see attitude, which is what most young people today have when they start dating someone.

Secondly, it is very likely that he did not actually start a relationship with Rachel. There are a few reasons for such a belief. (a) Laban would not have permitted it. (b) If he had been physically close enough to Rachel, it is unlikely that he would have mistaken Leah for Rachel on his wedding night.

The biggest difference between Isaac and Jacob's paths to marriage is that Isaac did not meet his wife prior to the wedding, and that he did not actually pick his wife himself. Other than that, both Isaac and Jacob had clean and pure courtships. We should not misuse the term "Jacob-style" to infer that we can therefore simply date as we like. As children of God, whatever we do, there are guidelines to follow. Let's take a look at some of the biblical encouragement.)



Part 2

Principles in Dealing With the Opposite Sex

As children of God, we must never cause harm to anyone. In things to do with our emotions, we must therefore be very careful. We need to have wisdom and self-control. Read the following Bible verses and discuss the questions.

A. *2 Samuel 13:1-19*

- a. What were the reasons Amnon was so attracted to Tamar?
- b. How can we tell that Amnon's feelings for Tamar were not true love?

(It is important to explain to our students that infatuation should not be equated with love, as clearly seen in the case of Amnon's feelings for Tamar. It is a common misconception among teenagers that an infatuation is different from true love in that infatuations do not last long. That is a superficial way to analyze one's emotions. Infatuations can last for a long time, and such feelings of attraction often last until we actually meet that person. Attractions usually fade

when we get familiar with a person and share many experiences. But, through sharing of common experiences, there is also opportunity for true love to grow.

As children of God, we must hold our emotions in check, and not pursue every single attraction we may feel for someone of the opposite sex. Attractions come and go, but we have to preserve our heart for the one person with whom we will spend the rest of our lives with.)

B. 1 Corinthians 6:9

- a. Among young people of the world today, pre-marital sex is very common. What does the Bible say about fornicators? (They will not inherit the kingdom of God.)
- b. When there is attraction and infatuation between two people, physical closeness is often desired. How can we maintain purity in such a situation? (It is important that their interaction with each other be in open and public spaces. It is best not to spend time alone in any closed room or space.)

C. 2 Corinthians 6:14

- a. In the case of Amnon, we have seen how destructive infatuations can get. What is the principle stated in this verse about how we should look for our potential spouse? (We should not go by our feelings at the moment or by looks. Amnon was infatuated with Tamar for a long time. So we should not use length of time to dismiss something as mere infatuation. In fact, an infatuation can last a long time, if one continues in his own desires and fantasies or refuses to heed others' advice.)
- b. What does it mean to be in communion with darkness? (When one is in communion with darkness, one does evil things and commits sins.)

D. 1 John 4:11

- a. The Bible teaches us many things. The fundamental principle in our relationship with people is love. How can one practice responsible love in issues of dating and emotions? (Love is not self-seeking. We should not date for the purpose of having fun or to satisfy our desires. The sole purpose of dating is for marriage. If you are not ready for marriage, you should not be dating. This is responsibility towards oneself as well as the other person.)

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



- 1 In what ways were Isaac and Jacob's paths to marriage different and in what ways were they similar?
- 2 Why is infatuation sometimes a dangerous thing?
- 3 What is the guiding principle from the Bible that we should apply to all aspects of our life?
- 4 How can we practice that principle in issues dealing with our emotions?

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



To Date or Not to Date

There are obviously differences between us and Isaac or even Jacob. We live in a totally different social and cultural setting. We meet more people, including people from the opposite sex. Social patterns of human interaction have also changed. But, there is one thing we must always remember: God never changes. So every generation of God's people faces the challenge of living out the principles of God no matter their social or cultural settings.

1. Does matchmaking still exist in the 21st century?

Yes, of course, and it is not done only in our church or in very traditional soci-

eties. People are often set up through friends. Online agencies are also very popular today. Basically, matchmaking should be taken as an opportunity to meet someone and to get to know the other person first as a friend. Then perhaps later on, the friendship could develop into something more. Depending on our spirituality and maturity, matchmaking can be an edifying and faith-building experience in our search for God's will in marriage.

2. Is dating okay in the eyes of God?

The straightforward answer is yes. But, perhaps this is not the right question to ask. (Read 1 Cor 6:12, 7:13, 10:23) The right question to ask is whether we can bring glory to God, benefit to ourselves and to others around us in whatever we do. For a start, we may want to ask the following questions.

3. Why do I want to date someone?

Do you sometimes feel that you want to have a girlfriend/boyfriend? What are the reasons? Here are a few stories about teenagers and their dating experiences. For each story, discuss if you think their motives for dating were correct or healthy. What do you think the consequences will be if one plunges into a relationship based on the motivations described in the stories? Would you do the same for yourself?

Story 1

Jason hung out a lot with a group of friends who really knew how to add fun to their lives. They always had activities after school and on weekends. One thing Jason noticed that separated him from his friends was that they all had girlfriends. Most of the time when they hung out, the girls came along. Jason always felt awkward being the only "bachelor" in the gang. He decided that he should try to get himself a girlfriend as soon as possible. Although it seemed awkward, Jason started to chat with girls more at school. He succeeded in finding a girlfriend. However, his girlfriend did not like to hang out with his friends at all. They often had fights over where to go, who to hang out with, and what to do. Jason started to realize that maintaining a relationship with someone was harder than he thought. It wasn't as simple as just having a girlfriend. He began to regret having a girlfriend, because he missed his freedom when he was single. But he did not know how to tell her.

Story 2

Ann is a very introverted girl. She is not really pretty or popular. She has always thought of herself as being "plain". When she saw that many of the girls in her school had guys, she wished she were more outgoing, and pretti-

er, because having a boyfriend seemed like a really cool thing. If she had a boyfriend, she would definitely be less lonely, she thought. Perhaps then, she would also have envious eyes staring at her.

Story 3

Growing up, Rob has always been a "goody-two-shoes". He always obeyed his parents. In the eyes of his elders, he's the perfect boy. In the eyes of his friends, he's the nicest person around. His only vice seems to be that he's too conservative and even too strict with himself. After entering high school, Rob gradually started to feel tired of being "the good boy". He wanted to be more "normal", to be more like his friends at school. He decided that he would try many of the things that other teenagers were doing. Among the first few items on his list was to try dating. After all, what's wrong with asking girls out and trying to find a soul mate if a nice girl came along?

- a. What are the motivations or attitudes of people who do not revere God when it comes to dating?
(kill time, kill loneliness, for sex, for fun, trying it out)
- b. What are some of the harmful consequences of those kinds of attitudes?
(It can lead to a lot of hurt for both parties, because human emotions are very fragile and precious. Emotional hurt can lead to a lot of insecurities, and even loss of faith in love. Also, it leaves behind a history that you can never erase. You don't want to marry someone who has a long history of trials with his/her ex-boyfriends/girlfriends, so you should demand the same of yourself and preserve your love for the one you want to marry.)
- c. What should be the right attitude towards dating—one that is acceptable in the sight of God?
(As Christians, we do not date to fill our loneliness or kill time. Our time should be spent drawing closer to God and His people, as well as doing useful things to glorify His name and bring benefit to all around us. We should not date for fun, just to try things out, or even worse, for physical indulgence. Dating should therefore be for the purpose of being serious about the other person, leading to marriage. Marriage should be the ONLY purpose for dating. We MUST NOT allow infatuations to grow that may lead to an emotional and/or sexual relationship. Then we would be committing a mortal sin against God. We should flee from this type of risky situation at all times.)

4. Is there a right age to start dating?

In principle, a person who is ready to date is one who is prepared and determined to commit his/her life to someone forever (i.e. two become one), living according to biblical teachings. Since we have established that dating should be for the purpose of marriage, it makes sense then that we should start dating only when we're ready for marriage. There is not a "right" age to start dating, but there are factors to take into serious consideration:

- a. Emotional maturity – Emotional maturity entails being able to accept ourself and others around us. It also involves being able to live and work with others in a considerate manner. A lot of hurt can be done to someone if we are not sure of what we want emotionally. We may think it's okay to move on to another relationship because it is not working out. But we could be scarring the other person for life because we are not emotionally mature enough to handle dating.
- b. Financial security – Someone who is not able to take care of himself financially should worry first about finding some stability, such as a stable job. Genesis 2:24 tells us that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife." This entails the ability to lead a life apart from his parents, and that includes having the financial means to take care of himself and his partner.
- c. Spiritual maturity – It is hard to pinpoint what it means to be spiritually mature. But a person who pursues and seeks after God all his life will know how to behave in a godly, responsible and loving way towards people he interacts with. This is an important factor in being able to deal with relationships.

5. Is it okay to put off dating?

Being ready to date does not mean we should plunge into dating right away. In fact, there are people who are ready for dating who choose to defer this stage of life because they want to pursue other more important things. Here are two real-life stories of youths in church who did just that:

Story 1

Sister W. is the dream of many brothers. Not only is she physically attractive, she attends a very prestigious college and is very fervent in serving God in church. All throughout her high school years and college, there were guys who tried to ask her out. When she was in her final year in college, she

started to become closer friends with one brother whom she had known for many years. Although they are not from the same locality, they email each other very often. Somehow, she could sense that the brother is interested in her. She liked that brother too, for he is a very exemplary youth in church and has a good job.

One day, the brother asked whether she would like to be his girlfriend. She was put in a serious dilemma. Although she was just a year away from graduation, she felt that it was still too early for her to be sure that this brother is the one that she would really like to marry. More importantly, she wanted to go on to graduate school. She knew that she would not be able to juggle fulfilling her potential, serving God in church and handling a relationship at the same time. After all, a relationship is not something trivial; she wanted to make sure time and effort are put in to make the relationship an edifying one for both people.

Although it seemed to run contrary to her feelings, she turned the brother down. She decided to entrust this matter into God's hands and she believes that God will take care of her marriage when the time is right.

Story 2

When brother L. graduated from college and found a well paying job, he started getting a lot of attention from sisters, parents and even more elderly members in church. Obviously, everyone thought he was ready to get married! In his mind, he had thought so too. He had always loved kids and he had secretly wished to be married young so that he could have his own kids.

However, as he started getting all this attention, he began considering what dating and marriage really meant. Having just started his career, he began to realize that juggling work and service to God in church was already tough. He didn't need to have an extra commitment at this stage. Therefore he made up his mind that he would rather wait a few more years before considering dating or marriage.



Some have said that unless one knows God, and fears God, one cannot really love another person. Indeed, love is of God. As children of God, we should practice love in all that we do. In emotional affairs, we must not be carried away by emotions of the moment. We should always watch and pray and not allow infatuations to develop. Remember that relying on the flesh leads to death, but relying on the Holy Spirit and putting to death the flesh will lead to life (Rom 8:13). We need to see things in a long-term perspective and observe the teachings of God. That way, we will not hurt others or ourselves, for that is part of practicing God's love on earth. May God guide everyone so that we will always seek His guidance.

Lesson 4

Why Stay Pure?

Listed Scriptures

Deut 7:6-14; Ps 119:11; Job 31:1; 1 Cor 6:19, 20; 1 Cor 6:9, 10, 10:12; Jas 4:7; Gal 5:15, 16; 2 Tim 2:22

Lesson Aim

- 1) To move students to be determined to stay pure with the help of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) To encourage the students to sign a pledge of purity.

Memory Verse

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb 12:14)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 10-12

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



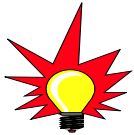
"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth" (Deut 7:6). From the very early stages of creation, God chose Abraham and his descendents to be a special people unto Him.

This exclusivity comes with a price and responsibility. This special people of God have to be separated from the rest of the nations. They belong to God, and therefore, they have to abide by God's commandments. This is so that they may have blessings as well as glorify God.

Today, we are the special people that belong to God. "Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham ... 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. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:7, 28, 29). In the same way, we have to keep

ourselves pure and separated from the evil that is in today's world. What does it mean to be pure? Purity is required of us in every way – our thoughts, our speech and our actions. In particular, there is a lot more interaction between members of the opposite sex today than centuries ago. All around us, sexual promiscuity is prevalent. To non-believers, sexual relationships with different partners are not wrong. However, for us believers, we must know that we have to preserve our purity for the one who we marry.

W A R M U P



The memory verse today tells us that without holiness, we cannot see the Lord. What do you think it means to “see the Lord”? To see the Lord can mean both seeing Him in this life as well as after we die, in heaven. The Bible has in many instances that indicate that if we are not clean or pure, the Lord will turn His face away from us. He will not answer our prayers or accept our offerings and services unto Him. Of course, if we are impure and full of iniquity, we will not be able to enter into His heavenly kingdom.

Today, we will look more closely at this topic of purity. May our Lord guide us to put purity among our first priorities in the way we lead our lives.



Part 1

Be Separate From the World

We live in a very corrupt world today. We may not see all of the evil that is happening around us, partly because a lot of evil that is done is done secretly. Perhaps, in our immediate circle of friends and relatives, we do not see this phenomenon; but there are many perverse and immoral things that go on in the world today. 2 Timothy 3:1–5 tells us that in the last days, many people will be “unholy ... without self-control...lovers of pleasure.”

