



ADULT TEACHER'S GUIDE

SUMMER 2026



ADULT TEACHER'S GUIDE

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A Personal Word

by Daniel Felipe
Contributor

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jer. 33:3, NKJV).

This invitation from God is not casual – it is covenantal. It is not poetic – it is prophetic. In Jeremiah 33:3, God is not merely comforting a weary prophet; He unveils to Jeremiah mysteries – “great and mighty things” – that remain hidden apart from divine illumination.

Prayer, then, is not just a devotional habit. It aids us in hearing the voice of God. Without prayer, we read Scripture and miss its deeper meaning. With it, the Word becomes alive, and truth pierces the heart.

When God gave this word to Jeremiah, Jerusalem was under siege, the prophet was imprisoned, and the future looked hopeless. Yet God cut through the noise with a call to intimacy: *Call to Me*. The breakthrough would not come through changed circumstances – it would come through surrendered communion. The same is true for us. We don’t need new methods – we need to hear from the Lord.

Jesus modeled this perfectly. Before choosing the twelve, He prayed through the night. Before speaking, He often withdrew to listen. He didn’t just teach Scripture – He interpreted it by the Spirit. The early Church followed this rhythm, devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching *and* to prayer (Acts 2:42). They understood that without prayer, the Church would become merely an informative institution.

Many today hunger for clarity – about their purpose, their families, their future. But God’s invitation remains unchanged: *Call to Me*. The reason the Word may feel distant is not that it has lost power, but that we have lost pursuit. Understanding does not come through rushing but through stillness. Through seeking. Through prayer.

Prayer tills the soil of our hearts so the Word can take root and bear fruit. Without it, we remain unformed. With it, we are remade.

Let us not settle for spiritual routine. Let us respond to the invitation. Let us call. For when His people pray, God not only answers – He reveals.

The Adult Teacher’s Guide at a Glance

This teacher’s guide is designed to help you accomplish your teaching goals, but it cannot replace your own prayerful study of Scripture (see 2 Tim. 2:15). This book contains many helps and ideas, all of which are intended to spark your creativity.

CENTRAL TRUTH: The CT is the deduction that should be drawn from what you have taught when you finish; it is the “takeaway” for your students.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW: This element of the lesson provides an introduction of the lesson topic to you, the teacher. It might contain a description of how this particular lesson fits into the context of the unit. It can also set the stage for how the lesson will relate to contemporary application. After reading this section, you should have a clearer understanding of what the lesson intends to convey, as well as how it might relate the topic to the students in a relevant way.

THE LESSON OUTLINE: This simple, three-point outline covers the lesson topic. The outline includes two subheads per point to help you stay on the course with the lesson.

TEACHING GOALS: There are three categories of teaching goals, each instructing you in a different aspect of how the lesson should impact the student.

TEACHING RESOURCES: These resources are intended to supplement the *Adult Teacher’s Guide*. The *Adult Teaching Resource* booklet contains resources that may stimulate discussion or inform the student about a particular aspect of the lesson in greater detail.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND: This section provides a brief overview of any historical or literary information/issues pertaining to the lesson. It serves to clarify aspects of the biblical world in which the Scripture was written. Note that further background information is often supplied throughout the main body of the lesson.

GOLDEN TEXT: This key verse summarizes the lesson.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES: This page provides the key Scripture verses of the lesson in both the King James Version and the New International Version.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: This section allows you to draw your students into the lesson topic. It might consist of a compelling practical question that prompts discussion or an illustrative example, quote, or short story that causes students to think about the topic. It sets the stage for the exposition and application of the Scripture that will follow.

COMMENTARY: Here we explain the lesson’s Scripture text, verse by verse, staying in harmony with respected teachers and commentaries. This is the main body of the lesson and follows the Lesson Outline. You will want to keep your Bible at hand as you study this section in preparation to teach.

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION: Each subhead is followed by two questions that will aid you in applying the lesson to the students’ lives. Questions for Application are intended to cause students to think about what was covered in the previous exposition of Scripture.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD: This section follows each main point. It provides the class with guidance on answering the question “How can I respond to what I have just learned?” In some cases, it might challenge the student to examine personal attitudes or motivations. In other cases, it could call the student to some form of action, including a response to prayer or worship.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP: This section serves as an overarching application to the lesson and therefore occurs near the end of the lesson. It provides students with a challenge or exhortation to put into action the principles learned throughout the lesson. The Call to Discipleship calls students to specific, tangible action, whether it is self-examination, a change of attitude, or a specific action that might be taken.

MINISTRY IN ACTION: This component provides an opportunity for the class to apply the lesson corporately through ministry. Often it includes specific prayer for one another, but it may also describe a class activity students might engage in outside the classroom setting.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: This is the last piece of every lesson. These daily readings from selected portions of Scripture will help you understand where the lesson is situated in the larger context of Scripture.

SCRIPTURES TO USE WHEN LEADING YOUR STUDENTS TO CHRIST

SEEK

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.”
–Isaiah 55:6

CONFESS

“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’ – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.” –Psalm 32:5

HEAR

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” –John 5:24

BELIEVE

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.” –Acts 16:31

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” –Hebrews 11:6

OBEY

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” –Matthew 7:21

COME

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” –Matthew 11:28

RECEIVE

“To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” –John 1:12

BE BAPTIZED

“Now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.” –Acts 22:16

PRAY

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” –Romans 10:13

FOLLOW

“Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” –John 8:12

SOW

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”
–Galatians 6:7-8

IF YOU ARE READY TO TAKE THESE STEPS TO GOD, PRAY THIS PRAYER:

“Lord, Jesus, I believe You died to pay for my sins. I want You to be Lord of my life. Please come into my heart so I may follow You. Amen.”

Adapted from Tract #306, The Tract League, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Scriptures are from the NIV®.

LEADING ADULTS IN RECEIVING THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Jesus left this earth to return to the Father, He promised not to leave us alone but to send another helper to be with us (John 14:16-18). Jesus also promised that we would do even greater works than He had done because He was going to the Father (John 14:12). This calls for a special gift of power.

John the Baptist told us, “He that cometh after me is mightier than I ... he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire ...” (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5). As Jesus was speaking to His disciples the last time before He went back to heaven, He told them to return to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49). He also said that when they received the Baptism, they would be filled with power to witness (Acts 1:5, 8). On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter identified this as fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel that the Spirit would be poured out on all people (Acts 2:16-21).

According to the examples in Acts, the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in an unknown language (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). This releases praise to God from within our spirit that is not limited by our ability to express our deepest praise. Like the early believers, we speak, and the Holy Spirit gives the utterance (words).

This initial evidence will be followed by many other evidences of the Spirit-filled life, including the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and the power to live a life that honors God and to be an effective witness. This baptism in the Holy Spirit begins a lifestyle of daily being filled with and walking in the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16).

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift. We are never good enough for any of God’s gifts. They are manifestations of His grace and are received by faith.

Encourage your students to pray for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and, in an atmosphere of praise and worship, expect the prayer to be answered. Do not delay; pray for the baptism in the Holy Spirit today.

Work and Rest

Beginning in early 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic many employees living in the United States quit their jobs. Because of its impact on the American economy, this trend was later designated the “Great Resignation” or “Big Quit.” Many who quit their jobs did so because of low or stagnant pay in the midst of a rising cost of living. Others noted lack of professional advancement and long-lasting job dissatisfaction as reasons for leaving their jobs.

You need not have been among those who left their jobs *en masse* in 2021 to have some of the same feelings about your job and work. The reality for many is that work is a necessary evil to take care of themselves and their families. But is that the perspective Christians ought to have about their work and work in general? The biblical witness is something altogether different.

A cursory reading of Genesis 1 and 2 reveals that God created work, and He Himself works. It also shows that God looks to enjoy work; it is something *good*. Work is also part of what it means for human beings to bear the image of God, as He instructs Adam to tend and care for the garden. Thus, work is part of God’s will for human beings.

However, this is not to say that work is without its challenges. After the Fall, recorded in Genesis 3, Adam’s work (and all of ours) encounters resistance. The entrance of human sin into God’s perfect world leads to work being frustrating. Because of the Fall, work also becomes an opportunity for temptation and sin, as we might despise work, looking on it as a necessary evil that we must perform just well enough to get by without bringing unwanted attention from our supervisors. For others, work becomes an opportunity not for laziness but for overworking, so that we give ourselves over to serving work and what we think it can bring us, thus making an idol out of work.

But the Christian worker can rise above these temptations. When we work, we work not for ourselves and our families, nor for our employers, nor for paychecks, but for the honor and glory of Christ. We work as an act of worship to Him. When we can truly do this, work is not a drudgery but an opportunity to exalt our Savior and point others to Him.

Equally important is rest. God has given us a pattern to follow, working for six days and resting on a seventh. This pattern, established in the creation narrative of the Old Testament, would later include a day (a Sabbath) not only for physical rest, but also for devotion specifically to the Lord, for worshiping Him with the people of God.

So as God’s people, we ought to work with diligence, as unto the Lord. But we should also truly rest when it is time to do so, not only for our physical health but for our spiritual health, as rest positions us to trust God to meet our needs (we are not working seven days a week) and to remind us that God in Christ has provided rest for our weary souls (Heb. 4:9-12).

—Keith Marriner

Lesson

1

Laws for Work and Rest (The Law)

Rhythms of work and rest are blessed by God.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

Beginning with God's example and continuing through His commands to Israel in the Law of Moses, this lesson looks at the topic of work and rest. The Bible reveals that work was not designed to be punishment or a curse on humanity, but one way in which the male and female humans reflected the image and likeness of God in the world. Before humans were created, God worked six days and rested on the seventh day. This rhythm of work and rest became the model for humanity. Because of sin, the work of humanity became more difficult, but work itself is not a curse. Work and rest are two parts of a fulfilling life that mirrors the image and likeness of God.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. God Exemplified Rest and Work
Gen. 1:1, 31 – 2:3; Exod. 20:9, 11
 - A. God's Work; No Sweat
 - B. Humanity's Work and Rest
2. God Commanded Work and Rest
Gen. 2:5, 15; 3:17-19; Deut. 5:12-15
 - A. Blessed Work, Cursed Work
 - B. The Continuing Command for Rest
3. Religious Seasons for Rest
Lev. 23:4-8, 15, 21, 23-25, 27, 28, 33-36
 - A. Passover and Pentecost
 - B. Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Help students recognize that God designed humanity to find fulfillment in work and enjoy seasons of rest and recovery.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Inspire students to have positive attitudes about the work God has given them to do as witnesses to others.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Encourage students to give their best efforts in their places of employment and make time for rest to avoid making an idol of their careers.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

God created humanity with the capacity, desire, and ability to work. He created a beautiful garden called Eden (Gen. 2:8) and placed man (Adam) in “the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (v. 15). To the first couple God gave a mandate that included work and stewardship of this world (1:27, 28). God gave the couple meaningful and fulfilling work to do before the curse of sin tainted human labor.

GOLDEN TEXT: GENESIS 2:2

On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. (KJV)

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. (NIV)

King James Version

Genesis 2:2 On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Exodus 20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Genesis 3:17 Unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Deuteronomy 5:14 The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

15 And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

Leviticus 23:4 These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover.

6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

7 In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

New International Version

Genesis 2:2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Exodus 20:9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Genesis 3:17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Deuteronomy 5:14 The seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do.

15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Leviticus 23:4 These are the Lord's appointed festivals, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times:

5 The Lord's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month.

6 On the fifteenth day of that month the Lord's Festival of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast.

7 On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.

8 For seven days present a food offering to the Lord. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “What are some things that make work fulfilling, and what can make work challenging?” Places of employment are mission fields where relationships are formed with people who may not attend a church or claim to be Christians. Approaching work with a positive attitude, even when things are challenging, sends the message that our life in Christ provides true fulfillment. If we view our work only as toil that we dread, our attitude undermines our witness. Instead, we should embrace God’s design for regular times of rest, finding contentment in both.

1. GOD EXEMPLIFIED WORK AND REST

A. God’s Work; No Sweat

Gen. 1:1; 31 – 2:3

Given that God has infinite power, when the Bible says that God “works,” it does not mean that anything God does takes any effort on His part to accomplish. To say that God works is to say that God is doing, creating, or accomplishing something. As such, it is noteworthy that the opening verse of the Bible reveals a God who is at work: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Nothing existed until God spoke it into existence (vv. 1-25). This was His work, but God was never strained or stressed in creating.

God could have created everything instantaneously if He chose, but He took six days. It seems God enjoyed systematically creating everything in perfect order to prepare for the creation of man and woman, who were made in His image and likeness (vv. 26-30). According to Genesis 2:1, the heavens (the universe) and the earth were finished by the end of the sixth day: “and he rested on the seventh day from all his work” (v. 2). Saying God “rested” from His work means that He paused His creative activity; it does not mean God was tired and needed physical rest. Even in His rest, God was sustaining creation, but on the seventh day, with His creative work completed, God paused to sanctify His creation (v. 3).

Questions for Application

What things do you enjoy doing so much that even though they are labor intensive, you still enjoy doing them? Why?

How can our work reflect the image and likeness of God in us?

B. Humanity’s Work and Rest

Exod. 20:9, 11

The Ten Commandments, as recorded in Exodus 20, deal with the topic of a sabbath in verses 8 through 11. God said that one day out of seven was to be set aside as a time of rest from one’s customary work. This command reveals that humans need to take regularly scheduled breaks from their work. God designated “the seventh day” (Saturday) as a holy day, which He blessed when He sanctified creation while resting from His work (v. 10). The word “sabbath” is from the Hebrew word *šabāṭ*, meaning “intermission” or “to cease,” as in “to cease working.” The word was used to identify the seventh day of the week on the Hebrew calendar. This day was set aside to cease all work, enjoy rest, and honor God.

The foundation for this command was the example of God, who ceased His work of creation on the seventh day. The cycle of work and rest is not only a holy directive but godly instruction for humanity. Studies show that humans need regular periods of rest. God designed people this way and established a divine pattern so that they could give their best in employment, ministry, and family. Research reveals that labor or mental activity without regular breaks results in decreased productivity and often physical, emotional, or spiritual decline. Therefore, the seventh day was blessed and set aside for humans to worship God and acknowledge Him as the Creator and their source of strength.

Questions for Application

What is the longest that you’ve worked without taking a day off? How did it affect you?

How do we incorporate the idea of a personal Sabbath without binding ourselves to the old covenant law code?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

When the Pharisees saw Jesus' disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath and eating it, they criticized Jesus. However, the Sabbath was to be a blessing, not the burden the Pharisees had made of it with their many rigorous rules. Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). God provided the Sabbath as a day of rest for humanity and not a day to be idolized. The apostle Paul, therefore, told the Christians at Colossae, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col. 2:16).

2. GOD COMMANDED WORK AND REST

A. Blessed Work, Cursed Work

Gen. 2:5, 15; 3:17-19

Before human sin entered the picture through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the work of the couple in the Garden of Eden was fruitful, fulfilling, and pleasant. The earth yielded its fruit, and Adam and Eve's labors were always productive. Even before they were in the Garden, before humanity tilled the land or planted seeds, the earth produced all they needed to thrive. It was a paradise for human existence. However, after creating man, God placed him in the Garden of Eden with a job description: "Dress" and "keep" the garden (Gen. 2:15). This was not punishment for anything Adam had done wrong; it was an honor bestowed upon Adam as a reflection of the creative power of God. Participating with God in His creation was fulfilling and pleasurable for Adam and Eve.

After they succumbed to temptation and engaged in disobedience, however, the picture changed. Work would require toil, labor, blood, sweat, and tears. God told Adam that because of his sin, the ground that had once yielded fruit with little human effort was now cursed, and "in sorrow [toil] shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (3:17). Adam's sin resulted in the thorns and thistles that Adam would struggle with as he tried,

through the sweat of his brow, to produce harvests to sustain himself and his family (vv. 18, 19). While most people no longer need to engage in farming to provide food for themselves, the result of human sin was that humanity's work, which was once a pleasure, became laborious. Work itself is not a curse, but the resistance faced in a fallen world can make work difficult, resulting in physical or mental stress requiring regular periods of rest. Still, as a part of redeemed humanity, a Christian can find joy even on the job.

Questions for Application

How can a Christian overcome the toils of a job and continue to maintain joy, day in and day out?

How does the curse of sin affect redeemed Christians living triumphantly in a fallen world?

B. The Continuing Command for Rest

Deut. 5:12-15

In the second recitation of the Law to the generation who came out of the 40-year wilderness wandering, the people were again commanded, "Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee" (Deut. 5:12). The cycle of work and rest is repeated, with the seventh day to be a day of rest for the people of God, their animals, any foreigners living within their borders, and even the servants (vv. 13, 14). In the wilderness, the Israelites were not even to collect manna on the Sabbath: "Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none" (Exod. 16:26). On the Sabbath, even God suspended His provision of manna. The day was to be sanctified, meaning it was set apart from all other days as a holy (special and unique) day.

In addition to being a day of rest, the Sabbath was set aside for the people to remember their deliverance. God wanted the second generation of Israelites to remember that they were brought out of Egyptian bondage by God's strong arm (Deut. 5:15). Likewise, Christians should express their heartfelt appreciation for God's deliverance from sin through "the Lamb of God, which taketh

away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In a cycle of work and rest, Sunday is set aside by most Christians as their day of worship. Jesus was resurrected “very early in the morning the first day of the week” (Mark 16:2), and the early Church soon began to observe Sunday as a day for rest and worship.

Questions for Application

Why do you think the second giving of the Law in Deuteronomy emphasized deliverance as a reason for observing the Sabbath, while the first edition in Exodus emphasized God’s rest?

What does the extended description about keeping the Sabbath in Deuteronomy 5:14 say about what matters to the Lord?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Sunday is sometimes called “the Lord’s day,” although that phrase is used only once in the Bible (Rev. 1:10). However, as Jesus told the woman at the well, the main thing God is seeking is people who worship Him “in spirit and in truth”; therefore, every day should be dedicated to the Lord by His people (John 4:23). Just as worship is not a matter of this mountain or that mountain, it is not a matter of this day or that day. However, we are created with the need to observe periods of rest and worship, and the biblical pattern is a seventh day of rest wherein we suspend our work to thank God for His provision and our salvation.

3. RELIGIOUS SEASONS FOR REST

A. Passover and Pentecost

Lev. 23:4-8, 15, 21

In addition to weekly Sabbaths in which no work was to be done, there were additional days, referred to as “holy convocations,” in which normal work was suspended, and the Jewish people dedicated themselves to the Lord (Lev. 23:4). There are seven Jewish festivals identified in the Mosaic Law.

According to Leviticus 23:4-8, each spring the Jewish people were instructed to observe “the Lord’s Passover” on “the fifteenth day of the first month,” which takes place in March/April in modern calendars (v. 4). The Passover meal with the Passover lamb was set aside by the Jewish people as a day to remember that God protected their firstborn sons from death while using the plague to deliver them from Egypt. The next day and for seven days following Passover, they were to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. During this week, they were to eat only unleavened bread, do no ordinary work, and give “an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (v. 8).