One area where young people find it hardest to stay pure is sexual relationships. Pre-marital sex is so common today that sometimes, it even seems like an embarrassment to admit to our friends that we are virgins! With married people, extra-marital affairs are commonplace. One-night-stands are not big deals. As God's children, do we realize that we have a very special position on earth today? Do we realize that we are a separate people, different from the rest of the world? Hence, in our moral standards, we have to be separate from the rest of the world too.

a. Noah (Gen 6:1–8)

In the earliest times, when God first destroyed the world by the flood, it was because the sins of the people at that time were too great. But, before destroying the world, He chose Noah. Noah found grace in the eyes of God because he was a righteous man. Through Noah, God wanted to save the rest of the people, if only they would repent and get into the ark!

b. Abraham (Gen 12:1–3)

Abraham was chosen not because God loved him especially and wanted to save only him. God told him that through him, all nations would be blessed. God expected Abraham to lead a life guided by His laws and Abraham indeed followed God faithfully.

c. The Israelite Nation (Ex 8:22, 23; Deut 7:6–14; cf 1 Pet 2:9)

When God plagued the Egyptians, there was a clear separation between the Israelite land of Goshen and the land where the Egyptians dwelled. God made it clear that the Israelite nation belonged to Him and so, from the 4th plague on, the Israelites were not affected. This special status as God's people was explained to the Israelites most clearly in Deuteronomy 7:6–14; the Israelites were chosen not because they were special. They were special only because they were chosen. To be chosen means they have to be separate. Their lifestyle and moral standards have to fit in with God's. They are not to be like any other nations around them.

Later on in the history of the Israelite nation, we see that God's abidance was with them whenever they kept the words of God, and God's grace departed when they sinned against Him and went after the ways of foreign gods.

d. Chosen People Under the New Testament (1 Cor 6:19, 20; 1 Cor 6:9, 10)

We have seen how God chose the Israelite nation to be a special people to Him, leading a life separate from the rest of the nations. In the same way, we are called today to lead life as a separate people. Therefore we must never compromise our standards of purity. The moral standards of the world have changed throughout history. But the word of God never changes. We should always remember our special status and keep ourselves untainted by the world! No matter how the standards of the world change, no matter what our friends do or encourage us to do, we must hold fast to God's laws.



Part 2

Guidelines For Shunning Impurity

The Bible gives us a lot of encouragement about how we can stay pure and shun impurity. The following verses are but a small selection. For each of them, write how we can keep pure by abiding by these words of God.

Ps 119:11- "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."

(It is important for us to be sure of God's teachings – what we can do, and what we cannot do. To hold God's words in our hearts is very important. That means we constantly have God's laws in our minds, even when we do not have the physical Bible in our hands. In times when we face temptations or when we are not sure what to do, it is the words of God that preserve us, if we choose to obey His teachings. We should not underestimate the importance of memorizing memory verses during class. As we read the Bible daily, we should also make it a point to keep God's word in our minds.)

Job 31:1- "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"

(Many successful stories are the result of determination and resolution. As far as keeping God's commandments is concerned, determination counts a lot too. We have to resolve to hold fast to God's laws, no matter how our environment changes. One way to stay resolved is to shield our eyes from evil things. The lust of the eyes is often the gateway to the lust of the flesh. "See no evil" may be the best way to run away from evil. As with Job, we should make a covenant with ourselves not to allow ourselves to be tempted.)

1 Corinthians 10:12- "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

(Be watchful. This is almost like a perpetual message. Yet we know that many people still fall into temptation and ultimately sin against God. It has been said that those who drown are those who know how to swim. The rationale is that those who do not know how to swim often simply avoid being in the water. It is those who know how to swim who overestimate their abilities to withstand the waves, and they drown when the waters prove too strong for them. It is the same with temptations. The moment we think we're strong enough, we fall. Let us never overestimate our abilities to withstand temptations. As the Bible encourages, we should "work

out [our] salvation with fear and trembling." Phil 2:12)

James 4:7- "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

(Joseph was determined to hold fast to God's teachings. When enticed and tempted by the wife of his master, Joseph did not flinch. In fact, he resolutely told her, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9). Then he simply fled! He ran away, even without taking back his cloak from the temptress. Today, we need to do the same.)

Galatians 5:16, 17- "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

(In terms of moral standards, there is no middle ground. You are either of God or not of God. You are either of the Holy Spirit or you are fulfilling the lusts of your flesh. One way to keep ourselves pure is to obey the Holy Spirit. How do we know if we're obeying the Holy Spirit? We know that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. If we hold on to the commandments of God, we are obeying the Holy Spirit.)

2 Timothy 2:22- "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

(In our life of faith, we need to have friends in the Lord and support one another. As Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, "Two are better than one ... and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." In history, we have examples like Daniel and his friends. The disciples of Jesus Christ often worked in groups or pairs. Even apostle Paul had companions in his missionary work, with people such as Barnabas and Timothy accompanying him at different times. When we have good friends in the Lord, we can share our problems and weaknesses and friends can help look out for us.)

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



1

In Deuteronomy 7:6-14, God told the Israelites that they were a special, chosen race and that they would be blessed. But this promise is conditional. What did the Israelites have to do in order to receive the promise of blessings?

- 2 In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, who are the people that are highlighted as those who cannot inherit the kingdom of God?
- 3 What reason did the psalmist give for having God's word "hidden" in his heart (Ps 119:11)?
- 4 What pact (resolution) did Job make with his eyes (Job 31:1)?
- 5 What is the simple advice James gives regarding fighting temptations/evil in James 4:7?

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



Give No Opportunity to Sin

Part A-Keeping ourselves pure

Many things are often easier said than done. The same goes for keeping ourselves pure. When we are not faced with the temptation, of course it is easy to stay pure. But when physically confronted with the opportunity to sin, we often find out (too late) that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Hence, it is important that we give no place to the devil or to ourselves to commit sin. Before we are even faced with the situation, we need to be prepared for possible scenarios where temptation can be so great that we fall.

Presented here are a few words of wisdom from brothers and sisters who kept themselves pure while they were dating. Read what they have to say, and then discuss other practical ways we can avoid committing sins of impurity.

Case 1

"I was glad that K. and I were in a long-distance relationship before we got married. Being physically apart meant that we did not face the temptation to get too close physically." – Sister L.

Case 2

"I was always under the impression that it's the guys who make the "first move". So, I resolved not to be alone with my girlfriend in an enclosed space. We made it a point that all our dates had to be in public places." – Brother T.

Case 3

"I guess you can consider me "old-fashioned" but I never even held her hands

until after we were married. Our dates consisted of very clean activities like watching TV with my family members, eating at restaurants or hanging out with a whole bunch of church youths. We never dated "in private" – we were always in public spaces. "Public activities" did not stop us from getting to know each other better. In fact, the best way to know a person is how she behaves with other people." – Brother C.

Case 4

"Guys, I have been told, are weak visually. I make sure that I am always dressed modestly so I do not give way to the devil to create any form of temptation for any brother." – Sister A.

Case 5

"I believe that keeping pure is a matter of self-respect. I respect myself enough to know that I want to keep God's word and be a pure bride to my husband when we get married. I expect the same of my future husband. Hence, I made a rule in my life that I will not engage in pre-marital sex, no matter how sure I am that I will be marrying the guy I'm dating." – Sister S.

Part B- Relationships are for nurturing, not for plunging into!

A lot of times, when two people feel very attracted to each other, there is plenty of motivation to want to get to know each other in as short a time as possible. But strong relationships are never built up in short time-spans. What often results is that the initial passions dies, leaving behind many mixed feelings.

Here is a true story that happened to a brother and sister in church. May this testimony be food for thought as well as a reminder for youths in church to be watchful about their feelings and to exercise self-control in relationships.

A Testimony

A sister came to me when I visited a certain church. As I turned to her, tears welled up in her eyes. It was clear that she was sensitive but tortured. She sobbed as she told me the following story.

Years before she and a brother met at a NYTS. They were both very good workers for the church and both have extraordinary gifts from God. During the NYTS, they got to know each other very well and after that, they started dating each other. They dove headfirst into an emotionally intimate relationship. They were not the shy types. The brother also confessed that he was attracted to her. She admitted that the feeling was mutual.

What followed the flirtatious exchange was a marathon tour of each other's personal lives. Impatience put them on the fast track. "We were instantly connected," she remembers. Everything came out in that first conversation. She poured out her life, telling him about her struggles as a Christian and at school. He did the same. Though they had known each other only a brief time, their conversation instantly threw their relationship into high gear. They felt close, even though they hadn't taken the time to nurture a friendship or get a reality check on each other's character. Even worse was that a few weeks after, they began having very close physical involvement. The rush of romance was intoxicating; but eventually, as with all highs, the fervor leveled off—illusion gave way to reality. Their relationship ended bitterly. That left them burdened with a sense of guilt and hypocrisy. She said, "Everyone at church thinks of me as an excellent sister beaming in innocence. But do you know what goes through my head every time I come to church? I am a hypocrite. I need God's forgiveness."

Today, they both deeply regret that they shared too much of their hearts with each other.

Question for discussion: Why is it best not to pursue a romantic relationship before we are ready to commit to marriage?

Part C—"My Creed of Purity"

We live in a world where there's much talk about achievement. Achievement in school, achievement in sports, achievement in the family, and even achievement in church. We are always reminded that we have to have a "to do" list. If we want to get somewhere in life, we must be achievement oriented; we need to have personal mission statements. Or, perhaps a vision or a list of goals.

Have we ever thought about what we want to achieve for God?

About a century ago, a young man drafted a list of what he wanted to be/to do. Although it may not look like a list we would make today, his list has endured through the century and continues to inspire many Christians today.

*I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.*

*I would be friend, of all the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh and love and lift.*

Does this sound familiar to you? Yes, this is part of a well-known hymn which is also in our church hymnal (hymn 396). The writer of these "I would's" wrote them as a resolution for himself to hold fast to the Christian principles that were taught to him as he was growing up. Right after graduating from Princeton, Howard Arnold Walter sailed to Japan to teach English at Waseda University for one year. From Tokyo, he mailed his mother this two—stanza poem. When Walter returned to the States, he went to the seminary and subsequently sailed to India as a YMCA staff member. There, still a young man, he died of influenza in 1918.

Throughout history, there have been young Christians who made resolutions to hold fast to God's teachings. Today, we also need to make resolutions and make sure we follow these resolutions throughout our lives, no matter what happens. Having read the story of Walter, let us now attempt to come up with our own creed to stay pure for the Lord.

Working either singly or in pairs, draft a "Creed of Purity" similar to the one that Walter drafted for himself. In your creed, make sure to include the reasons why you want to stay pure. You may also include details about how you can avoid tainting yourself so as to stay pure. Think seriously, but be creative and sincere! After you've completed your creed, share it with the rest of the class.

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



Sing hymn 401. Purity and holiness need to be consciously pursued and worked upon. It is an exercise in discipline everyday of our lives – in our thoughts, speech, and conduct.

Let us read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. Our bodies are the physical temples of God. God's Holy Spirit wants to dwell in us. We must not do things that contaminate and bring this body to shame. We can always turn to our Lord Jesus for His preservation and help. May we remain pure and holy until He comes and receives us into His eternal kingdom!

Love For a Lifetime

Listed Scriptures

Gen 1:27, 28, 2:18-24; Songs 8:6, 7; Eph 5:22-23

Lesson Aim

- 1) To discover the true meaning of marriage.
- 2) To allow students to reflect on the qualities that are important when selecting a spouse.

Memory Verse

"This is now the bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh." (Gen 2:23)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 13-15

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



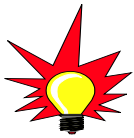
Marriage is a gift of God to mankind. God instituted the first marriage. He saw that Adam was alone and felt that it would be good to give him a helper (Gen 2:18, 21-23). Adam was so happy with God's gift to him that when he saw Eve, he said "This is now the bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). The Bible continues with the rule of marriage: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen 2:24, 25). Marriage is meant to be the most intimate relationship between human beings, where a man and a woman share their lives together, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

God acknowledged the importance of marriage with His people. For example, "When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with

any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken" (Deut 24:5). Marriage is a special relationship that has to be properly managed. Since marriage is a very precious gift from God, we have to be reverent in this matter, from the choice of our spouse to the life we lead after we are married. When two lives come together, it is not an easy thing to manage. Even in Old Testament times, there were occurrences of divorce. The Lord Jesus explains that Moses granted divorce only because the people were hard-hearted. What God has put together in marriage, no one should separate (Mt 19:6-8).

All the teachings of God are for the good of our lives. Marriage requires a lot of practice in virtues – love, patience, kindness, gentleness etc. The happiest marriage is always the one where both parties abide by God's commandments and live each day putting His teachings into practice.

W A R M U P



Do you know who spoke the words in today's memory verse? They are the words of Adam when he first met Eve, the wife that God had created for him out of his rib-bone. From these words, we can tell the joy and intimacy he felt for his wife. She was taken out of his very precious and vulnerable ribcage. She was someone whom he was to protect and care for with love. Eve was created because God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. God wanted to make him a helper. The beauty of marriage is God's gift to mankind.

Unfortunately, marriage is not seen in that light today. In the USA and Europe, the divorce rate is about one in every two couples. In Europe, many couples co-habitat instead simply because they no longer believe in the institution of marriage.

Where do we as children of God stand amid all this fear and lack of confidence in marriage today? Is marriage no longer what God had intended at the beginning of creation? Let us study this topic from the biblical perspective so that we may know what God intends for us today.



Part 1

"Why do we marry?"

Read Genesis 2:18-24

- a. God first instituted marriage for the sake of mankind. How do we know that marriage was instituted for the good of man?
(We have seen that God created all things for the good of man, so the woman was created with the same purpose in mind.)
- b. What is marriage supposed to do for the man?
(God instituted marriage and created a woman for man so that man would not be alone and would have a helper.)
- c. Read also Genesis 1:27, 28. What is another purpose of marriage?
(For man to multiply and increase – i.e. to have children.)
- d. Why was it significant that Eve was created out of the rib-bone of Adam, and not from other parts of his body, such as the head or the arms or the legs?
(The rib-bones are right under the heart of the man and in a very vulnerable part of his body. Hence, the man has to protect his wife as he would cherish his own life. The woman is not created from a piece of bone from his skull lest she thinks she can be the head over him. Neither is she from the legs because she is not inferior or under him. She's on the same level as him, but yet to be cared for.)
- e. Does verse 24 mean that when we get married, we should simply cut ourselves off from our parents? If not, what does it mean?
(This means that we are able to start and maintain our own family. From the time of marriage, a new family unit is created, and that becomes our first priority.)
- f. When do you think a person is old enough to "leave his father and mother"?
(There is no correct age. But we have to be mentally, intellectually, financially and emotionally mature before we can start and care for a family. By today's standards in most countries, it is when we have finished a certain level of advanced education and have the capability to support ourself and the family. This is also the time when we have arrived at a certain level of emotional maturity to know what it means to commit ourself in a love relationship.)