After “seven sabbaths” and a day (v. 15), or 50 days after the day of the Passover, the people were instructed to observe the “feast of the harvest” (Exod. 23:16), which is also referred to as “Pentecost” in Acts 2:1. (*Pentecost* is from the Greek word for *fiftieth*.) This was also a holy convocation requiring the people to bring meat to the Temple as a “wave offering” to the Lord (Lev. 23:15). As on the Sabbath, the people were to do no “servile” (customary) work on this day (v. 21). It was a holy day of rededication and a renewed commitment to God. The critical point to remember is that God included days of rest and rededication throughout the year for His people.

Questions for Application

What special days does the Church celebrate, and how can these days help Christians remember what Christ has done to secure our salvation?

How does the Lord’s Supper (Communion) serve to remind us of the sacrifice of Christ and call us to recommit ourselves to Him?

B. Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles

Lev. 23:23-25, 27, 28, 33-36

In the autumn of the Hebrew calendar, the Feast of Trumpets is on the first day of the seventh month (late September). It was also referred to as “a sabbath” (Lev. 23:24), and no work was done. Instead, rams’ horns and the priests’ silver trumpets were blown. This festival celebrated the

harvest and announced the preparation for the Day of Atonement. Once again, “servile [customary] work” was suspended so that the people could focus on their observance of this holy day (v. 25). This emphasized the need to prioritize worship in their lives.

The Day of Atonement was “on the tenth day” of the same month as the Feast of Trumpets (v. 27). During this time, the people stopped working so they could “afflict [their] souls, and offer an offering ... unto the Lord” (v. 28). The priests engaged in religious rituals, with strict adherence to the Law, to atone for the sins of the people. The word translated “atonement,” from the Hebrew noun *kippur*, means “to wipe out.” Through this annual ceremony, the priests interceded for the people so that God would purge the people of their sins. It was a sacred day when no one was to work (v. 28).

Five days later, the people were to observe the Feast of Tabernacles, one of three pilgrimage festivals that include Passover and Pentecost (v. 34). The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) commemorates the journey of the Jewish people through the wilderness following their deliverance from Egypt. The people were to build and live in booths or tents for seven days. They were not to do any of their regular work but were to make an offering by fire to the Lord.

Questions for Application

Does your church have annually scheduled times for remembrance of special days in its history? If so, what are they?

What, if any, special days in your own journey of faith do you commemorate? Explain.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Significantly, Jesus was a devout Jewish man who observed these holy days on the Jewish calendar. However, even as He observed them, He was fulfilling all the Law and the Prophets (Luke 24:44). During His ministry, Jesus instituted two significant rites or ordinances: water baptism (Matt. 28:19, 20) and the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:14-20). These ordinances remind the Church

of Christ’s work in its salvation from beginning to end. Such events should be practiced reverently and solemnly.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

As Christ’s disciples, we follow His example. The Gospels show Jesus regularly removed Himself from ministering to the crowds to spend time alone in pray with His heavenly Father. These periods of rest were necessary for the Son of Man to carry out God’s plan of redemption faithfully. If the Son of God took time to step away from the crowds to refresh and renew His spirit, then we should probably do the same. Consider how you can build regular times of physical and spiritual rest into your busy schedule and do it.

Ministry in Action

Encourage others to prioritize a regular day of rest in their lives. Resting from work while revitalizing our spirits is a biblical principle.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Gathering Manna, Keeping the Sabbath.**

Exodus 16:4, 5, 22-26

Tuesday: **The Sabbath Instituted for Israel.**

Exodus 31:12-17

Wednesday: **Right Living and Sabbath Observation.**

Isaiah 56:1-7

Thursday: **Jesus Ministers on the Sabbath.**

Luke 13:11-16

Friday: **Paul Speaks on the Sabbath.**

Acts 13:13-16, 42, 43

Saturday: **Christians and Sabbath-Keeping.**

Colossians 2:8-17

Lesson

2

Biblical Wisdom for Work (Proverbs–Ecclesiastes)

A right attitude toward work makes it more rewarding.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson, with passages from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, reveals that the significance of our labors comes through our relationship with God. Work is rewarding when we perform it with a proper attitude but can seem mundane and meaningless when we engage in it in a self-serving rather than a God-honoring fashion. The Book of Proverbs illustrates that work can result in profit, but perhaps just as importantly, work can provide one with purpose. The lazy person often lacks both means and meaning in his life. Ecclesiastes reveals that work that does not honor God may bring profit but still lacks significance, thus becoming vain or meaningless.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. About Work and Laziness
Prov. 14:23; 18:9; 23:4; 24:27, 30-34
 - A. Work: Profit and Purpose
 - B. The House of the Slothful
2. What Makes Work Vain?
Eccl. 1:3; 2:4-6, 11, 18-23; 5:12
 - A. Empty Labor, Empty Life
 - B. The Work of the Wise
3. What Makes Work Rewarding?
Eccl. 9:7-10; 11:1-6; 12:13, 14
 - A. God Gives Work Meaning
 - B. The Worker Who Trusts God

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Identify for students key passages of Scripture that emphasize the importance of work for both provision and purpose.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Encourage students to have a positive attitude toward work because God gives them the skill and the strength to honor Him through it.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Point out that we must never allow work or career goals to become more important in our lives than worshiping, serving, and honoring God.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

Given that King Solomon received special wisdom from God in response to his humble request (1 Kgs. 3:5-12), it is likely that many of the sayings in Proverbs were written or collected by Solomon. Proverbs contains godly and wise sayings for the reader and identifies behaviors that characterize the wise (cf. Prov. 9:10). The Book of Ecclesiastes also appears to reflect wisdom from Solomon's life, concluding that life, work, and pleasure are vain without God.

GOLDEN TEXT: PROVERBS 18:9

He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster. (KJV)

One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys. (NIV)

King James Version

Proverbs 14:23 In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.

24:27 Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

32 Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

33 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

34 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

2:4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees.

18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

9:7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

11:1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

New International Version

Proverbs 14:23 All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

24:27 Put your outdoor work in order and get your fields ready; after that, build your house.

30 I went past the field of a sluggard, past the vineyard of someone who has no sense;

31 thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins.

32 I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw:

33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—

34 and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?

2:4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.

18 I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.

9:7 Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do.

8 Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil.

9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.

10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

11:1 Ship your grain across the sea; after many days you may receive a return.

2 Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight; you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.

6 Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “What is your main motivation for engaging in work?” After hearing students’ responses, note there is a difference between doing a job and finding purpose and meaning through one’s employment. Even so-called menial labor can provide meaning when we understand and appreciate that God provided our strength and opportunities to sustain us, feed our families, and honor Him with our resources to advance His kingdom. However, refusing to work when we have the ability and opportunities dishonors God and invites poverty into our lives.

1. ABOUT WORK AND LAZINESS

A. Work: Profit and Purpose

Prov. 14:23; 18:9; 23:4

Many proverbs contrast the rewards of hard work with the results of laziness (Prov. 10:4; 12:24; 13:4; 28:19). Proverbs 14 contains many contrasting concepts identified by the word *but*, which juxtaposes a positive character trait or practice with a negative one and occurs 26 times in the 35 verses of chapter 14. For example, Proverbs 14:1 states, “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.” Verse 23 contrasts the one who works and the one who only talks. There is a profit (benefit) to labor, but the person who only talks wastes time and opportunity. It seems there have always been those who do more talking than working, and such people are great wasters (18:9). These are typically lazy people who talk big and work little. They waste their employers’ resources through unproductive time for which they are being paid.

Proverbs 23:4 points out that the motivation for work should be more than wealth. There are many examples of people who sacrificed their families and their health to climb the ladder of success, only to discover that their ladder was leaning against the wrong wall. If wealth and what it offers are the driving force of our lives, then we have made a god of riches, and such a god is never satisfied, regardless of our sacrifices. Instead, this proverb encourages the reader to seek wisdom because

wealth can be taken away, but wisdom remains and empowers wise people to rise again even if they must start over at the bottom.

Questions for Application

How would you counsel an employee who does more talking than working?

In what ways can laziness destroy a person’s life?

B. The House of the Slothful

Prov. 24:27, 30-24

Proverbs 24:27 counsels the reader to prioritize preparing the fields for planting before focusing on the home. A beautiful house without enough food for its inhabitants to eat reveals misplaced priorities. Some cultures focus first on appearances and trying to look as if one is more successful than one is. However, this proverb says to prepare and plant the fields first and then work on the house. Planning with proper priorities will produce more success than improper priorities and poor planning.

The proverb continues with the writer’s statement that he observed the field of the slothful and unwise man who lacked understanding. That field was not productive; it was overrun with thorns and weeds, and the stone wall around it “was broken down” (v. 31). This is the field of a man who was both lazy and unwise. This man would have no harvest. However, the writer had learned something from the field of the foolish man (v. 32). What was the lesson? It was that what may seem like a little rest here and there when one should be working results in a lack of resources. Little by little, poverty creeps up on the slothful man “like a thief” (NIV), and then suddenly the needs of the sleeper hit him “[like] an armed man” (v. 34) demanding to be satisfied – the bills must be paid, the children must be fed, and taxes are due.

Questions for Application

How can parents help their children prepare well for their futures?

What can a church do to help a person who takes no initiative to meet his or her own needs or the needs of the person's family?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

It has been said that if one fails to plan, then one plans to fail. This may seem like a cliché, but there is much truth in this saying. The Bible reveals that God has plans. In fact, He has plans for our lives (Rom. 8:28). Likewise, the wise person will pray, plan, prioritize, prepare, and then execute the plan. Lazy people trust luck and circumstances to meet their needs, but the wise person prayerfully sets goals, works diligently to achieve them, and enjoys the fruits of godly plans and faithful efforts to bring one's vision to reality.

2. WHAT MAKES WORK VAIN?

A. Empty Labor, Empty Life

Eccl. 1:3; 2:4-6, 11

Although humans were designed in the image and likeness of God with the capacity to engage in creative and productive work, sometimes a person's efforts can feel empty and meaningless. The writer of Ecclesiastes (called the "Preacher") used a word translated "vain" or "vanity" to describe this meaninglessness. The Preacher seemed to have it all: fame, wealth, houses, land, many beautiful women in his life, and people's adoration. The biblical text, however, reveals that even with all this, he lost his focus on God, and in the absence of God, the Preacher began to see that everything he had done and accomplished was vanity. In 1:3, he essentially asked, "What's the point of all that I've done?"

In chapter 2, he began listing the things he had accomplished. He built houses and planted "vineyards," "gardens," and "orchards [with] all kinds of fruits" (vv. 4, 5). He constructed "pools" that supplied water to various trees, which provided various kinds of wood for his building projects (v. 6). Everywhere he looked, he could see what

his labors had produced. His success was the envy of the world. He had "servants," "cattle," and the best entertainment money could buy (vv. 7, 8). He said he still had his "wisdom" (v. 9), and if he saw anything he wanted to try, he tried it (v. 10).

After years of planning, working, and creating, one might think he would have found satisfaction in his accomplishments. The Preacher said that at first he did have joy and delight in his labors, and he claimed he had a right to rejoice in his works (v. 10), but then something changed. He said he looked again at all that he had done, "and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (v. 11).

Questions for Application

If you had the money and power to do anything you wanted, what is the first thing you would do? Why?

Why do you think the Preacher came to see all his work "under the sun" (life on earth) as vanity?

B. The Work of the Wise

Eccl. 2:18-23; 5:12

The Preacher realized that regardless of what he had accomplished – his wealth, his possessions, and so forth – he would have to leave it all behind when he passed from this life to the next (Eccl. 2:18). Also it troubled him that he could not know whether the person who would take his place and inherit the benefits of his labors would be wise or foolish (v. 19). Either way, someone else would be eating from his orchards and living in his houses. He had worked hard to achieve success, but someone else, who might be foolish and lazy, would inherit it all. This distressed him. When he was a young man looking ahead to his goals, the thrill of the vision propelled him forward in wisdom and God's blessings. Now, however, later in life, he realized it would all end up in the hands of someone else, and he concluded, "This also is vanity" (v. 19).

This thought took the joy out of his life. He had it all, but now he took no pleasure in it. He said he was the man who worked, the man with

wisdom, and the man who labored, yet another, who had not earned it, would inherit it (v. 21). For the Preacher, this was “vanity and a great evil” (v. 21). He wondered what was the point of all his labor if someone else enjoyed all that he had worked for.

At this point in Solomon’s life (if Solomon was the Preacher), he had made many compromises to form alliances with other kingdoms. He married many pagan women and allowed them to build temples to their gods (1 Kgs. 11:1-11). He had all he ever dreamed of, but he compromised his relationship with God, and now nothing he had accomplished brought him joy. He once found fulfillment in his labors, but now, with all that any man could imagine possessing, he found no rest, no sleep, and no satisfaction (Eccl. 5:12).

Questions for Application

Which do you think is more fulfilling: dreaming and working to achieve your goals, or having all that you dreamed of and worked to accomplish and possess? Explain.

How can we help our children or grandchildren appreciate what we leave behind for them when we die?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Sometimes dreaming, planning, and working to see a vision achieved can be as exciting and fulfilling as achieving the dream. Even as we envision a preferred future in the Lord, we must consider the legacy we leave behind for those who will follow us. The Preacher lamented that he had to leave all he had achieved to someone else, who would benefit from his labors. A legacy is more than material possessions left to one’s heirs. A legacy includes an example of what it takes to reach one’s goals, and it teaches the next generation about the value of godly goals, faith, and hard work.

3. WHAT MAKES WORK REWARDING?

A. God Gives Work Meaning

Eccl. 9:7-10

Having considered the implications of leaving his wealth behind to others, the Preacher began to think that perhaps great wealth and possessions are not what gives one’s life meaning. In Ecclesiastes 9, he began to consider the implications of the fact that good and evil things happen to both wicked and righteous people: “One event happens to the righteous and the wicked” (v. 2, NKJV). Then he observed that everyone dies, and “a living dog is better than a dead lion” (v. 4). Therefore, in verse 7, he instructed the reader: “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.”

In short, one should enjoy the life one has and give God one’s best. Wake up every morning, wash your face, put on clean clothes, and seize the day (v. 8). Among the things the Preacher said a man should appreciate are his wife and his opportunities to work, create, and accomplish something of significance (vv. 9, 10). His counsel is that people should do it now, do it while they have the chance, because once a person dies, all opportunities die with the person. The Preacher was not saying one should live only *for* the moment, but he was undoubtedly saying one should live *in* the moment.

Questions for Application

What did the Preacher mean by saying, “A living dog is better than a dead lion” (v. 4)? Explain.

In what ways can our dreams and goals distract us from the blessings God has already placed in our lives?

B. The Worker Who Trusts God

Eccl. 11:1-6; 12:13, 14

In Ecclesiastes 11:1-6, the Preacher pointed out there is much a person cannot know about the ways God works in nature or in a person’s life. In verses 5 and 6, the Preacher repeated “thou knowest not” three times. However, ignorance of

such details as when rain will come (v. 3), when or which way a tree will fall (v. 3), the direction of the wind (v. 4), or the way a baby is formed in the womb (v. 5) should not result in inactivity. Despite what a person may not know, he should continue to do right by others (v. 2) and to do what he knows to do because God continues to work even if a person does not understand how He does it (v. 6). A person may not always know the outcome of his hard work, but a person does know that the outcome of doing nothing is a harvest of nothing. Therefore, “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (v. 1), meaning, “Do good whenever you can because the good you do will eventually return to you.”

In 12:13, 14, the Preacher drew upon all that he had observed and contemplated and came to a concise conclusion about what makes one’s labors and life meaningful: “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (v. 13). God created humanity for relationship with Him, but this relationship is possible only through obedience to God’s Word and His will. Apart from that relationship, everything a person achieves or possesses is vanity. One day, all will stand before God to give an accounting of their works and secret things, whether they be good or evil (v. 14; see also Rev. 20:13). If a person has not maintained a right relationship with God through faith and obedience, then nothing that person has done in this life will be of any benefit in the next. It is one’s works that will follow him into eternity (Rev. 14:13).

Questions for Application

What are some examples of times when doing something would be better than doing nothing, even if we do not have all the information we would like?

What are some examples of what it means to cast our bread upon the water and then see it return to us?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

There is a consistent principle in the Bible of sowing and reaping. In Galatians 6:7, the apostle Paul said, “...For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” This was symbolic language drawn from the natural world, but it applies in many areas of life, including spiritually and relationally. If we do not invest ourselves in having and maintaining our relationship with God and others, then nothing else we do will bring joy or satisfaction, and our lives will feel empty and meaningless. However, if we walk faithfully with God, we can find joy in all we do.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus came to do the works of the Father, who sent Him (John 9:4). Likewise, we are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and faithfully do the works He has given us to do as salt and light. The works we are called to do as followers of Christ are not works to secure our salvation because Christ has done all that needs to be done for that. However, we are to be ambassadors of Christ, appealing to others of their need to believe the gospel. Let us be diligent not only to hold out the gospel to others, but to live in such a way that we make the gospel desirable to those in need of its life-saving message.

Ministry in Action

People watching our lives can tell whether our achievements or our relationships with others are most important to us. We should always prioritize God and others (Phil. 2:3).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Noah Working.**
Genesis 6:14-22

Tuesday: **Isaac Working.**
Genesis 26:12-18

Wednesday: **Jacob Working.**
Genesis 31:36-42

Thursday: **Jesus' Disciples Working.**
John 21:1-12

Friday: **Apostle Paul Working.**
Acts 18:1-3

Saturday: **Workers in an Evil Occupation.**
Acts 19:24-32

Lesson

3

Guidance for Work and Rest (New Testament)

Both work and rest are ordained of God.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson looks at the topics of work and rest from a New Testament perspective. First, the teaching and example of Jesus are explored. Jesus consistently endeavored to do the work His heavenly Father sent Him to do. Likewise, Jesus instructed His disciples to balance Kingdom work with periods of rest and recuperation. Second, Paul's teaching and example regarding the role of Christian work as a service to God and an example of engagement in the world are highlighted. Last, Paul emphasized the importance of Christian work, as opposed to laziness or sloth. He had an unfavorable view of those who could work but refused to do so.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. Jesus on Work and Rest
John 5:16, 17; 9:4; 17:1, 4; 6:26, 27;
Mark 6:30, 31; Matt. 11:28-30
 - A. Jesus' Work Glorifies the Father
 - B. Disciples Called to Work and Rest
2. Paul on Christians Working
Acts 20:33-35; Eph. 4:28; Col. 3:22-24;
1 Thess. 2:9; 4:11, 12
 - A. Paul's Customary Practice
 - B. Work That Honors God
3. The Christian Work Ethic
Eph. 6:5-9; 2 Thess. 3:6-13
 - A. Christian Employees Who Honor God
 - B. Dishonoring God by Not Working

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Help students appreciate that Jesus faithfully worked to honor His Father, and Paul likewise worked to serve and honor God.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Encourage students to embrace the idea that our employment and work in the kingdom of God should glorify God.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Inspire students to give their best on the job and in the church, viewing their efforts as a sacrifice to God and a witness to others.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

Work was deeply linked to Jewish cultural and religious beliefs in the first century. Labor was valued as a form of worship, while the importance of rest, especially the Sabbath, was also emphasized. The belief that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh illustrated work and rest as a sacred and moral duty. This religious and cultural reality shaped early Christianity.

GOLDEN TEXT: MATTHEW 11:28, 29

[Jesus said,] Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (KJV)

[Jesus said,] "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (NIV)

King James Version

John 5:16 Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Mark 6:30 The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Acts 20:35 I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Ephesians 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

Ephesians 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

New International Version

John 5:16 Because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.