Read Songs 8:6, 7; Ephesians 5:22-23

- a. How is marriage similar to the relationship between Christ and the church?

(In a marriage, the husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church and gave His life for the church. The wife has to submit to the husband like the church submits to Christ.)



Part 2

“What should we look for in a spouse?”

A. Finding Your Other Half

You may have a picture of what a marriage or a relationship should be like. Perhaps you read a book about romance and you long to have something like that too. You may also admire other couples as role models. Or your picture might be based on Hollywood movies.

The fact is if we are going to have a good marriage, we need to forget about our fantasies of the ideal relationship. It is very important to understand that a perfect marriage is not like the Hollywood image we see paraded in front of us but rather based on the principles in the Bible. Movie characters don't face life's daily challenges in a realistic manner.

If you want to have a fulfilling relationship, you must give up your unrealistic expectations of your partner. A spouse is usually not as handsome or as beautiful as a movie star, or as wealthy. A realistic marriage involves two people with different opinions and different tastes, as well as different obligations outside of the relationship. Your differences will add to the richness of your partnership.

The following questions are based on the article “Finding Your Other Half” by Terry Chang (*Manna* 32, p. 41–44). Discuss the answers with the students if time allows.

- a. “Turning to God as the first step”: Explain why the writer realized that the criteria she used to judge/choose a potential marriage partner could not guarantee happiness for a lifetime.
- b. “Putting God’s teachings first”: What is the definition of the “right person” according to the writer? What other characteristics would you include in your definition of “the right person”?
- c. “The importance of prayer”: What factors must be present for a person who has prayed to understand God’s will?
- d. “Be the right person”: Marriage involves great skills in partnership. What are some important qualities a person must possess before he can consider himself ready for marriage?



B. Five Important Qualities

Besides marrying in the Lord, having the same faith and serving God together in the church. There are five qualities that are absolutely necessary for a marriage to be great.

G for Good communication

R for Real partnership

E for Effort

A for Adaptability

T for Total Commitment

In addition both people need to read the Bible, pray together daily and attend church services!

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



1

Why did God institute marriage?

2

What did Adam say when he first saw Eve? What is the significance of his words?

3

In what ways is the role of the husband to the wife like the role of Christ to the church?

4

What are some important qualities one should (a) look for in a spouse (b) possess before one considers marriage?

Marriage Issues**Part A- Marriage is not a Fairy-Tale**

We have talked quite a bit today about the expectations we should NOT have about marriage. Indeed, marriage is not a fairy-tale.

When reality sets in, every married couple realizes that marriage is not the “happily ever after.”

Read the article in *Manna* Issue 37 (Oct-Dec 2001), pages 33–36. Here is a testimony of a sister about her first year of marriage. Read her testimony and discuss the following questions.

1. *What parts of reality did the husband and the wife not foresee before they actually got married? (Think along the lines of personality/interests, economic considerations, time management etc.)*
2. *What were some areas of conflicts that the sister did not handle well, according to her? What other ways could she have been attempted to avoid those conflicts?*
3. *What methods did the sister (and/or her husband) try to make the marriage work out?*

Additional reading material:

1. “Myths About Marriage” *Manna* Issue 38 (Oct – Dec 2002), pages 33–35.
2. “Walking Together” *Manna* Issue 25, 1995, page 3

Part B- Love Forever?

Read Exodus 20:14,17; Matthew 19:8, 9; Hebrews 13:4

1. *Committing adultery is a sin God abhors and it is a violation of the 10 commandments. From this, we can understand how important it is that a person stays faithful to his spouse. Marriage is something to be taken seriously. To most people today, it is better for a couple to break-up than for two people to stay together in an unhappy marriage. What do you think are the implications of such an attitude?*

Read Matthew 19:6.

1. *Why is the Lord’s teaching about marriage for life important for the family and society as a whole today?*
2. *Since marriage is for life, what are the implications for single Christians concerning the way they conduct themselves before marriage, especially with regard to interaction with members of the opposite sex?*

Read 1 Cor 13:1–8

1. *Marriage is the closest intimacy between two people, where they share almost all aspects of their lives. Marriage without love is therefore a very unfortunate thing. Yet, love is not exactly what is portrayed in romance novels or fairy-tales. When two people of the opposite sex meet, there may be attraction between them— physical looks, intellectual admiration, personality matches etc. But attraction itself is not enough for marriage. Based on what you have just read, what do you think is the difference between love and mere attraction?*
2. *God is love. For each “Love is ...” characterization, write down one practical application that can be carried out in the family.*
3. *Love is not just a feeling. Love is a culmination of actions. How would you characterize a person with love? What qualities does a person with love possess? How can you tell from his actions?*

Part C- Till Death Us Do Part

Many lovers vow to be together forever, in life and in death, but I don't believe I've heard of anyone whose loyalty and devotion matched that of Mrs. Isidor Straus. The year was 1912. Mrs. Straus and her husband were passengers on the Titanic during its fateful voyage. Not many women went down with the ship, but Mrs. Straus was one of the few women who did not survive for one simple reason: She could not bear to leave her husband. This is how Mabel Bird, Mrs. Straus' maid, who survived the disaster, told the story after she was rescued:

“When the Titanic began to sink, panicked women and children were the first ones loaded into lifeboats. Mr. and Mrs. Straus were calm and comforting to the passengers, and helped many of them into the boats

“If it had not been for them,” Mabel stated, “I would have drowned. I was in the fourth or fifth lifeboat. Mrs. Straus made me get into the boat, and put some

heavy wraps on me."

Then, Mr. Straus begged his wife to get into the lifeboat with her maid and the others. Mrs. Straus started to get in. She had one foot on the gunwale, but then suddenly, she changed her mind, turned away and stepped back onto the sinking ship.

"Please, dear, get into the boat!" her husband pleaded.

Mrs. Straus looked deep into the eyes of the man with whom she'd spent most of her life, the man who had been her best friend, her heart's true companion and always a comfort to her soul. She grabbed his arm and drew his trembling body close to hers.

"No," Mrs. Straus is said to have replied defiantly. "I will not get into the boat. We have been together through a great many years. We are old now. I will not leave you. Where you go, I will go."

And that is where they were last seen, standing arm in arm on the deck, this devoted wife clinging courageously to her husband, this loving husband clinging protectively to his wife, as the ship sank. Together forever...

Questions to think about:

1. *How many people today would do the same?*
2. *Do you think what Mrs. Straus did was in accordance with the spirit of Jesus Christ's words in Mark 10:9 "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate"?*
3. *What do you think is the secret of a long-lasting relationship?*

Part D- Debate: Marriage is Forever

Today, at least half the world's adult population no longer has faith in the eternity of the marital bond. Rising divorce rates are seen in almost every country. Most young people go into marriage without the confidence or determination that the marriage will work. Today, we will have a mini-debate about this topic. One side will argue for the sanctity and eternity of marriage, while the other side will represent what many people in the world today think about marriage. At the end of this debate, do a summary of what the secular views are, and then reiterate what the biblical views about marriage are.

Proposition: (You represent the biblical view about marriage)

1. What God has put together, let not man put asunder (Mt 19:6). The fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom and wisdom will bring us true happiness. We must therefore hold on to God's commandment that marriage is for life.
2. Marriage is something that requires a lot of skill and effort. We should not simply give up when troubles arise.
3. Relationships are difficult, and it's not only between husbands and wives. From a young age, we know that communication is hard. We have to learn to live harmoniously with our siblings and with our parents. We also put in great effort to maintain our relationships with friends. What more with marriage. We should work hard at making it work.
4. Other points...

Opposition: (You represent the views that exist today about marriage)

1. It is better for two people to separate than to stay together and be unhappy. It is also better for the children. It is psychologically detrimental for the children that their parents are not in love with each other. Parental fights have deep psychological impact on children. A couple should never stay in a marriage for the sake of the children. It can only do more harm than good.
2. Marriage is different from dating. If two people realize that they have made a mistake in marrying each other, they should spare each other further pain and be divorced. That way, they both can have a new chance in love.
3. In times past, people did not live very long and it was easier to stay married for life. Today, with medical advancement, we all live to a ripe old age. It is not possible to stay married for four or five decades. The novelty will have definitely run out.
4. Sometimes, you don't know what you really want or need in life until you've failed. A failed marriage is actually a stepping-stone to finding the right person who will come along later.
5. Other points...



Many church members who are happily married have said that marriage has enabled them to realize the love between God and the church much more than when they were single. It is just like what Ephesians 5:22–33 says. Indeed, marriage is a “many-splendored thing”—a special gift that God has given to mankind. May we all seek God’s guidance as we prepare ourselves for marriage.

Goals

We are bombarded daily by controversial issues. Our students are bound to have questions like the following: How should Christians view homosexuality? Can a Christian ever drink alcohol? What kinds of pop music are acceptable in the eyes of God? These are the issues that need to be thought through and resolved. The Bible does not give us a list of do's and don'ts. But, through basic principles about God's requirement for us, the Bible does provide answers to these issues.

The lessons in this section will help the students think through some of the issues thrown at them by the media and their social surrounding. It is important that the teachers deal with these topics in a sensitive way and provide guidance through prayer.

Teacher Devotional

There is a story about a frog who was put into a pot of water. The temperature of the fire was set to rise so slowly that the frog would have time to assimilate with his surrounding temperatures. That way, he would not realize the danger he was in and would not attempt to jump out of the pot to save himself from his impending death. The sad story of the frog is actually a good parody of the situation that a lot of Christians are facing today. We are slowly being acculturated by the values and ideologies of the secular world, without our realizing it. We may think that we are vigilant if we go to services often and stay in touch with church friends. However, a large part of our time is spent with people who do not have the word of God, and who do not hold the same biblical principles we do. It is crucial that we check ourselves often, and also engage the support of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. In our ways of thinking and our conduct, we need to make sure we have not been taken by the world.

Flee From All Evil

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:7, 8a)

www.popmusic.today

Listed Scriptures

1 Sam 16:14–23; 2 Chron 20:1–26; Rev 18:4; Rom 12:2

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable our students to understand that music lyrics do impact our thinking.
- 2) To help our students resolve to listen to godly music.
- 3) To help our students take control of their minds.

Memory Verse

"Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant." (Ps 135:3)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

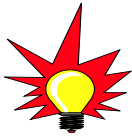
Proverbs 16-18

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



There is no Bible background information for this lesson.

W A R M U P



Music is a part of almost every person's life. But the type of music one listens to is a conscious choice.

What types of music do you listen to? Do you have any particular reasons why you listen to those types of music? Do you listen to different kinds of music at different times? What kinds of effects do those types of music have on you? (Teacher should simply allow the students to respond freely and candidly, without any pressure that the types of music they listen to may not be "acceptable" in the eyes of the teacher, their fellow church friends or even the church.)

We will keep in mind all your responses. Today, our topic of study is "Pop Music". One of the objectives of this lesson is for all of us to have an idea of what biblical principles to adhere to in our choice of music.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Music in the Bible

The history of music stems all the way back to Genesis (Gen 4:21). We know God granted us music to enjoy. It is almost something instinctive to us. In fact, there have been numerous studies in recent years that looked at the nature of music and the physiological effects on human beings. Some studies have shown that soft soothing music can regulate one's heartbeat. We have all probably experienced how music can sometimes help calm our nerves or even lift our spirits. Music is such an important part of our lives, and we should learn to utilize this gift of God well.

Can you recall events in the Bible where music is involved? Most of you will probably think of instances in the book of Psalms, for poetry is often very much intertwined with music. Indeed there are many psalms that talk about making music or singing praises to the Lord. Let's take a look at a few of these psalms. We'll also take a look at some other biblical instances where music is involved.



A. Music to Praise God

Read the following verses aloud:

Psalms 69:30, 31

Psalms 71:22, 23

Psalms 135:3

Psalms 147:1

Exodus 15:1–22

Luke 1:46–55

Questions to consider:

- a. Most of the psalms listed above involve singing to the Lord in praise. Why is it important to sing praises to God? Base your answers on both the verses referred to here as well as other instances in the Bible or experiences you may have had. (We sing praises to God because it is a pleasant experience. Singing hymns can remind us of the good things God has done for us, and that can lift up our spirits as well as glorify God's name. Sometimes, when we are really down, hymn singing can touch us and comfort us.)
- b. Music can move one to tears. Music can inspire fighting spirits. Music can create the atmosphere suited to the occasion. The power of music is great. Has music ever helped you in your faith? How?



B. Music for Specific Purposes

In the Bible, there are also instances where music played a special role in helping the biblical characters. Let's take a look at two of these examples. The questions will help you comprehend the passages:

1 Samuel 16:14–23

- a. Why did Saul need David to play the harp?
(An evil spirit tormented Saul.)
- b. What types of music do you think David played for Saul? Why?
(It was likely soothing and calming music, because Saul was tormented. The music was probably light and simple too.)
- c. Do you think the type of music produced has anything to do with the player of the instrument and/or the composer of the music? What kinds of music do you think David played? (It is possible to infer this from the lifestyle he led.)
(David was a shepherd boy who dwelled with his sheep in pastures, near sources of water. Sheep are very gentle and timid animals. Such an environ-

ment likely helped David to be a calm and peace-loving person. His music would have blended in with nature and his lifestyle.)