17 In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."

6:26 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Mark 6:30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Ephesians 4:28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you,

12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Ephesians 6:6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people,

8 because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “Should a person do nothing but rest on Sundays, or can activities other than one’s regular job also be a form of rest?” After allowing time for discussion, point out that in Jesus’ day, religious leaders such as the scribes and Pharisees added the teachings of man to the Law, making the observance of the Sabbath stressful. However, God provided a day of rest as a blessing for humanity and not a burden for humanity, as Judaism had made it. Note that Jesus replied to the Pharisees’ misunderstanding of the Sabbath, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

1. JESUS ON WORK AND REST**A. Jesus’ Work Glorifies the Father**

John 5:16, 17; 9:4; 17:1, 4

In John 5, Jesus was in Jerusalem at the pool called Bethesda. Many people were there because it was believed that the first person who could enter the pool when the water was “troubled” would be healed of whatever disease he had (v. 4). Jesus saw a man who had been afflicted with an infirmity for 38 years lying on a mat (v. 5). Jesus asked him, “Do you want to be made well?” (v. 6, NKJV). The man replied that he did not have anyone to help him into the pool, and others always entered it before he could. Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (v. 8). The man was immediately healed and “took up his bed, and walked” (v. 9). However, it was the Sabbath, and according to the Jewish religious leaders, a person was not allowed to carry his bed on the Sabbath. So the religious leaders told the man he was breaking the law. But the man said the one who healed him told him to take up his bed and walk (v. 11).

Instead of celebrating the healing, the Jewish leaders wanted to persecute Jesus for healing the man and telling him to carry his bed on the Sabbath. Jesus was not intimidated. He told them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (5:17, NKJV). God the Father is always working, even on the Sabbath. Therefore, doing the will of the Father, Jesus was

also working on the Sabbath. In John 9:4, Jesus told His disciples, “I must work the works of him that sent me.” This was the destiny of Jesus, and He embraced it. His life’s work was to glorify the Father (17:1), and He did this through the work the Father sent Him to do (v. 4). Doing the works that God equips and sends the Church to do glorifies Him.

Questions for Application

Why did the Jewish religious leaders add requirements to the Law of Moses?

God is always at work, so what were the implications of Jesus’ saying He also would work, even on the Sabbath?

B. Disciples Called to Work and Rest

John 6:26, 27; Mark 6:30, 31; Matt. 11:28-30

In John 6, after Jesus fed the multitudes, the crowds followed Him across the Sea of Galilee. When they found Him, Jesus chided the people for looking for another free meal instead of recognizing the Messianic implications of the sign. He then told them they should not be working only for temporal things, such as meat, which are eventually depleted. Instead, they should focus on doing the things pertaining to everlasting life (v. 27). He had given them food in the wilderness, but He had much more to offer them if they were willing to believe and receive it. God the Father had sent Jesus and sealed Him to provide the gift of life if they were ready to accept it.

In Mark 6, not long after the death of John the Baptist, Jesus was with His apostles, who were giving Him an update on their ministries. They told Jesus “both what they had done, and what they had taught” (v. 30). Hearing of their works of faith, Jesus counseled them to take a break. Wherever Jesus and His apostles traveled, the people would be seeking ministry and teaching from them, so Jesus said, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while” (v. 31). There were times when they were so busy ministering to others that they did not have time even to

eat. While ministry is important, Jesus also knew these men needed to rest periodically. Even Jesus observed times of rest in His ministry, such as the time when He went to a mountain alone to pray.

To the people laboring under the heavy burden of life’s daily challenges and the requirements of the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus promised, “...I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). By coming to Him, accepting His teaching, and following His example, they would find rest for their souls (v. 29). There is physical exhaustion for which one needs physical rest, but there is also spiritual exhaustion that affects one’s soul. When someone comes to Jesus, who is “meek and lowly in heart” (v. 29), that person finds that the “yoke” (the work or purpose) He gives “is easy, and [His] burden is light” (v. 30). This is in part because, unlike the hypocritical Jewish religious leaders, Jesus showed His disciples the way and gave them the power to accomplish it. The people labored under the Law, which had been weighed down with man-made requirements, but Jesus was offering an easy yoke and a light burden. He would do all the heavy lifting on the cross.

Questions for Application

Do you sometimes feel guilty for needing a break from time to time? How do you explain to others that you need a break?

Under what burdensome yokes and heavy burdens do people without Jesus often labor?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Jesus exemplified a heart of obedience and devotion, seeing every task, even the cross, as part of the purpose given to Him by His heavenly Father. Through His faithfulness, Jesus glorified the Father and was Himself glorified. This is a powerful reminder for us to embrace the roles and responsibilities God has placed in our lives. When we engage in works of faith and labors of love, we glorify Him and fulfill our calling in His kingdom. Let us strive to walk in that same spirit of dedication and trust.

2. PAUL ON CHRISTIANS WORKING

A. Paul’s Customary Practice

Acts 20:33-35; Eph. 4:28

Paul never wanted anyone to accuse him of being in ministry for the money. While he had a right to request provisions from those to whom he ministered, Paul and the teams who traveled with him chose instead to work with their own hands to meet their own needs (Acts 20:34). Not only did Paul want to ward off any accusations of coveting anyone’s “silver, or gold, or apparel,” but he also wanted to provide an example for others (v. 33). He was teaching through word and deed that by their labors, they should be able to meet their own needs and also “support the weak,” such as the elderly, the young, or the infirm (v. 35). Paul quoted Jesus, saying, “...It is more blessed to give than to receive” (v. 35).

In Ephesians 4:28, Paul reiterated the importance of work as a means of meeting one’s own needs and providing for others. Speaking to some people who had once been thieves, Paul implored them never to steal again but instead to find honest work, to use their hands for good instead of evil. Rather than taking from others what was not theirs to take, they should use their hands to earn wages or goods and then give to others who were in need. The grace of God will turn a life around so that the thief becomes the worker, and the taker becomes the giver.

Questions for Application

What do the words “It is more blessed to give than to receive” mean to you?

How has God’s salvation of your life been used to help you become a blessing to others?

B. Work That Honors God

Col. 3:22-24; 1 Thess. 2:9; 4:11, 12

When the apostle Paul was writing, slavery was simply a fact of life in the ancient world. But the gospel of Jesus Christ, which emphasizes love and the dignity of all people, sowed the seeds for the end of this evil institution. In Paul’s day, one did not become a slave because of race or

ethnicity. Rather, one might be a slave because one was unable to pay one's debts or because one was a prisoner of war.

Paul instructed Christian slaves to obey their "masters according to the flesh" to honor God (Col. 3:22). The ultimate Master and Judge is not the master in the flesh but God. Therefore, slaves should always give their best, doing work "heartily" (from the heart) as if they were doing it for God (v. 23). God is the one who will reward a person with "the inheritance," which was something slaves rarely received. Because Christian slaves were serving Jesus Christ, they could anticipate "an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32, NKJV).

In 1 Thessalonians 2:9, Paul also reminded his readers that he and his coworkers had worked to meet their own needs while they ministered among the Thessalonians. Some may have accused Paul of ministering only for monetary gain, but Paul said the Thessalonian Christians knew this was false because they would remember the "labour and travail" of Paul and his team (v. 9). Later in this letter, Paul spoke to some in the church who were not working to meet their own needs but might have been taking advantage of the church's resources and generosity. Paul instructed those not working to lead a quiet life of study, to conduct their own business, and to work with their own hands (4:11). In this way, the people outside the church could not accuse church members of being lazy or being beggars. Instead, if the Christians engaged in honest work, they would have a good reputation in the community and would not need to ask others to supply their needs (v. 12).

Questions for Application

How does Paul's guidance to a servant apply to a worker's responsibility as it pertains to his or her employer?

Why did Paul insist that he and his coworkers meet their own needs through their own labors while establishing a church?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Whether pastors should have their needs met by the church, meet their own needs independently of the church, or some combination of both is a decision pastors and their families must make. Paul regularly worked while planting churches, although he welcomed resources from previous churches he had established. Paul did not want to be associated with false teachers who claimed to have a word from God but were only hoping to get rich. On the other hand, Jesus and Paul also stated that a minister has a biblical right to support from the church when it is available (compare Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:7-15; and 1 Tim. 5:17, 18). However, whether a person is a minister or a mechanic, anyone who receives a salary should give an honest day's work so that God is glorified through His people.

3. THE CHRISTIAN WORK ETHIC

A. Christian Employees Who Honor God

Eph. 6:5-9

Paul shared a message that emphasized making Jesus Christ the center of one's life, whether one is a slave or an owner. Slaves who had been born again Paul encouraged to be exemplary workers, reflecting Christ so brightly in their actions that these actions could soften their masters' hearts, even fostering a bond as brothers in Christ (see Phlm. 1:15,16). He urged slaves to see their work as being "the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6). Similarly, Paul reminded masters to treat their slaves with kindness and without threats, recognizing that all are ultimately servants of the same "Master ... in heaven," who shows no favoritism (v. 9). In essence, Paul's message extends to everyone, encouraging a work ethic that honors God – whether dealing with kind or with difficult bosses – by giving one's best effort to the Lord and trusting that God will reward such faithfulness.

Questions for Application

How can a Christian worker be an example of Christ's character when his or her boss is extremely difficult to work for?

How can lazy or problematic Christian workers make life more difficult for other Christians?

B. Dishonoring God by Not Working

2 Thess. 3:6-13

Apparently, some did not heed Paul's counsel that Christians should work rather than go house to house seeking sustenance. In 2 Thessalonian 3, Paul addressed this issue again, and this time somewhat more forcefully. Paul said he was commanding the church to separate themselves from people who were causing trouble and not submitting to spiritual authority (v. 6). Again, Paul referred to his coworkers' example among the Thessalonians, pointing out that they were never trying to get a free meal from anyone, "but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you" (v. 8, NKJV). They took this position not because Paul and his team had no right to ask for support; they did have a right. They did this because they were trying to set an example of working diligently to meet their own needs so as not to be a burden to the Thessalonian church.