2 Chronicles 20:1-26

- a. What was Jehoshaphat's first reaction when he heard the news that the armies of the Moabites and Ammonites were advancing against his people? (He prayed to God right away.)
- b. What did the prophet Jahaziel (v.14) tell the people? (He told them that the battle belonged to the Lord and that they should not be discouraged by the size of the enemy's armies. They would have victory even without fighting.)
- c. What was the strategy of warfare that Jehoshaphat employed (vv. 21, 22)? What advantage is there to such a strategy? (He told the people to sing to the Lord and praise Him. This is good because one can get courage and strength when one reminds oneself of God's power and grace as one sings.)
- d. What was the outcome of the war? (By God's mercy, the enemies started to turn against one another and attacked themselves, so the Israelites won the battle even without fighting.)

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



1 Why did Miriam sing and what did she sing about after crossing the Red Sea?

- 2** What is the content of Mary's song of praise to God?
- 3** What effect did the music of David have on Saul's spirit?
- 4** What was so special about the war strategy employed by Jehoshaphat in the battle against the Moabites and Ammonites?

Teaching Tips

Tips for the teacher: For this section, you may want to first bring in a sample of different types of music/songs that are in circulation today. You may choose to play a few to the students and ask for their comments on the effect they think the kinds of music will have on listeners. You may also want to print out copies of the lyrics of some secular songs (choose carefully!) and have the students realize how un-Christian and not edifying they are.

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



Part A- Guidelines in Choosing Music

As Christians, we must be very selective about what types of music we listen to. Revelation 18:4 says "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues." This call to come out of the world entails more than just not actively participating in sinful deeds. It is also a call to be separate from the people of the world in terms of our lifestyle. The types of music we listen to are certainly part of our lifestyle.

Romans 12:2 says "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Hence, it is of utmost importance that we consider our choices of music.

Today, we are bombarded with all sorts of different music – classical, rock, country, hip hop etc. We know that music can affect our moods and in the long run, even our attitudes and behavior. Music has been known to generate certain moods. Can you think of some examples?

(Students to respond. Some examples: During pop concerts, the loud music has been known to generate moods of hysteria in the audience. In some restaurants, soft music is played in the evenings and candles are lit on the dining tables. That is to create a soft, romantic and relaxing mood for the diners. Baby-sized walkmans are used to play lullabies into the ears of premature infants to help them sleep better. We can all think of many other examples. The impact music has on one's moods cannot be ignored.)

On top of the various different types of music, the lyrics are also an important factor. Words by themselves are very powerful, able to motivate people in different

directions. That is why the news media are such an important part of propaganda. When words are combined with music, the power is far greater. We cannot but be aware and careful about what we listen to!

Now, in groups of three, work out a list of guidelines that you would draft for yourself and your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ concerning the types of music to avoid. For each of the guidelines, try to come up with at least one Bible verse to support your point. If you cannot find a verse, be prepared to explain why you set that guideline. You may want to use the chart given below for reference.

Guideline	Biblical Support	Explanation
Music that is not too rowdy.	"Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me." (Ps 131:2)	It is important to feel calm and quiet in our spirits in order to be close to God, like a weaned child in his mother's bosom.
Lyrics that do not endorse activities or behavior that is contrary to the teachings of the Bible.		It is required of us, as believers of God to know His teachings well, so that we can distinguish what is acceptable or not for us to do, including our choice of music. Many pop songs today have explicitly sinful lyrics so we have to be very selective.

Part B- Music in Christian Worship

When the Israelites finally built a kingdom and ended their nomadic lifestyle, music ministry was started to meet the needs of worship. In the Old Testament, there were musicians especially dedicated to the music ministry in the temple of God. The book of 1 Chronicles outlines at least three different occasions when David organized the music ministry of the Levites.

1. To sing and play instruments as the Ark of the Covenant was brought back to Jerusalem (1 Chron 15:14-24)
2. To commemorate, thank and praise the Lord in the tabernacle (1 Chron 16:4-6)
3. To be musicians in the temple (to be built by Solomon) (1 Chron 23:5)

Questions to think about:

1. What types of music do we have in church today?
2. Which ones mentioned in the previous question are the equivalents of what the Israelites had in their music ministry during the Old Testament time?
3. What are the purposes of the music in our church today?
4. Are these purposes different from those found in the Bible?
5. Read Matthew 28:19, 20. These two verses give us the fundamental commission that the Lord Jesus has entrusted to His church in the New Testament – to preach the gospel and to teach and shepherd the believers. Do you think the music in our church today has been geared towards these two aims? How else can music contribute to these aims?

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



In conclusion, let's read Isaiah 30:15 together: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." This verse tells us a secret to a good relationship with God – inner sense of security and stability. When we are at peace inside, we can then turn our attention to God and to what God has to say about how to go about our life. May our choice of music be geared towards the direction of drawing closer to God, and not away from Him.

Let's Party!

Listed Scriptures

Prov 20:1, 23:30–35; 1 Cor 6:12, 10:23, 8:8, 9, 13; Phil 4:13, Prov 3:5, 6

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable our students to know the hard facts about substance abuse and alcoholism.
- 2) To help our students say “no” the first time they are invited to drink/smoke through role-play.
- 3) To help our students understand that the Holy Spirit can help us make wise decisions in difficult situations.

Memory Verse

“See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise . . . and do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”
(Eph 5:15, 18)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

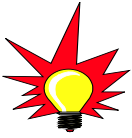
Proverbs 19–21

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



Due to the nature of this lesson, there is no Bible background information available.

W A R M U P



What are some of the activities you and/or your friends from outside of the church do when you hang out? Maybe most of you have not been exposed yet to the wilder aspects of teenage life. But a lot of teens engage in drugs, smoking, dancing and heavy drinking when they hang out. Partying becomes an even more common activity when you enter college. Going to clubs is something many non-Christians do too.

If you do not have exposure to these types of activities, we thank God, and there is no need for you to give them a try. If you are already being asked to join in these kinds of activities, it is important to understand the hidden risks and pray to God for help to overcome these temptations.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Drinking, a highly risky activity!

Read the following verses: Proverbs 20:1 and Proverbs 23:30–35.

Questions to discuss:

- Have you ever seen someone drunk? Perhaps you have seen it on TV or in the movies. What are some of the things people who are drunk do that are not pretty, and may even cause them deep regret later?
- How are some of these things you have just listed similar to what is described in Proverbs 23:30–35?
- What do these verses tell you about the risks to our spiritual life if we drink?

Here, the writer of the proverbs gives a very true depiction of what it is like to get tipsy, and then ultimately, drunk. With alcohol, no one can know the point when one loses control over one's own actions. Getting drunk is not something that sets in abruptly. It sets in gradually, and often begins when one is still in complete consciousness. It is a gradual process where one slowly lapses first into a very relaxed mood and becomes emboldened to do things one would not normally do. Then,

when one gets drunk, one may not even be conscious of what one does or does not do. In many cases, one does not even remember the things one has done in a state of drunkenness.

Besides getting drunk, another problem related to consumption of alcohol is alcoholism. Many alcoholics first started out as people who drink to reduce stress. Since antiquity, it has been observed that there is a relationship between alcohol consumption and stress—reduction. For instance, the Greek poet, Alcaeus prescribes drinking as a way to handle distress: “We must not let our spirits give way to grief ... Best of all defenses is to mix plenty of wine and drink it.” Shakespeare, in his play *Julius Caesar* (Act IV, Scene III), writes: “Speak no more of her. Give me a bowl of wine. In this I bury all unkindness...”

Actually alcohol is not the only tool that has been used for solving problems (or rather, avoiding problems). Cigarettes and drugs are often used in the same way. These are in fact not solutions to anything at all. They become a problem in themselves when one finds oneself addicted to them! This is often a reality because these substances get people hooked before they even realizes it.



Part 2

Drunkenness leads to sin!

In the Bible, we can find characters who have committed sins under the influence of alcohol. As you read about these characters, you will find that they did not set out to do these foolish things. But wine got the better of them, without their realizing it until it was too late. That is why alcohol is such a venomous thing!

Noah (Gen 9:20–24)

- What do you think caused Noah to drink?
(His life had become rather stable. He had planted a vineyard and made his own wine. In a state of complacency, he did not control himself and drank too much.)
- Are there similar situations today that may induce one to drink, often too much?
(It is more likely for us to drink too much when in the company of people who drink. Out of the spirit of fun and friendship, we may be encouraged to go on drinking. Sometimes, we may drink because we want to be accepted by others. Or, we may just want to try out of curiosity. We may also drink because

we have heard that drinking can make us forget our woes since drinks can relax a person, and cause us to lose sobriety! It is hard to know how much we can really drink. Besides, it is difficult to keep track of how much we are drinking when with friends. Hence, it is best not to even get started.)

Lot (Gen 19:30-36)

- a. Do you think the tragedy of incest in this case could have been avoided? How so?
(One very crucial factor here is the wine. If Lot had been vigilant and controlled himself, he would not have gotten drunk.)
- b. Lot did not learn from his mistake the first night. What lessons can we learn from his folly?
(We should always remember our first folly and not allow ourselves to repeat our mistakes. In fact, in the case of drinking, one should simply just avoid it altogether.)

King Belshazzar (Dan 5:1-4)

- a. Under the circumstances of an imperial feast, do you think the king could have avoided drinking?
(Probably not.)
- b. What could he have done instead of getting himself drunk?
(He could have been wise to simply drink a little and continue to take sips from the same glass for the entire evening. He could also have made other activities the focus of the banquet rather than wine.)
- c. What sins did he commit when he was tipsy?
(He used the vessels from God's temple as serving glasses for drinks for his guests. He also praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone, i.e. idols.)
- d. What does this case tell us about the dangers of drinking?
(In our state of semi-consciousness when we drink, we become relaxed and our spirits and actions are often beyond our full control. This is the time when we are vulnerable to sinning against God when we do not actually mean it.)

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 things that a drunken man would do, as depicted in Proverbs 23:30-35?

- 2 What did Noah, Lot and Belshazzar do respectively, under the influence of alcohol?
- 3 Why do you think Proverbs 23:31 tells us not to even look at the wine when it sparkles red in the cup – what are some of the hidden dangers of alcohol?

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

Part A- Saying No



Some may want to argue that certain activities in and of themselves are harmless. For instance, we know that dancing can be a good form of exercise and wine is not necessarily something harmful to the body. Wine used in cooking can add flavor to the dishes. Wine has also been used for medicinal purposes (e.g. 1 Tim 5:23). So why do we need to guard ourselves against these types of activities? We can answer this question from a few angles. Read the following few verses, and discuss the reasons why we should say "no" to activities such as drinking, smoking and taking drugs.

1. 1 Cor 6:12
(For the teacher: There are many things that the Bible does not explicitly say we cannot do. However, many things often have the power to hold a person in such a way that an addiction develops. Cigarettes and drugs are definitely in this category. In this verse there are two factors to consider: what is helpful and whether we can be brought under the power of that activity.)
2. 1 Cor 10:23
(For the teacher: There are many things that we as Christians can do. But, the more pertinent question is actually to ask if an activity edifies or not. The issue of whether an activity edifies is has two facets to it: edifying for the self and edifying for others, which then brings us to the next point. See below.)
3. 1 Cor 8:8, 9, 13
(For the teacher: Paul considers whether his actions would cause a brother to stumble. He's even willing to not eat meat if eating meat is something that could make a brother stumble in faith. This is a continuation of the second point raised – whether or not our actions bring edification to another person. When doing anything, we should consider what impact that action would have on

- others.)
- 1 Cor 6:19, 20
(For the teacher: Our body is the temple of God. Through baptism, this body of ours is dipped into the water and the precious blood of Jesus Christ miraculously washes away our sins. God even allows His own spirit, the Holy Spirit to dwell in this physical body. So this physical body is very precious. We must not do anything to deliberately cause harm to this body, such as smoking, drinking or taking in other substances. We have to give an account to God as to how we take care of this physical body.)

Part B- “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!”

Read Philippians 4:13. We often do not know our own weaknesses and limits until we actually fail and fall. What comes after we get ourselves into trouble is the hard road to recovery. In the following testimony, a brother who was once addicted to drugs testified of the grace of God which helped him overcome his addiction. The power of God and His Holy Spirit will help us flee evil, and that is the true meaning of the verse we’ve just read, that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us!

Reading Material: “In Hopelessness I Met God” (Testimony by Bro. Jason Yu, *Manna* 38, p. 7–9. Available also from www.mannamagazine.org.)

After reading the testimony, work in groups of 2 and outline the process and the steps that brother Jason took in his road to recovery and into the fold of God.

Part C- Cigarettes, Drugs and Alcohol

In this activity, the students will have to

- come up with a scenario where the temptation to try either cigarettes, drugs or alcohol arises,
- enact the scenario in the form of a very short sketch detailing how one can be enticed into trying one of the above mentioned substances,
- enact also how one can successfully shun these temptations and say “no”.

Procedure:

- First, as a class, have the students brainstorm some possible places or occasions where such temptations may arise.
- Have them also discuss how one may be approached to try out those substances.

- Then, have them list the ways one can stay firm and say “no” – both internally as well as explicitly to the people who are inviting them to try.
- Then, in groups of 2 or 3, have them prepare a sketch depicting a scenario.
- When the groups are ready, have each group present the sketch in front of the class.
- After all the presentations, ask the class if they have further suggestions about the situations presented by each group concerning how to say “no” to temp-

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



Sing Hymn 177. As we go through life, we will find that temptations will increase. Boundaries between what is right and wrong, what is permissible and what is not become more fuzzy. It is necessary that we are well equipped with the word of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we have wisdom and strength to discern what is right from wrong, and good from bad. In addition, we should always rely on God. Let’s read a verse for conclusion. Read Proverbs 3:5, 6 – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”

www.x-rated.sin

Listed Scriptures

2 Tim 2:22; Mt 5:28-29, 8:9; Ps 19:14, 139:23-24; Eccl 11:9, 12:14

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable our students to understand that pornography is a sin
- 2) To guide them to remain a pure vessel of God by focusing their extra energy and time on godly activities

Memory Verse

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Tim 2:22)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 22-24

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



Due to the nature of this lesson, there is no Bible background information available.

W A R M U P



We live in a world where people commit all kinds of sexual sins. Many date and sleep with multiple partners at one time. In stores, we have access to magazines that contain articles that are very explicit in their sexual content. Today, people don't even have to leave their own home to fulfill their lust because they have the Internet.

As Christians, we live in the midst of all these. It is inevitable that sometimes, we get invitations from friends to join them in such activities. Perhaps we may even be weak to the point of falling into such temptations. It is therefore very important that we understand God's take on these kinds of activities, and be firm in our spirit.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Pornography

A. What is pornography?

This is probably a question that needs no answering because we all know what pornography is. But what exactly constitutes pornography?

Pornography usually is found in magazines that are catered for a special audience. There are also pornographic movies that are openly sold or rented. And of course, there is the Internet.

B. Was there pornography during biblical times?

There is no record in the Bible about pornography per se. But from historical records, we know that in all cultures, there are explicit drawings that can be classified as pornography today. Whether those were widely circulated during the various biblical periods, we do not know. However, we know that the Lord Jesus has some teachings regarding guarding our hearts and eyes.

- a. Matthew 5:27–29 – “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”
- b. Matthew 18:9 – “And, if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.”

From these verses, we know that the requirement of the Lord is that we keep our eyes pure. What we see can affect what we think in our hearts and minds. Hence, it is important to control ourselves regarding what we see so as to preserve our whole body in purity.



C. Why is pornography a sin?

There is no verse in the Bible that says, “thou shall not watch pornography.” However, we know that the general principle for us is that we should keep ourselves pure and holy, before God and men. We have to keep our hearts pure too. Read the following verses, and explain in your own words how that verse is a good reminder that pornography is a sin before God.

- a. Ps 19:14 – “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.”
- b. Ps 139:23, 24 – “Search me, O God, and know my heart; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
- c. Eccl 11:9 – “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these, God will bring you into judgment.”
- d. Eccl 12:14 – “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

A short summary, for the teacher to wrap us this section with the students: In all that we do, we must remember our status as children of God. God wants us to be separate from the rest of the people in this wicked generation. We have to

maintain our purity in all ways. Our words and thoughts have to be pure and acceptable to God (Ps 19:14). Sometimes, we must also ask Him to illuminate our hearts so that if we have hidden sins, we may know to change (Ps 139:23, 24). God has given us a lot of good things on earth to enjoy. As youths especially, we want to try many things and enjoy as many things as we can. But, remember our status as God's children and that we have to glorify Him. And, finally, in all things, we must remember that God is watching and on the last day He will judge us based on our actions.

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



1

Why is pornography a sin?

2

What does the Lord Jesus mean when He says we should pluck out our eye if that eye causes us to sin?

3

The Bible says that we can walk in the ways of our hearts, but what is the consequence that we have to bear in mind?

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

Part A- God Wants Us to Stay Pure



Hebrews 12:7 says, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?" When we do wrong, it is a great blessing if God punishes us. That's how we know we have done something wrong and probably would have a strong impression on our minds never to do it again. The following testimonies by some brothers and sisters illustrate the importance of keeping away from pornography. God wants us to be pure in every way.

Testimony 1

Sister W was invited by some friends to go to a movie. When she asked about the name of the movie, she knew that it was one with a lot of explicit sexual scenes. But she did not want to disappoint her friends. She thought it would be all right since it is just a movie. It is more important that she join in the activities of her friends or else they might think she's too "holy" and not include her in their future

activities. However, that is not the way God thinks. The next morning, when she got out of bed and looked into the mirror, she realized that both her eyes had become bloated and puffed up, and they were very red. Immediately, she knew that it was a punishment from God. She cried and prayed desperately. It was not until one week later that her eyes returned to normal. She knew for sure what God's message was to her.

Testimony 2

Sister P's experience was very similar to sis W's. Instead of a movie, she was actually at a party where people were dancing and drinking heavily. She had never thought going to such parties was wrong. She always believed that as long as she did not get drunk and did not participate in any physical "activities" with anyone, it was fine. That night, the party went really wild. Towards the end of the party, many people were so drunk that they lost all inhibitions and started getting really physically intimate with their partners or members of the opposite sex that they had picked up at the party. Although sister P felt at that time that she should leave the party right away, she did not. Of course, she did not join the people in their physical intimacy, but still, the damage was done. The next day, when she woke up, she saw that her eyes were all red and puffy. No matter what medication or eye cream she tried, it was of no use. She knew then that it was God's chastisement. She repented and wept bitterly before God. Thank God, she recovered within a few days. But that lesson stuck with her until today, and she realized that many of the parties of gentiles are indeed activities that we, as children of God, should never attend.

Testimony 3

Brother L is an exemplary youth in his local church. He received the Holy Spirit when he was in elementary school. Even when he was only in the junior class, he was often scheduled to lead hymns and even help out with the RE classes of the younger children. In his first year of college, he attended the NYTS. There, during one of the prayers, he discovered that he could no longer pray in tongues. In the subsequent prayers, he tried and tried, and he realized one alarming fact: The Holy Spirit had left him! He was so troubled but he didn't want anyone to know. This is because he knew why the Holy Spirit had left him. Actually, he had been surfing certain websites containing pornographic pictures for quite some time. Each time, he would feel very guilty and prayed for forgiveness from God. He would even pray in tongues to make sure the Holy Spirit had not left him. But, he was not able to resist the temptation and he continued in these activities for a few months. When the Holy Spirit left him, it was then that he realized that he had sinned terribly before God. As he listened to the words of God through the les-

sons taught at the NYTS, he decided that he had to confess and pray to God to give him the Holy Spirit again. He took up the courage and told a pastor about it. The pastor told him that he must truly repent and never do it again. During that NYTS, brother L always knelt in the first row during the prayers for the Holy Spirit. He also fasted and prayed during meal times. At the end of that NYTS, he still did not receive the Holy Spirit. The pastor told him that he must never give up repenting.

Questions to think about:

1. *The testimonies give us three types of pornography related activities that we should flee from. What are some other related activities that you can think of that we should totally abstain from?*
2. *We know that God watches everything we do, and knows everything we are thinking about. Do you think being chastised by God like in the cases we just read is better than having nothing bad happen to us when we sin? Discuss your reasons.*
3. *What are the three most important lessons for you from these testimonies in terms of how to say “no” either to friends or to yourself?*
4. *If you have heard of similar cases, share the testimony (anonymously, of course) with the rest of the class.*

Part B- Resolve to Stay Away From Impurity

We have seen how important it is that we do not transgress in this area of purity. The Bible says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7). Where sin is concerned, the best strategy is to not even go near it. Let us now look at some of the ways we can say “no” to pornography related sins. For each of the following temptations, think of two possible reasons why it may happen and how you can resist the temptation. Then share it with the rest of the class.

1. Say no to friends’ invitations to join in

Temptation: A friend tells me about a “hot” website and asks if I’d like to go over to his house to view the site together.

How I could reply: I would tell him that I am a Christian and that I do not have any wish to view those pictures. Even though no one would know, God knows,

and as a child of God, I want to glorify God’s name whether or not people are watching me.

2. Say no to self

Temptation: (Think of some situations where you may be tempted to want to give certain things a try, e.g. when you feel really bored)

How I could reply: (students’ answers)

3. Do not even try to go near

Temptation: (Think of situations when these temptations “appear” in your environment, e.g. when you walk past a magazine stall)

How I could reply: (students’ answers)

When we fight against temptations, we do not merely adopt avoidance strategies. We need to be proactive and occupy ourselves with spiritually edifying or other beneficial activities. In groups of two or three, come up with a list of things that you can think of which will help you spend your time wisely. Here are a few examples to get you started: Proactively do other things, e.g. attend services, Bible studies, organize fellowships, sports. What others can you think of?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing Hymn 224. This hymn teaches us to examine ourselves, and ask for God’s cleansing. It is important for us to be pure both inside our hearts and outwardly in front of men. Our hearts and thoughts are hardest to control and the responsibility is on us to discipline ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit. If we are good only outwardly but full of filth inside, we are like the whitewashed tombs that the Lord Jesus mentions. Tombs appear beautiful outwardly but they are full of dead bodies and bones inside. Read Matthew 23:27. We have to constantly examine ourselves: Am I a whitewashed tomb? May God give us strength to resist the worldly temptations and keep ourselves pure, in every way.

Homosexuality

Listed Scriptures

Gen 19:1–11; Lev 18:22, 20:13; Jdgs 19:22–29; 1 Cor 6:9; Mt 4:1–4

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable our students to understand that homosexuality is a sin.
- 2) To enable our students to understand that any hint of homosexuality is a sin to God.

Memory Verse

“The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.” (Ps 119:160)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

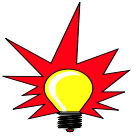
Proverbs 25–27

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



Due to the nature of this lesson, there is no Bible background information available.

W A R M U P



The topic that we're going to study is a rather sensitive topic. It is sensitive because in the society that we live in today, any judgments made regarding this topic can be considered politically incorrect and may even spur some negative responses. We may even have friends who hold very strong views about this issue. Whatever the background we each bring to the lesson today, let us have a heart of humility and reverence towards God and learn from the Bible what God says about this issue, homosexuality.

Teaching Tips

The topic in today's lesson is very sensitive. It is important that as teachers, we pray for wisdom and gentleness in approaching and discussing this topic with our students. Depending on the students and the kind of environment they are from, we may get some very strong views. It is crucial that we handle everyone's views in a firm but gentle way, without compromising the principles of the Bible. The effectiveness of this lesson depends in large part on the teacher-student and student-student discussions. Teachers should be mentally prepared to keep the discussion on track and guided by biblical principles

B I B L E S T U D Y



Homosexuality

A. The Different Views

What are some of the views about homosexuality that you have heard? (Let students respond candidly, sharing the views of people in church as well as outside of the church.) As with many issues, we can approach it from various angles, including a socio-political perspective, a moral-religious perspective or even physiological perspective. Some of the stands that have been expressed in recent decades about homosexuality include the following:

- a. Homosexuality is a sin before God.
- b. Homosexuality is the result of biological and genetic make-up, so homosexuals really cannot help themselves and should therefore be accepted as they are.
- c. Homosexuality is the result of an overly liberated society where anything goes and judgments are simply politically incorrect, so we should refrain from judging anyone.
- d. Homosexuality is a personal choice.

No matter what has been or is being said, no matter who is saying what, this is an issue that has been mentioned in the Bible since the creation. That means God does have standards and requirements where this area is concerned. God's word never changes. As Christians, we have to understand that what the world says about this issue may change with the trends of society and even with new reports from various researchers in the field of genetics. However, the standard of God will never change.

Let us study today what the Bible says about this issue and then we will discuss why we should resist this act of abomination and how we can approach it in a Christian manner.



B. What the Bible Says

The Bible makes it very clear that homosexuality is a sin. Let's take a look at some of the sections in the Bible that mention this issue:

a. Genesis 19:1-11

- i. What was the state of morality in the city of Sodom at that time? (The city's people were so depraved that there were less than ten righteous people to be found (Gen 18:32) and that's why God sought to destroy it.)
- ii. What did the men in the city try to do when the two angels of God visited Lot's house? (They wanted to commit homosexual acts with the angels of God.)
- iii. What was the end of this depraved city (ref Gen 18:17-20; 19:24, 25)? (It was burned by sulphur from heaven.)
- iv. Do you see a resemblance between the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the world that we live in today? Does the ending of Sodom serve as a warning to us today? (In our world today, we see a lot of sexual immorality just like what was in

Sodom. The people are not repentant of what they are doing but instead, take pride in it and seek to continue. Just as Sodom was destroyed, God will destroy this sinful world.)

b. Leviticus 18:22, 20:13

- i. Homosexuality is not a phenomenon of modern society only. As we can see, in the period of the Old Testament there were already warnings from God against this sin. What does this tell us about the laws of God across the ages? (God's laws never change. What is a sin in the Old Testament is still a sin today. What God considers abominable in the past, He still considers them abominable.)
- ii. Do you think people in the Old Testament thought of explanations to justify the act of homosexuality? What types of justification do you think they used? Are those excuses similar to those we hear today? (The common reason for homosexuality is that one is born with such a tendency. Well, everyone in the flesh has physical tendencies and desires. We cannot simply say that because we're born with weaknesses, we can therefore indulge in those weaknesses. God has called us into light and will help us to overcome our weaknesses if we want to obey Him. We should also fight against our desires and rely on the Holy Spirit to bring our desires under our subjection.)

c. Judges 19:22-29

- i. What are some of the atrocious and barbaric acts that are recorded in this section? (They committed homosexual acts, rape and murder. It was almost like these people were insane.)
- ii. We can see that the people were living in a very depraved generation. Do you see any similarities between that period and our world today? (Around us today, we see or know of friends who commit all kinds of sins. In the news, we read about and hear of many evil things being committed – rape, murder, torture etc.)
- iii. Read Judges 21:25 – “In those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” What does this verse and the section you have just read tell you about the necessity of obeying God's word in a depraved generation? (If everyone does what he thinks is right, there is no standard and everyone can do whatever they want. Our world today resembles such a state. It is very sad. Ethics and morals are so subjective. We must therefore rely on a standard of morality and ethics – God's teachings. Otherwise, we see chaos.)

- iv. As a child of God, what do you think your role is in this end-time where almost everyone does what is right in his own eyes? (We have to keep ourselves unspotted from this world. We must not do what people in this world are doing. In addition, we should preach the gospel and save the people around us from destruction.)

d. 1 Corinthians 6:9

- i. During the time of apostle Paul, homosexuality was obviously something in existence. What does Paul say about homosexuality? (Homosexuals cannot inherit the kingdom of God.)
- ii. From the Old Testament to the apostolic times, God's word on homosexuality has never changed. What does it say about God's stand on this issue in our days? (Today, no matter what people claim, no matter what research says, and no matter how laws are changes, God is still against homosexuality.)