Paul then reminded the Thessalonian Christians of the blunt command he had previously given them, namely, "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (v. 10). Nevertheless, Paul heard there were some in the church who were "disorderly, working not at all, but [were] busybodies" (v. 11). Paul commanded and exhorted again that they should stop causing trouble, get to work if able, "and eat their own bread" (v. 12). Those who were working Paul encouraged not to get tired of doing the right thing (v. 13).

Questions for Application

Why would some of the Christians at Thessalonica have quit working and started going house to house looking for free meals?

What things can a church do to help people find gainful employment?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Codependency is a circular relationship in which one person needs the other, and the other person, in turn, wants to feel needed. When codependency happens, it hurts the people we are trying to help. The church should never foster codependent relationships by handing out food or money to people without helping them learn to meet their own needs through their own efforts. Paul was blunt in his comments, saying that the church should never support slothfulness.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

As disciples of Christ, we should always be involved in works of faith and labors of love that glorify God and provide a good testimony for the name of Christ and His church (see 1 Thess. 1:2-7). Consider how your work ethic may play into your witness of Christ among your unsaved coworkers. Think about how keeping up your home and yard may make a way for the gospel to be more readily received by your unbelieving neighbors. Reflect on ways you and your local church, as a testimony to the love and goodness of God, can minister to the needs of those in your community who are *unable* to meet all their daily needs.

Ministry in Action

Churches can engage in networking to help connect Christian workers with employers and provide training for writing resumes and engaging in interviews.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **The Israelites Punished With Work.**

Exodus 5:1-9

Tuesday: **Ruth's Work Rewarded.**

Ruth 2:8-17

Wednesday: **Nehemiah's Great Work.**

Nehemiah 6:1-4

Thursday: **A Virtuous and Industrious Woman.**

Proverbs 31:10-20

Friday: **Zebedee, a Commercial Fisherman.**

Mark 1:16-20

Saturday: **God Making All Things New.**

Revelation 21:1-5

Letter to the Galatians

In recent years, study of the apostle Paul and his letters has centered on the kind of Judaism Paul opposed and the way he understood the new covenant in relation to the old covenant. Beginning with E.P. Sanders and his widely influential work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), the “New Perspective on Paul” (NPP) was born. Others followed Sanders, modifying and building upon his work. Most notable are James Dunn and N.T. Wright.

Kent L. Yinger, in his book *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction*, summarizes the basics of the NPP. First, NPP has to do with Judaism during the Second Temple Period (roughly from 538 B.C. to A.D. 70). Second, NPP places an emphasis on *covenantal nomism*, which “is the view that one’s place in God’s plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression” (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 75). It was covenantal nomism, *not* legalism, that characterized Judaism in the first century A.D. Third, Paul was not opposing *legalism* in his letters, since first-century Judaism was not legalistic, according NPP. Fourth, first-century Judaism taught that the Jewish people were saved by God’s grace (the nation was saved/elected) and responded by following the Law. In this way, the old covenant was not so dissimilar from the new covenant. Fifth, first-century Judaism (covenantal nomism) was concerned with identity markers (boundary markers), which identified a person as a covenant member. This was the reason for Judaism’s emphasis on circumcision and eating Kosher. Finally, what makes the old covenant and the new covenant different is “that Jesus is Israel’s Messiah and the Lord of all creation. No longer is Torah the defining center of God’s dealings; what counts now is belonging to Christ” (Yinger, *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction*, p. 31).

As influential as NPP has become, especially in Christian higher education, it is not without its challenges. (See the monumental two-volume work *Justification and Variegated Nomism*.) Some major problems with NPP’s portrayal of first-century Judaism and NPP’s interpretation of Paul’s letters are: (1) It makes first-century Judaism into a monolithic belief system without any variation. Other biblical scholars have shown first-century Judaism was widely varied (thus the designation “variegated nomism”), much like the proliferations of Christian denominations and theological traditions today. (2) If NPP claims that first-century Judaism is about grace to *get* in but effort to *stay* in (circumcision, dietary laws), then it is no longer a religion of grace. (3) When the apostle Paul contrasts “works of the law” with “faith in Christ,” he is not merely trading one set of identity markers for another but is addressing fundamental differences when it comes to the ground of one’s salvation or justification before God. At least some Jewish people of the first century had come to believe that one was justified before God by keeping the Law, a belief which Paul vehemently opposes. (4) When it comes to defining *justification*, NPP proponents dismiss the forensic (declarative) nature of the New Testament Greek verb *dikaioō*, which is well attested in ancient Greek lexicons. No ancient Greek lexicon defines *justification* “to declare that someone is a member of the community of the people of God,” something which NPP’s more well-known adherents believe to be the case.

This brief overview of NPP is *not* intended to get you to spend more time studying NPP, but to immerse yourself in God’s holy, inerrant, and inspired Word.

—Keith Marriner

Lesson

4

Only One Gospel

The only Gospel is about Jesus Christ.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

Paul's letter to the Galatians addressed a critical issue within the churches of Galatia, where some believers had been misled by a false gospel. After a brief greeting, Paul confronted this matter head on, emphasizing that the message he preached was not of human origin but divinely revealed by God. To counter the false teachers questioning his authority, Paul argued that his calling and message were directly from God, not self-derived or dependent on human approval. He further stated that the apostles in Jerusalem acknowledged and affirmed his ministry (not that he sought their approval), reinforcing the legitimacy of his message and the truth of the gospel he proclaimed.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. Christian Greetings
Gal. 1:1-5
 - A. From Paul to Churches of Galatia
 - B. Grace and Peace From God
2. There Is No Other Gospel
Gal. 1:6-12
 - A. Paul's Curse on False Preaching
 - B. Paul's Preaching of the Gospel
3. Called and Transformed by Grace
Gal. 1:13-24
 - A. Paul's Testimony
 - B. God Glorified Through Paul's Conversion

TEACHING GOALS

1. Impart and Reinforce Knowledge: Help students understand the reason for Paul's urgency and forcefulness in this letter to the Galatian churches.

2. Influence Attitudes: Emphasize to students that any perversion of the gospel is a serious matter and must be confronted and corrected.

3. Influence Behavior: Encourage students to reject any teaching or doctrine that violates the clear message of the Bible and to stand firm on the foundational truth of God's Word.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

Some Jewish teachers in Jerusalem who accepted Jesus as Messiah struggled with the inclusion of Gentiles among the people of God. Their resistance seemed rooted in the belief that Gentiles could not be saved (or continue to be saved) without following certain aspects of old covenant law. Biblical scholars commonly refer to these false teachers as *Judaizers*. Judaizers were not a unified group but represented Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah who wavered from the one true gospel.

GOLDEN TEXT: GALATIANS 1:9

As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (KJV)

As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! (NIV)

King James Version

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

10 Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

23 They had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me.

New International Version

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—

2 and all the brothers and sisters with me, To the churches in Galatia:

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

11 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin.

12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.

14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased

16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being.

20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

24 And they praised God because of me.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “Why did Paul emphasize his own apostolic authority when dealing with false teachers in the Galatian church?” Paul established his authority as an apostle to highlight the fact that his calling and message came directly from Jesus Christ and not from human origin. He passionately defended the purity of the gospel, warning against false teachings and stressing there is no other salvation apart from the one revealed through Christ. This lesson reveals Paul’s pastoral heart and bold leadership, serving as a reminder to stay rooted in the truth and resist influences that seek to alter or dilute the gospel’s core message.

1. CHRISTIAN GREETINGS

A. From Paul to Churches of Galatia

Gal. 1:1, 2

Paul opened his letter with a distinct and purposeful greeting that set the tone for his message. He began by asserting his apostolic authority, stating, “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)” (Gal. 1:1). His opening remarks established that his calling and mission were divinely ordained and not of human origin, a fact that was crucial, given the challenges to his authority in the Galatian churches. He also tied his identity and message to the work of Christ and God the Father, emphasizing the divine origin of the gospel he preached. By referring to the resurrection, he pointed to the power and authority of God as the foundation of his ministry.

In verse 2, Paul extended his heartfelt greeting on behalf of “all the brethren which are with me,” emphasizing that the other members of his ministry team fully supported his ministry and message. This collective endorsement highlighted that the broader Christian community affirmed Paul’s gospel. By including this detail, Paul stressed the shared nature of the Christian faith, reinforcing the legitimacy of his mission. His opening greeting was carefully crafted to blend both theological and personal elements, reflecting his dual roles as a spiritual leader and a caring mentor. It not

only established his apostolic authority but also declared the divine origin of his message, emphasizing that it was not of human invention but inspired by God. This introduction also served as a foundation for addressing the doctrinal challenges and confusion that had arisen among the Galatian churches. By doing so, Paul set the tone for his letter, preparing to confront and correct the issues troubling the believers while reaffirming the core truths of the gospel.

Questions for Application

Did Paul always open his letters by asserting his apostolic authority? Why was it important in the letter to the Galatians?

Why is it important that what we teach is affirmed by the community of faith?

B. Grace and Peace From God

Gal. 1:3-5

In Galatians 1:3, the apostle Paul opened with a heartfelt blessing: “Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” He began by extending grace and peace, two gifts at the heart of the Christian faith. *Grace* refers to God’s unmerited favor, freely given through Jesus, while *peace* speaks of the deep rest and reconciliation believers have with God because of Christ’s sacrifice. Continuing in verse 4, Paul emphasized the self-giving nature of Jesus, highlighting His voluntary act of laying down His life for humanity’s sins, revealing the depth of Christ’s love and the redemptive purpose behind His crucifixion. Paul drew attention to the selfless act of Jesus, who gave Himself to rescue people not only from sin but also from the brokenness of the world around them.