C. Overcoming Our Weaknesses

Today, there is a lot of talk that homosexuality should be accepted as a part of the physiological limitations or needs of a certain group of people. There are research reports claiming that homosexual inclinations are the result of the genetic make-up in a person (but there is also research that claims the contrary). Some have even gone so far as to say that we should accept homosexuality as a part of human nature just as we accept other physiological needs like hunger and heterosexual desires.

In the face of so many different schools of thought, how should we view or defend the Bible's stance on this issue? The one answer lies in OBEDIENCE!

We have studied earlier that God does not approve of homosexuality. Even if it really is a human limitation, physiologically, there is no reason to condone homosexuality as something permissible. It is the same principle as not condoning having multiple sexual partners. In fact, one characteristic that distinguishes human beings from animals is the fact that we know how to control our instincts. One of the reasons why the world has so many problems is that man has lost self-control in many things. We see many families breaking up as a result of one parent (or both parents) deciding to have an extra-marital partner. Hearts are broken when one party in a relationship decides that he does not love the other party anymore and wants to have a relationship with someone else. Responsibility and control are

two virtues on the decline in our world today.

The greatest act of obedience to God's teaching is when we deny our physical needs so as to fulfill the will of God. If we do not have the physical weaknesses, we will naturally not do certain things that are wrong. Where then does the role of obedience come in? Obedience comes into the picture only when we resist our own fleshly desires and choose to obey God's laws. One simple example is the act of throwing tantrums when we are angry. It is a natural response when we are angry to speak spitefully, or even, as some children and adults do, retaliate physically. But, if we know the teachings of God and choose to obey, we will keep our anger in check and deal with the situation in a way acceptable in the eyes of God. That is what obedience is about.

We will take a look at two examples of obedience: Job in the Old Testament and the Lord Jesus in New Testament.

a. Read Job 1:9-2:10

- i. What was the problem with Job, according to the devil's accusations before God?
(That God had protected him and blessed him, and that's why Job has every reason to praise and worship God.)
- ii. When Job lost everything he had, including his own children, he was surely entitled to question and curse God. But he did not. What did he say instead? ("Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." and "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?")
- iii. Job left for us a great example of how one can resist physical urges and choose to stand by God, thereby defeating the very ploy of the devil. Explain in your own words how Job's case illustrates for us the definition of obedience.
(We obey no matter what the circumstances are.)

b. Read Matthew 4:1-4

- i. When did the devil come up with the first temptation for the Lord Jesus?
(After Jesus Christ had fasted forty days and nights, and was hungry and physically weak.)
- ii. How was the Lord Jesus at His weakest point physically at that time?

(As a human being, after not having had food or drink for forty days and nights, one is surely weak and food is tempting.)

- iii. The devil says, "If you are the Son of God..." – do you think the Lord Jesus has the power to turn the stones into bread? Do you think the Lord Jesus has a good reason to do so, if He really did? Explain your answer.
(Yes, as God, the Lord could have turned stones to bread to feed Himself. But, he would not be tempted by the devil.)
- iv. The Lord Jesus had a good reason physically to turn the stones into bread – He was hungry after having fasted forty days and nights. He also had the power to do so – He was God Himself! Yet, He set for us an example of how to resist all physical reasons. What does this say about our approach towards the issue of homosexuality and even more generally, the issue of sexual immorality?
(Even though one may be physically pre-disposed towards homosexuality, one should resist this weakness and fight it, instead of using it as an excuse to sin.)

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



1

What types of sins were in existent in Sodom and Gomorrah?

2

What was the "principle" guiding the lives of the people during the time of the judges? What was wrong with that "principle"?

3

Paraphrase the content of these verses: Leviticus 18:22, 20:13.

4

What does 1 Corinthians 6:9 say about the end of homosexuals?

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

What Would You Say?



Part A- The following confession comes from a homosexual who turned down a church member's invitation to come to church. His name has of course been changed. He did not want to turn to God or the church because he believes that the church does not understand the position of people like

him. Read his story and then write a short passage of encouragement to him. Then, share with your classmates about how we can best approach people who are homosexuals.

Kevin's story:

I realized that I was a homosexual when I was 12. Actually, prior to that, teachers had talked to my mom telling her that I seemed to get along much better with girls at school than with the boys. I am more sensitive to feelings and emotional things. I feel that I can talk to girls like I am one of them; I understand their emotional upheavals and I go through moods like them too, sometimes.

My mother and sister accepted me as I am. They have always doted on me, being the youngest. All these years, since I declared myself a homosexual at 12, they have never treated me any worse. I really appreciate that Some people say it's something in the genes. I really don't know. I just know that I am more attracted to guys than I am to girls. Maybe it's because my father left my mom when I was only 3, so I grew up with my mom, sister and my aunts. There was a lot of feminine influence as I was growing up. But, I would say that it's also something I have sort of chosen. It's the easier way for me. I can't really visualize myself doing otherwise. It's a mixture of genetics and environment, I believe.

Church ... do you really believe that what the Bible says about homosexuals is to be taken literally? Then, I don't think I can ever become a Christian, because I am what I am and I will never be anything else.

What is your advice and response?

Part B- Mini-debate

Read 1 Peter 3:15 and Titus 1:9. As children of God, we should "sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks [us] a reason for the hope that is in [us], with meekness and fear." It is therefore important to be able to know why we believe what we do. Today, we'll do a mock-debate on the topic of whether homosexuality is to be condoned.

Topic: "Homosexuality should be condoned and accepted by the church."

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into two groups.
2. Either by drawing names or by choice of the students, have one group repre-

sent the proposition and the other group the opposition.

3. Based on what has been covered in the lesson today, as well as any materials/ideas they have come across outside of this lesson, students should come up with a defense for the side that they are on.
4. Have each group brainstorm and work on the speeches together, and then select three or four speakers each to represent their respective positions.
5. Conduct a mock mini-debate, with each speaker not talking for more than two minutes.

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



We have studied today that homosexuality is a sin. There is no doubt about it. But this does not mean we start going around and rejecting homosexuals. Instead, we should have the heart of our Lord Jesus, to want to reach out to them, to help them. There are a lot of people out there in our world, even in our immediate environment, who are in need of God. The devil has the world held under his sway. When we see a sinner, we must distinguish between the sin and the sinner. When the Lord Jesus came to this world, He came to save sinners. Once, when He was seen eating with tax collectors and sinners, the Pharisees asked His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" The Lord Jesus' reply was: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Mt 9:11, 12). Today, are we like the Pharisees who do not care to associate with sinners? Or, are we true Christians who will bring the sick to the Great Physician, our Lord Jesus?

May God grant us wisdom and love to reach out to all types of people, that the kingdom of God may reach more people!

Goals

There are certain behavioral issues that we often take for granted or do not pay attention to. These are very basic but essential aspects of our lives as Christian: honesty, dealing with greed and anger-management. At the very least, we have to be good examples and a light to the world concerning these issues. More simply, as Christians who bear the special status as God's children, we have to glorify His name and uphold certain biblical principles.

It is important to let our students know that these issues, albeit fundamental, are important to our lives, before God and men. The lessons will give them a peek into what the Bible teaches about these issues. But ultimately, the teacher's support and guidance must be present to help the students live out these principles.

unit 4

Teacher Devotional

Faithfulness in little things is a great thing. This saying is so true! In our spiritual lives, we have probably realized this for ourselves. For example, it is always easy for us to fast and pray for many hours during student theological training seminars or spiritual convocations. But, how many of us can actually sustain a lifestyle of such fervor everyday? The true test of our faith towards God is not about what we do during such events organized by the church. True faith comes from our every little act and thought in our daily living. The true test of our spirituality is in the way we deal with others. Let us not deceive ourselves or be deceived. Let us strive to lead a life as a true Christian, demonstrated as we live a life guided by the words of God.

Live a True Christian Life

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Col 3:17)

Lesson 10

Honesty Counts

Listed Scriptures

Rom 8:5; Eph 4:15; Ex 20:16, 17; Prov 4:23; Rom 12:3; 1 Kgs 21:1-25; Jn 13:21-30

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable our students to understand that cheating is not just stealing and that there are other kinds of cheating, big or small.
- 2) To help our students assess their own character.
- 3) To help our students resolve not to compromise their character.

Memory Verse

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." (Rom 8:5)

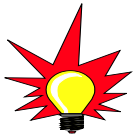
Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 28-30

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



Due to the nature of this lesson, there is no Bible background information available.



“Honesty” is a word that we don’t hear much of nor use nowadays. Either people assume that honesty is a given, and everyone is honest, or we’re living in a world where returns and gains outweigh all other considerations, and we simply don’t think honesty fits into anyone’s picture anymore. The latter is probably true. As Christians, we must uphold our integrity and in all our dealings with people, we must be honest.

Today, we’ll take a look at this topic. Let’s first define what honesty means to you. Specifically, in what aspects of life is honesty relevant? (Let students respond.) We will keep in mind all your responses as we go through today’s lesson. We will see if there are areas you haven’t thought of concerning what it means to be honest.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Honesty in...

The Bible does not give us specific commandments that we have to be honest but, from various other teachings, we know that honesty is a very important virtue in the sight of God. Let’s look at some Bible references regarding honesty.

A. Speech (Eph 4:15)

- a. What does it really mean to be speaking the truth with love? Does that mean we should indiscreetly tell everyone everything there has to be said? Would that be considered a loving act?
(As best as we can, without contradiction to the truth, we should speak honestly and truthfully. But, there are some things that do not need to be said or known, and we need to have wisdom to know when to keep our mouths shut sometimes. For example, if someone has done something embarrassing but it does not affect the church, there is no need to let anyone else know. By

not publicizing it, we are not being dishonest. It is just simply something that does not need to be shared.)

B. Money/Things/Goods (Ex 20:16,17)

- a. What does it mean not to bear false witness?
(It means we do not say anything that is not true, as far as we know for sure.)
- b. The 9th commandment (to be truthful in our words) is often lumped together with the 10th (to not covet) as one teaching. What do you think is the relationship between honesty and covetousness?
(Often, we exaggerate things or slip into half-truths if we have something to gain. With many cases of dishonesty, there are some gains to be attained. Hence, the Bible teaches us to speak the truth and not covet.)
- c. Read: “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim 6:9, 10). Do you think greed for money and honesty can co-exist? What are some situations where a person’s greed for money might have caused him to be dishonest?
(Greed is when you desire more than what you are entitled to. It is hard for honesty to co-exist with greed because to gain what we do not deserve, we often have to use dishonest means.)
- d. Can you think of a biblical character whose greed for money led him or her to lie?
(Jezebel, Judas Iscariot, Ananias/Sapphira)

C. Our Hearts (Prov 4:23, Rom 12:3)

- a. What does it mean to keep one’s heart with all diligence?
(It means to make sure our thoughts and plans are properly controlled and according to God’s teachings.)
- b. Why is “keeping one’s heart” so important?
(All actions stem from an idea, or a thought, inside our head or our heart. Hence, we have to guard our hearts if we want to keep ourselves from sinning.)

- c. Do you think honesty is one important aspect of “keeping one’s heart”? (Of course.)
- d. Why is honesty important to the “issues of life”? (Honesty affects many other actions – like what we say, and what we do and how we interact with others.)
- e. Why is it important for us to be honest with ourselves (ref Rom 12:3)? (If we are not honest with ourselves, we may get bitter about a lot of things, especially when we compare ourselves with others. That may lead to further unhappiness and even sin against others. Being honest with ourselves also means we can come before God with a true heart to repent.)
- f. What does it mean to be honest with ourselves with regard to our faith and spiritual life? (We need to know if we’re true to God. Outward appearances can be deceiving. We may be good Christians in the eyes of others because we go to church and work a lot for God. But, what are we in truth? What are our thoughts, our words, our actions? Only we know ourselves best. We have to self-examine constantly so we can improve all the time and be a true Christian.)



Part 2 Case Studies

Honesty and greed often cannot co-exist. Dishonesty often leads to grave consequences – to others and to oneself. We shall now take a look at two case studies from the Bible where the downfall of the characters stemmed from their greed and dishonesty.

A. Jezebel Frames Naboth (1 Kgs 21:1-25)

- a. Did Ahab need an extra vineyard? (He had the desire, but not a real need for another vineyard.)
- b. Why did he want to have another vineyard? (He wanted to convert it to a vegetable garden because it was conveniently located next to his palace.)

- c. What was the plan that Jezebel came up with to help Ahab secure Naboth’s vineyard? (She would get people to frame Naboth, saying that he had blasphemed God and have him sentenced to death.)
- d. What was God’s reaction to the plan of Jezebel? (God punished Jezebel and wild dogs ate her corpse.)
- e. What do the endings of Jezebel and Ahab tell you about the gravity of their sins? (Ahab died in battle. Bearing false testimony is a great sin in the eyes of God.)

B. Judas Iscariot (Jn 13:21-30)

- a. At the last supper, the Lord Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. He did not exclude Judas, whom He knew was going to betray Him. If you were Judas, facing your master who stooped down to wash your feet, what would your feelings be then? (Guilt-ridden, perhaps change my mind about betraying the Lord.)
- b. Do you think Judas had a chance to turn from his evil plan to betray the Lord Jesus at that moment? Would the Lord Jesus have forgiven him? What would have been the reaction of the other disciples? (Yes, the Lord Jesus is full of compassion and if Judas had repented at the last minute, he would have been forgiven.)
- c. If Judas had confessed and changed his mind, God would still have fulfilled salvation through another way. Why do you think Judas caused himself to become the one who would go down in history as the betrayer of Jesus Christ? (Greed for money. He was overcome by the idea and did not try to cleanse his heart of the evil plan.)
- d. What lessons does the decision of Judas have for you?

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



- 1 In what ways do we have to be honest?
- 2 What does it mean to “speak the truth in love” (Eph 4:15)?
- 3 What is the relationship between greed/covetousness and honesty?
- 4 What was the end like for those people who tried to gain through dishonesty, like Jezebel and Judas?

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



More Than a Dime

Lead a short discussion before the following story is shared (the teacher should make sure students do not read the story before this discussion):

Questions to think about:

1. What would you do if the cashier at a department store gave you extra change?
2. What are the factors you consider when making a decision like that?
3. Do you think the amount matters? If it is just a quarter, maybe you would keep it. But if it is a few dollars or more what would you do?
4. What do you think are the potential repercussions/implications of your decision?

Here is a story about honesty in what most people would consider a very trivial thing. But as the saying goes, “Faithfulness in little things is a great thing.” The same can be said for honesty. We will see how one little dime can bring about great implications.

Several years ago, a pastor moved to Houston, Texas. Some weeks after he arrived, he had occasion to ride the bus from his home to the downtown area. When he sat down, he discovered that the driver had accidentally given him ten cents too much change.

As he considered what to do, there alternately appeared to him little angelic figures sitting on his shoulders and whispering instructions into his ears. One said, “You had better give the dime back. It would be wrong to keep it.”

On the other shoulder, a voice said, “Oh forget it. It’s just ten cents. Who would worry about this little amount? Anyway, the bus company already gets too much fare. With the millions they collect everyday, they will never miss it. Accept it as a gift from God and keep quiet.”

When his stop came, he paused momentarily at the front door, and handing the driver the dime, he said, “Here. You handed me too much change.”

The driver replied, “Aren’t you the new pastor in town? I have been thinking lately about going to church somewhere. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you ten cents too much change.”

When the pastor stepped off the bus, he literally grabbed the nearest light pole, and held on, and said, “O God, I almost sold Your Son for ten cents.”

(By Alan Johnson, “Romans – The Freedom Letter”)

Questions to think about:

1. After reading this story, do you think your responses to the questions in the discussion earlier would be different now? Why?
2. With respect to the two angels, whose opinion do you agree with more? Why?
3. Imagine a different scenario: If the driver is not someone who was out testing the pastor, do you think your answer to the second question would be different? Why?
4. Can you think of other scenarios where honesty can be so crucial? In groups of two or three, come up with situations where honesty is very important. Explain the situation and the factors needed for consideration.



As a conclusion to today's lesson, let us read a well-known story. It is a story many of us have heard about when we were young children. Many of us have at one point or another been told that we should always be honest. As we grow older, life becomes more complicated and it sometimes become harder for us to be honest. But let us always retain a childlike pureness, no matter how old we grow, for that is beautiful in the eyes of God. May God help us to always be honest and truthful.

When George Washington was about six years old, he was made the wealthy master of a hatchet of which, like most little boys, he was extremely fond. He went about chopping everything that came his way. One day, as he wandered about the garden amusing himself by hacking his mother's pea-sticks, he found a beautiful, young English cherry tree, of which his father was most proud. He tried the edge of his hatchet on the trunk of the tree and barked it so that it died. Some time after this, his father discovered what had happened to his favorite tree. He came into the house in great anger, and demanded to know who the mischievous person was who had cut away the bark. Nobody could tell him anything about it. Just then George, with his little hatchet, came into the room.

"George," said his father, "do you know who has killed my beautiful little cherry tree yonder in the garden? I would not have taken five guineas for it!"

This was a hard question to answer, and for a moment George was staggered by it, but quickly recovering himself he cried: "I cannot tell a lie, father, you know I cannot tell a lie! I did cut it with my little hatchet."

The anger died out of his father's face, and taking the boy tenderly in his arms, he said:—

"My son, that you should not be afraid to tell the truth is

more to me than a thousand trees! Yes, though they were blossomed with silver and had leaves of the purest gold!"

Surely our honesty towards men and before God will be praised by our Heavenly father just as George Washington's was praised by his father!

Greed

Listed Scriptures

Gen 13:5-18, 18:20, 19:23-26; 2 Kgs 5:5-27; Mt 26:14-16; Acts 1: 18-20, 5:1-11; Prov 30:7-9

Lesson Aim

- 1) To enable our students to understand that greed breeds sin.
- 2) To help our students become people of integrity.

Memory Verse

"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness." (1 Tim 6:10)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 31-Ecclesiastes 2

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

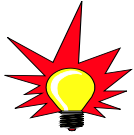


Biblical history is replete with people who have lost their lives or God's grace because of greed for wealth or other earthly things. Lot is one such example. When Abraham told him he could choose any piece of land for himself, he chose the land by Jordan, which was well watered and he thought he could make a good living there with his herds and sheep. He failed to consider the fact that the land he had chosen was close to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were sinful and evil cities. Wealth was the key factor of consideration for him (Gen 13:10-13). In the end, we know that he lost all his possessions and even his wife.

In the New Testament, we know the story of Judas Iscariot. He was so blinded by his greed that he did not see how small a sum of money thirty pieces of silver was. For that, he betrayed the Lord Jesus, died a terrible death and lost his own salvation (Mt 27:2-4, Acts 1:16-18).

The Bible teaches us “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim 6:6). And there is a good reason for that. Greed can lead one to lose rationality. One can risk many things just to get more of what one wants. As children of God, we have to learn to rely on God and to be content with what He has provided for us. We work for a better living with our capabilities give by God, and with God’s blessings, we will not lack anything.

W A R M U P



We have heard and read about people who bring tragedy upon themselves as a result of their greed. There are some who invest in stocks without self-control so that when their stocks lose value or when markets crash, they go completely broke. Many of them end up with psychological problems or even committing suicide.

There are also those who commit crimes as a result of their greed, bringing harm to many people and even to themselves. To desire a better standard of living is not wrong, but greed is often insatiable, and if we do not make an effort to control the greed in us, we may fall into the traps of the devil and commit sin.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Bible Characters Who Fell Due to Greed

In the history of mankind, we have heard many stories of people who lost their lives or paid a high price as a result of greed. The Bible also has many examples of such people. We'll take a look at some of them.

A. Lot (Gen 13:5-18, 18:20, 19:23-26)

- Do you think Lot was greedy and selfish when he chose the lands for himself? (He was probably worried too much about himself. When we do not entrust our whole life and everything to God, we become possessive and defensive

and will try to fight and gain things for our self.)

- What were some factors he neglected to consider as he tried to satisfy his greed and ambition for better lands? (Whether the lands he chose allowed him to continue to worship God, whether the people who occupied the lands were evil people who would affect his faith in God.)
- What reasons were there for Lot to regret his choice? (The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were depraved and sinful. Lot lost everything he had, including his wife.)

B. Gehazi (2 Kgs 5:5-27)

- Why do you think Elisha turned down the offer of gifts from Naaman? (He performed the miracle for Naaman out of compassion and to glorify God, not for his own gain. Moreover, he wanted Naaman to understand that it was God he had to thank for the healing.)
- What was Gehazi’s rationale for wanting to have those gifts? Do you think those reasons are valid? (Gehazi felt that Elisha deserved some kind of reward for healing Naaman. But, by taking the gifts, it defeated the purpose of bringing glory to God through the healing.)
- What was the result of Gehazi’s lie and greed? (He was punished with leprosy.)

C. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

- What did Ananias and Sapphira do? (They lied that they were offering everything to the church.)
- Did the apostles make it compulsory for the believers to offer all they had? (No.)
- Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira lied? Was there a need to? (Perhaps they felt pressured to lie since most people contributed all they had. Perhaps they wanted to have glory, so others would think highly of them. In

fact, there really wasn't a need to lie, since God did not require them to offer all they had.)

D. Judas Iscariot (Mt 26:14-16, Acts 1:18-20)

- a. For how much did Judas sell the Lord Jesus?
(30 pieces of silver)
- b. Was that a large sum of money, worthy of such a great sin?
(Not at all)
- c. What do you think prompted Judas to do such a foolish act?
(Greed at first, and then a moment of folly.)
- d. How did Judas spend the money?
(Bought a field.)
- e. What was the end of Judas like?
(He hung himself and died when he fell, with his entrails gushing out.)



Part 2

Biblical Advice Against Greed

a. Proverbs 1:10-19

- i. What are some of the things a greedy person might do?
(Become an accomplice with robbers/burglars and even commit murder.)
- ii. What is his end likely to be?
(He may lose his own life.)

b. Proverbs 15:27

- i. What troubles do you think a greedy person will bring to his household?
(If he gets into trouble, his family will be implicated. Their source of income may be affected too.)
- ii. In what ways is greed related to bribes?
(People who take bribes are greedy; that's why they fall prey to those who want to bribe them for their own gain.)

c. Proverbs 21:25, 26

- i. Is a lazy man often a greedy man?
(Not necessarily – but if one is lazy to work for an honest living, one may be tempted to accept easy money.)
- ii. What happens when a person is both lazy and greedy?
(He will not have enough for himself since he's too lazy to work for his needs. He will always be craving for things he wants but refuses to work towards.)
- iii. Can a greedy person also be a giving and generous person? Why or why not?
(No, to be generous, a person has to be willing to make himself suffer some disadvantage, so to speak. If someone is greedy, he always wants to keep things for himself.)

d. Isaiah 56:11

- i. Greed can lead to a cold and selfish society. Why?
(Greedy people think only of themselves. The society will be cold if each one cares only for himself.)

e. 1 Timothy 3:1-3

- i. Why is it important for a person who desires to work for God to be free from greed?
(If he's greedy, he may compromise on important things of God for the sake of money. Worse, he may even betray the church or God for money.)
- ii. What are some problems a worker of God can get into if he is greedy?
(He may be easily tempted to go astray. See also previous question.)

f. 1 Timothy 6:6-10

- i. In what ways do you think greed can cause one to stray from faith?
(If one is not satisfied with what one has, he may go and pursue things he desires at the expense of his faith.)
- ii. How can one guard against greed?
(One has to learn to be content, and to seek things above and not things of this transient world.)
- iii. Why is contentment the best way to guard against greed?
(One who is content is satisfied with what he has, and will not do sinful things to increase his possessions.)

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



1 What did Lot choose for himself, and why were his choices not wise?

- 2** What was wrong with Gehazi's attitudes?
- 3** What happened to Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit?
- 4** Why would you say Judas is indeed a tragic figure?
- 5** What does the Bible say about greed and faith and/or service to God?
- 6** Why is contentment the best way to guard against greed?

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



Part A- The Tragedy of Greed

There is a story about a foolish man who lost his life trying to satisfy his greed. This tragic story reveals much about human nature. Read the story and discuss the questions that follow:

Many years ago, there was a sparsely populated country with vast lands suitable for farming that adjoined a heavily populated country with very little land to cultivate. The king of the large country made a declaration offering parts of his land to anyone who wished to farm in his country as long as they met his stipulated conditions. The farmers were required to leave from a specified location at sunrise, stake out the land and return to the same location by sunset and not a minute later. If one were late returning, then the land was forfeited.

There was a man who left at sunrise to stake out his desired land. He walked a distance staking out his posts and continued to do so in pursuit of acquiring more land for his use. As the sun began to set in the western sky, he realized that he had strayed too far from the destination.

In order to return by sunset, the man ran all the way back to the destination but in the process, died at the finish from exhaustion. The king ordered his subordinates to bury the man, and despite his effort to meet the deadline no property was granted to him.

Questions to think about:

- 1.** *In the story, the man was greedy for land/property. What other things do you think people covet and crave after? (Think of some of the tragic life-stories you know of where greed is the cause of a person's downfall.) (Fame, ambitions of different sorts, money)*
- 2.** *In the story, the greedy man exhausted himself because he didn't think to come back earlier. What are some of the things people do to get what they want?*
- 3.** *Do you think going to such lengths to achieve what we want befits a Christian? What are some things we should never do? Where and when do we draw the line?*
- 4.** *How do you think one can control greed?*

Part B- How Do We Fight Greed?

We know that greed is something we have to fight against. As children of God, we rely on the Holy Spirit to help us. It helps also to be able to look at our own weaknesses and pre-empt the temptations that we are likely to be exposed to as a result. Greed is something innate in almost every one of us. It does not mean that one has to be a robber or burglar to be considered a greedy man. Greed manifests itself even in small ways.

There is a story about a very indulgent mother who always condoned her son whenever he stole something from a neighbor as a child. One day, it would be a bowl of food, another it would be a little gold pin. She never stopped him. As the son grew up, he became more and more bold and soon, he became a robber. He robbed all kinds of people. From small items as a child, he upgraded to huge amounts of money. Finally, he was caught and about to be hanged. In the last visitation, he asked his mother to come close to him by the bars of his prison cell. The mother thought he had come up with a good plan of escape. Little did

she expect what was going to happen to her. The son bit off his mother's ears! He said he did it as revenge because he blamed his mother for not teaching him right as he was growing up. If he had been taught to curb his little acts of stealing when he was young, he would not have become a criminal.

One of the messages of this story is that greed, if left to develop, can lead to grave mistakes in life.

In this exercise, each one of us will think of one or two areas where we know we are the weakest and likely to succumb to greed. Then we will write a short explanatory note about the area we are likely to fall into temptation and what those temptations to sin are. After that we will put that note, anonymously, into a box. The teacher will then pick out each slip of paper and write those areas identified on the board. As a class, we will brainstorm how we can guard against those temptations.

Teaching Tips

If time permits, perhaps the teacher can break the students into groups and have them do a skit or role-play on people who are under temptations of greed. Then, as a class, brainstorm ideas how to help that person. That way, the students may not feel they have to write down what they think their weaknesses are, but can instead bring it up indirectly through the skit

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Let's read Proverbs 30:7-9. This is a very wise prayer request made of God. A Christian should always aspire to lead a simple life. God has promised to take care of our lives. If we spend too much of our time and energy on things of the world, we will definitely compromise in our faith and zeal towards God. Worse, we may even make foolish decisions like some of the biblical characters we studied today. If we resolve to lead a simple life, we can be spared from the snares of greed.