The passage concludes with a short doxology (statement of praise) in verse 5, stating, “To whom be glory for ever and ever.” This statement focuses on God’s sovereignty and eternal worthiness of praise. These verses serve as a concise summary of the gospel: God’s grace, Christ’s redemptive work, and the ultimate aim of glorifying Him. They root Paul’s message in the transformative

power of the cross. Paul was not looking for any glory for himself but was always directing all the glory back to God. It was God's grace that found Paul and put his feet on the path to God's peace, something Paul never forgot.

Questions for Application

What is the continuing significance of grace and peace in the life of the Christian?

How does Christ "deliver us from this present evil world [age]" (Gal. 1:4)?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Sometimes when we are sharing the gospel, someone will challenge us with the classic question, "Who do you think you are?" They may try to intimidate us because we did not get our Ph.D. in biblical studies or a master's degree in theology. Even Paul, who was basically a walking Bible encyclopedia, was challenged for not being one of the disciples who had walked with Jesus during His ministry in Galilee and Judea. But Paul did *not* throw up his hands and say, "You're right. I have no authority to teach you." Instead, His attitude was, "Listen, I'm not here because I'm the best theologian or because I was one of the Twelve. I'm here because God called me, and that's what matters." So the next time someone questions your credentials, just remember it is not about your résumé; it is about the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. THERE IS NO OTHER GOSPEL

A. Paul's Curse on False Preaching

Gal. 1:6-9

In Galatians 1:6, Paul marveled that the Galatians had "so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." His tone was firm, emphasizing the seriousness of abandoning the message of grace through Christ. This passage reveals Paul's unwavering commitment to the purity of the gospel and his warning against false teachings. Paul's reference to "another gospel" did not suggest there

is more than one valid gospel but emphasized that any deviation from the original message is a perversion (v. 6). Verse 7 expresses Paul's concern about the distortion of the gospel by others who were confusing the Galatian believers. It serves as a reminder of the importance of staying true to the core of the gospel: salvation through grace and faith in Christ alone. Paul's tone here reflected both urgency and care, as he desired to protect the church from being led astray by teachings that compromised the truth. This verse encourages believers today to be discerning, to test what they hear against Scripture, and to hold fast to the purity of the gospel. It is a warning from Paul to prioritize God's truth over human opinions, remembering that even subtle changes to the message can have significant consequences.

In verses 8 and 9, Paul passionately warned against deviating from the true gospel of Christ, emphasizing the seriousness of preaching any false message even if it came from an angel or from Paul. His warning emphasized the importance of unwavering faithfulness to the truth of the gospel. His repetition of the condemnation "let him be accursed," stating that even an angel or Paul himself would be accursed for preaching a false gospel, demonstrates the seriousness of being faithful to God's truth (vv. 8, 9). This passage is a reminder to stay grounded in Scripture and to discern teachings carefully, ensuring they align with God's Word. It also serves as a gentle nudge to evaluate one's own beliefs and practices, guarding against anything that might distort the good news of grace and salvation through Jesus. Paul's boldness here is a call to prioritize truth over popularity, encouraging Christians to remain steadfast in their faith while sharing it with love and integrity. Paul's words are a reminder that faithfulness to the gospel is not optional; it is essential. In an age when competing ideologies abound, this text challenges Christians to remain vigilant, testing all teachings against Scripture to guard against spiritual deception.

Questions for Application

Why was Paul astonished that the Galatians had so quickly turned to a different gospel?

What did Paul say about those who preach a gospel contrary to the one he delivered?

B. Paul's Preaching of the Gospel

Gal. 1:10-12

In Galatians 1:10, Paul asked a set of rhetorical questions: “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?” He emphatically stated that his mission was not to please people but to serve Christ, expressing the incompatibility of allowing human expectations to take priority over being a servant of Christ. Paul challenged believers to examine their motivations, urging them to focus on divine truth over socially accepted views. Paul asserted the divine origin of his message, declaring that the gospel he preached was not a product of human invention or tradition but a direct revelation from Jesus Christ (vv. 11, 12). This reinforced the authority and authenticity of his teachings, setting them apart from any man-made doctrines.

These verses also remind the reader of the power of divine revelation to change one's life. Paul's emphasis on receiving the gospel directly from Christ illustrated the personal and spiritual nature of his calling. It also invites readers to reflect on their own journeys of faith, encouraging them to seek God's guidance rather than relying solely on human wisdom. Ultimately, this passage emphasizes the importance of unwavering commitment to God's truth even in the face of opposition and calls believers to anchor their faith in the message of the gospel, which never changes.

Questions for Application

How should we respond when human expectations conflict with what we know to be God's will for our lives?

Why would Paul's audience need reassurance that his message came directly from Christ and not from human sources?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

At times we can compromise over nonessential things in life – even in the church. For example, we might discuss different opinions on matters such as how often to observe the Lord's Supper. The Bible does not set a specific schedule but says that as often as we do it, we should do it in remembrance of Jesus (Luke 22:19). We can have different opinions without sacrificing unity in the church. However, Paul revealed there can be no compromise when it comes to revealed truths in God's Word, and anyone who distorts God's truth stands on dangerous ground. With regard to anyone perverting the gospel, Paul emphatically states twice, “let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8, 9).

3. CALLED AND TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

A. Paul's Testimony

Gal. 1:13-17

In Galatians 1:13-17, Paul reflected on his dramatic transformation from a zealous persecutor of the Church to a devoted servant of Christ. He openly acknowledged his past, emphasizing how deeply embedded he was in Jewish traditions and how passionately he opposed the early Christian movement. This honesty about his former life testified to the radical nature of God's grace that had truly transformed him. Paul's testimony serves as a reminder that no one is beyond redemption and that God can use even the most unlikely individuals for His purposes.

Verse 15 highlights the profound sovereignty and grace of God in calling individuals to His purpose. Paul reflected on his life, acknowledging that his calling was not based on personal merit but on God's divine will and plan, established even before his birth. Paul expressed the concept of being set apart for God's work, emphasizing that one's salvation and purpose are initiated by God's grace, not human effort. It also serves as a reminder of God's ongoing involvement in one's life, orchestrating events to fulfill His greater purpose. Paul's transformation from a persecutor of

the Church to an apostle exemplified the power of God's calling to redeem and repurpose lives for His glory. This verse invites believers to reflect on their own calling and the grace that underpins their relationship with God.

Paul's insistence that his calling came directly from God and not through human influence is striking. He said he did not consult anyone or seek approval but instead withdrew to Arabia, allowing time for personal revelation and growth. This shows the importance of a personal relationship with God and the power of His calling to provide focus and purpose in one's life. Trusting in God's timing and direction can be challenging, especially when it means stepping away from the familiar. However, Paul's journey illustrates that God's plans often defy human expectations yet can lead to a life of significance and impact.

Questions for Application

Why did Paul emphasize his former life as someone who persecuted the Church?

Why do you think Paul chose not to consult with others immediately after his conversion?

B. God Glorified Through Paul's Conversion

Gal. 1:18-24

In Galatians 1:18-24, the apostle Paul recounted his early interactions after his conversion, emphasizing his limited contact with the apostles and the churches of Judea. After three years, he visited Peter in Jerusalem, staying with him for 15 days, and briefly met James, the Lord's brother. Paul stressed his independence from the other apostles, asserting that his gospel message was not derived from them but received through revelation from Christ.

Paul emphasized his commitment to authenticity in his ministry and his intentional separation from human influence in developing his message. His limited contact with the apostles reinforced his claim of divine commissioning. Additionally, the churches in Judea glorified God because of Paul's transformation, recognizing the profound work of grace in turning a former persecutor into

a preacher of the faith. Therefore, those false teachers claiming to come from the churches in Jerusalem to call into question the authority or authenticity of Paul's teaching were exposing themselves as frauds.

Questions for Application

Would it have been wrong for Paul to spend time with the apostles to learn the teachings of Jesus? Why do you think he emphasized divine revelation as the source of his gospel?

What significance could Paul's reputation among the churches in Judea, as described in Galatians 1:22-24, have had for his ministry and message?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Sometimes sharing our personal stories about how God turned our lives around can do wonders when we are talking about the gospel. Memorizing key verses of Scripture is important – think of them as spiritual flashcards – but maybe we should not lead with, "Here's why you're a sinner going to hell." Instead, try this: "Here's my testimony. I was a lost sinner, but now I'm redeemed." Even Paul, a persecutor of the church who became an apostle, admitted that people initially knew him only as that man who had been harassing Christians. But once they heard his story, they thought, "Wow, God's really out here at work in this world!" (See Gal. 1:24.) Let your testimony be the salt and light that lead people to look to Jesus for redemption.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus told His disciples to make disciples by teaching others to observe His commandments (Matt. 28:20). As disciples of Christ today, we too need to make this commissioning part of our lives in the service of Christ and others. The degree to which we do this and the opportunities we have will vary among us, but we are called to be faithful with what the Lord has given to us. If you are uncertain about how to do this, or if you fear

LESSON 4: ONLY ONE GOSPEL

doing this, make a point of starting small, sharing the gospel with your family or even with another brother or sister in Christ. Remember, be faithful!