Lesson 12

Anger

Listed Scriptures

Num 20; Jdgs 12; Dan 6; Jn 8:1-7

Lesson Aim

- 1) To help our students learn from the examples of biblical characters who had anger issues.
- 2) To help our students take specific steps to control and diffuse anger.

Memory Verse

“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.” (Eph 4:26, 27)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Ecclesiastes 3-5

BIBLE BACKGROUND

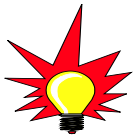


Anger can be likened to a flame that can set a whole forest ablaze. In the Bible, we can find examples of tragedies that happened when anger was not brought under control.

In Judges 12, we see a very sad case of how brothers killed one another because two parties did not know how to handle their anger. The Ephraimites were upset that they were not enlisted by Jephthah, the judge, to fight the Ammonites. Jephthah's reply showed anger and folly, causing the Ephraimites to be more upset. In the end, the Gileadites (Jephthah's brothers) killed forty thousand Ephraimites when a fight broke out between them. We can see that anger can lead one to say provocative words that hurt and cause trouble.

Proverbs 16:32 says, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” Anger is one fleshly weakness that is hard to control. Being angry in itself is not destructive. But, anger inevitably leads to other thoughts or actions that are often sinful or may lead to sin. Anger that is not resolved can lead to hatred, which may in turn lead to physical, harmful acts. That is why Proverbs 29:22 says, “An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered man commits many sins.”

W A R M U P



Is there anyone in this class who dares to claim he has never been angry before? Does anger necessarily lead to verbal or even physical fights? Why or why not? (Let students respond.)

Let us first read Proverbs 16:32, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” Why do you think such a person wields so much “power”? Can you think of situations where gentleness wins the day?

Today, we will look at this topic of anger. It is possible to be angry but not to lose our temper, or as Ephesians 4:26 says, “Be angry and do not sin”. We will first look at some biblical examples of how anger was or was not brought under control.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Anger Gone Awry

For the following two sections, read the Bible references and answer the questions.

A. Numbers 20:1-12

- What was the complaint from the Israelites? (They had no water to drink.)
- In vv. 3–5, we see that the Israelites made a complaint in a manner that they

had always been doing since they left Egypt. Analyze the complaint.

- What types of comparisons did they make? (They compared their current state with the lives they had in Egypt and the foods they enjoyed.)
 - Who were they pointing a finger at? (Moses, for bringing them out of Egypt.)
 - Do you think such murmuring provoked Moses’ moods, or anyone’s moods, for that matter? Why? (Yes, especially since they had done it many times. It makes even the most gentle-spirited person irritated.)
- What did God tell Moses he should do to handle the situation? (He told Moses to speak to the rock and water would flow out.)
 - What were the result of the complaints on Moses (vv. 10–12)? (Moses was so disturbed that he did not obey God’s command to simply speak to the rock. Instead, he struck the rock twice with his staff and water came out. As a result, God did not allow Moses to enter Canaan because he did not honor Him.)
 - If you were in Moses’ shoes, do you think you would have done differently?



B. Judges 12:1-6

- What was the complaint of the Ephraimites (v.1)? (That they were not included in the fight against the Ammonites.)
 - Do you think it was a justified complaint? Why? (No, because according to Jephthah, they were called but they chose not to fight. See v. 2)
 - Do you think their approach was provocative and offensive? Explain. (Anytime we confront someone, we run the risk of aggravation. The Ephraimites were definitely confrontational and harsh.)
 - Do you think they could have voiced their displeasure in another way? How? (Perhaps by talking to Jephthah after the whole situation had blown over, just so they can be counted in the next time. There was no way to turn the present situation around anyway.)

- b. What was Jephthah's reply? Do you think his reply was equally provocative and offensive, like the approach of the Ephraimites? Cite evidence from the passage.
(He replied by pushing the blame to them, saying that they were called to help but refused to help him, v. 2. He even went on to say that as a result of their refusal to help, he had a hard time fighting the Ammonites, v. 3)
- c. What was the result of the confrontation between the Ephraimites and Jephthah?
(Jephthah gathered the Gileadites to fight the Ephraimites. They were actually all brothers of the nation of Israel. Forty-two Ephraimites died.)
- d. Do you think the tragedy could have been averted? In what ways could both sides have given in a little?
(They could have tried not to speak so harshly. Or, they could have let the matter rest for a while until everyone was more calm to talk things over. It is always wise not to discuss things when one is angry or not ready.)
- e. What does this event tell you about the potential damage of confrontations and spiteful words?
(It can cause a lot of damage – sometimes irreparable damage to one's life, and relationships are hurt.)



Part 2

Potential Confrontation Avoided

A. Daniel 6:1-10

- a. What was the plot against Daniel?
(The satraps wanted to remove Daniel by having him go against the king's decree that no one should bow to any one else but the king himself.)
- b. As the favored one of the king, do you think Daniel could have gone up to the king to clarify matters after learning about the plot against himself?
(Yes, but Daniel chose to tell it to God first, before doing anything.)
- c. Why was the situation potentially confrontational? Who would have been

likely to confront whom?
(Daniel could have confronted the king or the satraps, his colleagues.)

- d. What did Daniel choose to do to deal with the situation?
(Daniel chose prayer and reliance on God.)
- e. What else could he have done, if anything? Explain.
(He could have chickened out and not worshiped God. That way, he would have failed. He could have talked to the king. But Daniel chose to stick to the most reliable method: turn to God first.)

B. John 8:1-7

- a. Why was this a situation that was potentially confrontational?
(If Jesus Christ let the woman go, the people would accuse Him of condoning adultery. If he did not, they could accuse Him of not showing mercy.)
- b. Who were the ones who tried to initiate the tension/confrontation against the Lord Jesus?
(Teachers of the law and the Pharisees.)
- c. How did the Lord Jesus alleviate the tension?
(The Lord Jesus calmed Himself down when facing confrontation by drawing on the earth).

C. Conclusion

There is a saying that one should not utter more than three sentences when one is angry. This highlights the crucial role of holding back our words when we're not in a clear-minded situation. Why do you think this is so? (Answers include: words can lead to argument; words can hurt someone when we don't mean to; words are like spilled milk, you can never take it back; the damage caused by words can sometimes be irreparable.)

Other than holding back our words, what other methods are there in alleviating situations of tension/anger? Daniel's example shows us the importance of prayer. The Lord Jesus' example shows us the need to calm down and not react right away. (Brainstorm as a class – talking a walk, go running, do something else and come

back to deal with the matter at hand only after one has allowed things to settle and cool off etc.)

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



1 What was the complaint of the Israelites at Kadesh?

2 Why did Moses lose his cool?

3 What did Jephthah do that caused the Israelite brothers to end up killing one another?

4 What could have been done in the cases of Moses and Jephthah to avoid the tragedies?

5 What were the methods of Daniel and the Lord Jesus in dealing with potentially confrontational situations?

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



Part A- Anger, A Lethal Weapon

Most human beings get angry at some points in their lives. Some people are more prone to anger, while others are not. Actually, when we say a person is prone to anger, it is often because we see more manifestations of anger from that person. One of the most commonly seen manifestations of anger is the outburst of angry words. Here is a thought-provoking story about the damage of anger and spiteful words.

Once upon a time, there was a boy with a very difficult character. His father gave him a bag full of nails and told him to drive one nail in the garden fence every time he lost his patience and/or had an argument with someone. The first day, the boy drove 37 nails in the garden fence.

In the following weeks, the boy learned to control himself and the number of

nails driven into the fence got lower everyday. The boy discovered that it was easier to learn to control himself than to hammer nails in the fence.

At last, the day came when the boy did not drive any nails in the garden fence. Then he went to his father and told him that he did not need to hammer any nails again. His father then told him to take out one nail from the fence for every day he succeeded in controlling his temper and not losing his patience.

Many days passed and finally the boy could tell his father that he took out all the nails from the fence. The father brought his son in front of the fence and told him: "My son, you behaved well, but look how many holes you left in the fence. It will never be the same again."

When you have an argument with someone and say hurtful words to him, you leave him with wounds like the nail holes in the fence. You can stab a man and then take the knife out, but you will always leave a wound. It does not matter how many times you say sorry, the wound will stay. A wound caused by words hurts just as badly as a physical wound.

Questions to think about:

1. Can you think of an occasion when you were angry and said things or did things that caused "holes in the fence" as the boy did in the story?
2. Did you manage to make amends for the damage or hurt you caused? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. If you could do things differently, what would you have done in that incident?
4. What lesson did you learn from that incident?

Part B- Self-Control in Times of Anger

As the memory verse teaches us, we should not sin when we are angry. What does it mean to be angry but not to sin? (Let students respond.)

It is sometimes inevitable that things happen or certain people make us angry. But, how we deal with the situation will determine if we are true Christians with good spiritual character.

The Bible has many verses of encouragement about how to handle confrontational situations. Using a concordance, work in groups of two or three to come up with a list of five verses that are relevant for exhortation in self-control when we are angry. (You may use search words like “angry”, “wrath”, “feelings” etc. As a group, brainstorm the words that are related to this topic.)

For each verse, come up with an example of a potentially explosive situation and an explanatory paragraph of how the Bible verse can help alleviate the anger. Then, share with the rest of the class what your group has come up with.

Here’s a sample for this exercise:

Bible Verse	Example of Situation	Explanation of how the verse helps/could have helped
Proverb 15:1 – “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”	Mary came back home one day looking like she had a bad day. The moment she stepped into the apartment she said really loudly to her sister, “Could you please turn off the music? I am stressed out as it is already, and your music irritates me even more!” Her sister felt very offended and replied, “You deserve to be stressed out. It’s nothing to do with me. Why are you taking it out on me and my music?” A bigger verbal fight then ensued.	If Mary had been careful to remind herself not to have spiteful outbursts, knowing that she had had a stressful day, she would not have provoked her sister. If her sister had remembered to reply with a soft answer, such as, “Okay, I’ll turn off the music now. Are you feeling alright?”, things would have been under control right away.
Example 2		
Example 3		
Example 4		
Example 5		

Some of the verses that can be shared to help the students get started include: Eccl 7:9, Prov 20:3, Prov 16:32



Read Proverbs 18:21 – “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” In today’s lesson, we studied the importance of controlling our tongue when we are angry. Actually, there are also many other manifestations of anger. As children of God, we should always be careful not to allow ourselves to get worked up. It takes conscious effort in spiritual cultivation. Finally, let us read James 1:19, 20 – “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” May God help us to be people of a gentle spirit, that we may bring glory to His name!

Review

Lesson Aims

- 1) That the students may have a revision of some of the key points learned in the past 12 lessons.
- 2) That the students may be able to apply the memory verses to their lives.

R E V I E W

Memory Verse

For the following Bible references, write out the memory verse, and explain how this verse relates to your life today. (Some parts of the verses have been given to you as hints.)

1. 1 Thess 5:16–18 (Lesson 1)
 “Rejoice always, _____, in everything _____; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Relation to my life today:

2. Phil 2:15 (Lesson 2)
 “That you may become _____ and _____, children of God without fault in the midst of a _____ and _____ generation, among whom you _____ in the world.”

Relation to my life today:

3. Heb 12:14 (Lesson 4)
"Pursue _____ with all people, and _____, _____."

Relation to my life today:

4. Eph 5:15, 18 (Lesson 7)
"See that you _____ not as fools but as _____ ... and do not be drunk with _____, in which is dissipation, but be _____."

Relation to my life today:

5. Rom 8:5 (Lesson 10)
"For those who live according to the flesh _____, but those who live _____."

Relation to my life today:

6. Eph 4:26, 27 (Lesson 12)
"Be angry but _____: do not let the sun _____, nor _____."

Relation to my life today:

Discussion

1. Too Busy to Pray?
 - Why is it important to have a prayer routine?
 - Who are the "heroes of prayer" in the Bible, and how did prayer benefit them?
2. Getting Your Spiritual Life in Shape
 - Discuss a plan, detailing the "workouts" to keep our spiritual life in shape. What are the required procedures and why are they important?
3. Dating 101
 - Is it okay for Christians to date?
 - What is a good age to start dating? Why?
 - What are the things one should be very careful about when it comes to relationships with members of the opposite sex?

4. Why Stay Pure?
 - Why is purity so important?
 - What are the circumstances/situations where purity may be threatened? How can we circumvent such situations?

5. Love For a Lifetime
 - How is love different from a mere infatuation?
 - From the Bible, what is the true essence of love?

6. www.popmusic.today
 - Why do we have to be especially selective about the lyrics of the songs we listen to?
 - How does music affect a person?
 - Give two examples from the Bible of how music can be related with spirituality.

7. Let's Party!
 - Why is alcohol a dangerous thing?
 - What are some of the ways we can avoid the influence of alcohol?

8. www.x-rated.sin
 - How do we know that pornography is a sin?
 - What are some healthy activities we can engage in, instead of directing our attention to unhealthy and un-edifying activities such as pornography?

9. Homosexuality
 - What is the Bible's stand on homosexuality?
 - What should our attitude be towards homosexuals?

10. Honesty Counts
 - In which areas should we be honest?

11. Greed
 - Name some of the biblical characters that fell as a result of greed.
 - What are the lessons we can learn from their downfall?
 - How can we guard ourselves against greed?

12. Anger
 - How is anger related to sin/transgression?
 - What are some good strategies to adopt when we feel angry, so that we do not sin?



During this quarter, we studied various aspects of our Christian life. We discussed how to have a healthy spiritual life and also issues about love, relationships and pop culture. Although we may all have different opinions about how to live our life, the most important lesson to remember is that no matter what we are doing, we must not forget that we are living for Christ. In all that we do, let all glory and praise be given to our heavenly Father.

**God permits
tests to come
our way to
train and to
build up those
He loves. He
does this with
good and noble
reasons, so
that we may be
refined.**

*“Whatever your task,
work heartily as
serving 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)