Ministry in Action

Paul said that when the churches in Judea heard his testimony, they celebrated what God was doing in him. Celebrate what God is doing in people's lives.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **God's Word in the Heart.**

Psalm 119:9-16

Tuesday: **Understanding From the Word.**

Psalm 119:97-104

Wednesday: **Hunger to Obey God's Word.**

Psalm 119:145-152

Thursday: **Jesus Preached the Gospel.**

Mark 1:9-15

Friday: **Paul Preached the Gospel.**

Romans 1:1-2, 13-17

Saturday: **We Must Proclaim the Gospel.**

Mark 16:14-16

Lesson

5

Defending the Gospel

The gospel must be defended against all threats.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson examines the second chapter of the apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians, in which Paul provided a brief account of the early stages of his ministry. He recalled his divine calling to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles, a mission recognized and affirmed by the Jewish Christian leaders in Jerusalem. Paul also addressed an issue involving the apostle Peter, who had been influenced by Jewish Christians who struggled with the inclusion of Gentiles among the people of God. Furthermore, Paul reflected on his own transformation, stating that his prior reliance on adherence to the Law had ended because he had been "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). Through this spiritual rebirth, Paul said he then lived by faith in Jesus, who dwelled within him.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. The Gospel Presented to Leaders
Gal. 2:1-10
 - A. Paul Is Faithful to the Gospel
 - B. Paul Called to the Gentiles
2. The Gospel of Grace Disregarded
Gal. 2:11-14
 - A. Paul Confronted Peter for Compromise
 - B. Paul Rejects Requirements of Judaism
3. The Gospel of Grace Defended
Gal. 2:15-21
 - A. Believers Are Not Justified by Works
 - B. God's Grace Is Enough

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Help students to see that Paul would not be deterred from his mission to the Gentiles by false teachers.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Encourage students not to be intimidated into deviating from the truth of God's Word by anyone claiming to possess superior knowledge.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Point out to students that, like Paul, we can move beyond our past (good and bad) to embrace a new future through life in Jesus Christ.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

Galatians 2 can be divided into two parts: Paul's account of his meeting with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem (vv. 1-10) and his account of his confrontation of Peter in Antioch (vv. 11-21). In the first section, Paul revealed that the gospel he preached to the Gentiles aligned with the message of the Jerusalem church leaders. The second section shifts to Paul's confrontation of Peter, whose inconsistent behavior toward eating with Gentile believers threatened to compromise the gospel's message.

GOLDEN TEXT: GALATIANS 1:9

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (KJV)

I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing! (NIV)

King James Version

Galatians 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

9 When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

11 When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

New International Version

Galatians 2:1 Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also.

2 I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.

3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

4 This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

9 James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

11 When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

12 For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.

13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

16 Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “How should you deal with someone who makes a false doctrinal claim during a Bible study?” Such individuals (if desirous of the truth) must be treated gently, and the truth of Scripture should be brought to their attention patiently. However, some people knowingly intend to spread false doctrine and will not accept correction from mature Christians or from those who are over them in the Lord (1 Thess. 5:12). A different and more direct approach may be necessary in such cases, but no one should be allowed to lead others into false teaching.

1. THE GOSPEL PRESENTED TO LEADERS

A. Paul Is Faithful to the Gospel

Gal. 2:1-5

Paul began in Galatians 2:1, 2 by informing the Galatian Christians of a journey to Jerusalem that took place “after fourteen years” (ESV), likely referring to 14 years after his conversion (v. 1). Accompanied by Barnabas and Titus, Paul went to Jerusalem in response to a revelation (v. 2). This visit was not a casual trip but a strategic meeting between Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church to ensure that the gospel he was preaching among the Gentiles was not “in vain.” As such, his decision to bring Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile follower of Jesus Christ, was intentional. Titus was a living example of the transforming power of faith in Christ without adherence to Jewish customs. By presenting Titus to the church leaders in Jerusalem, Paul illustrated that salvation is by grace through faith alone, not through any works of the old covenant law.

In verses 3-5, Paul noted the opposition he faced from “false brethren” who had infiltrated the church (v. 4). These individuals, knowing Titus was a Gentile, sought to impose the rite of circumcision on him and, by extension, on all Gentile believers. Paul described their motives as an attempt to “spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (v. 4). This language reveals the significance of this issue. For Paul, adding

any requirement to faith in Christ (or a specific requirement, like eating Kosher, to remain faithful to Christ) amounted to undermining the gospel itself and enslaving believers under a yoke of legalism. Therefore, Paul’s response was firm: “...We did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (v. 5, NKJV). This statement shows his unwavering commitment to safeguarding the integrity of the gospel message. Paul understood that compromising on this issue would not only affect his ministry but also jeopardize the spiritual freedom of all believers.

Questions for Application

What does Paul’s account of his visit to Jerusalem teach us about standing firm in the truth of the gospel even when facing opposition?

How should we confront an erring brother or sister in Christ?

B. Paul Called to the Gentiles

Gal. 2:6-10

Galatians 2:6-10 recalls Paul’s defense of his ministry and the unity of the gospel message. Paul wrote of his meeting with the leaders in Jerusalem, “who seemed to be pillars” of the Church, such as James, Peter (Cephas), and John (v. 9). He was not disparaging them but acknowledging that many held these men in high regard as leaders of the Church responsible for safeguarding the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul met with them but insisted here that these leaders had added nothing to his message. Instead, they affirmed that his gospel to the Gentiles was divinely commissioned and complete. The Jerusalem apostles “gave to [Paul] and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship,” meaning they sent Paul and his coworker with their blessings (v. 9).

Paul emphasized that “God accepteth no man’s person,” meaning that God shows no favoritism (v. 6). This is a powerful reminder that spiritual authority is grounded in divine calling rather than human status. The agreement between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders revealed a shared commitment to the same gospel, albeit with

different audiences. Paul's ministry was to the *uncircumcision* (Gentiles), and Peter's was to the *circumcision* (Jews) (v. 7). This division of labor reflects the ability of the gospel to reach diverse groups without compromising its core truth.

Paul noted that the only thing the Jerusalem leaders asked of him was that he remember the poor, something he eagerly embraced (v. 10). In fact, Paul regularly solicited funds from predominantly Gentile churches to take to the impoverished believers in Jerusalem (see 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1 – 9:15; Rom. 15:14-32). This reflects the nature of the gospel to address both spiritual and physical needs. The message of Galatians 2:6-10 ultimately demonstrates unity in diversity within the early Church and challenges believers to prioritize the integrity of the gospel while remaining sensitive to practical concerns like compassion and care for fellow believers.

Questions for Application

Paul mentioned that God shows no favoritism (Gal. 2:6). How does this truth impact the way we view others in our daily lives?

Verse 10 emphasizes remembering the poor. How can the church put this directive into practice?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Paul's unwavering defense of the gospel of Jesus Christ is still relevant for believers navigating today's maze of clashing ideologies, trendy philosophies, and traditions that sometimes feel like a buffet of distractions. In a world where the simple, life-changing truth of the gospel can be buried under layers of noise, Paul's boldness and conviction point us back to what really matters. His courage is a reminder that standing firm in biblical truth is not just an ancient pastime – it is also a modern necessity. So let us follow Paul's example. Let us hold tightly to the gospel with both hands, ensuring it is not watered down or lost in translation as we share it with others. After all, the gospel is not just good news; it is

the *best* news, and it deserves to shine in all its transformative glory for generations to come.

2. THE GOSPEL OF GRACE DISREGARDED

A. Paul Confronted Peter for Compromise

Gal. 2:11-13

Galatians 2:11-13 presents a critical moment in the early Church. Paul's confrontation with Peter (Cephas) over an issue of hypocrisy offers profound insights into leadership, integrity, and the unity of the Church. At the heart of this passage is the tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the early Church. Certain Jews, claiming to have come in the authority of James (the Lord's brother), believed adherence to Jewish customs like circumcision was necessary for continuing in the faith (or for salvation), even for Gentile converts (v. 12). Peter, who had previously embraced fellowship with Gentiles (Acts 10), withdrew when certain Jewish Christians arrived, perhaps out of fear of criticism or conflict (Gal. 2:12).

Paul saw this as a serious issue. Peter's actions were not just a personal failing but a public compromise that threatened the gospel's core message: salvation by grace through faith, not by works or cultural identity. By withdrawing from the Gentiles, Peter implicitly endorsed the idea that they were second-class believers, undermining the universal nature of the gospel. When Paul confronted Peter for this, he was not attacking Peter personally; he was defending the truth of the gospel. Paul's boldness demonstrated that preserving doctrinal integrity sometimes requires difficult conversations, even with respected leaders.

Questions for Application

Why do you think Paul confronted Peter so openly in this situation?

Have you ever felt pressured to act a certain way because of the people around you? How did you handle it?

B. Paul Rejects Requirements of Judaism

Gal. 2:14

Galatians 2:14 captures the confrontation between Paul and Peter (referred to as Cephas). Paul's rebuke centered on a discrepancy between belief and behavior. He accused Peter of not walking "uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (v. 14). This phrase is key. The gospel proclaims that all are justified by faith in Christ, not by works or adherence to the law (v. 16). By withdrawing from Gentile believers, Peter's actions contradicted this truth, suggesting that faith in Christ was insufficient without adherence to Jewish customs.

Paul's question ("Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?") exposes the hypocrisy of Peter's actions (v. 14). Although Peter himself lived free from the old covenant law code (as evidenced by his previous fellowship with Gentiles), his withdrawal in Galatia implied that Gentiles needed to adopt certain Jewish practices to be fully accepted into fellowship with God and His people. This was not merely a mistake by Peter; it was a theological misstep with serious implications for the unity and purity of the Church.

Questions for Application

Have you ever faced a situation in which you had to call out a friend or leader for his or her behavior? How did you handle it?

Why is it important that our actions align with the truth of the gospel, especially in diverse communities?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Paul's bold choice to call out Peter "to the face" was not just some quiet, behind-the-scenes chat; it was a public showdown in front of everyone who had been influenced by Peter's questionable behavior (Gal. 2:11). Paul, who was never afraid of confrontation, knew that leadership is not about titles; it is about setting the right example. When leaders slip into hypocrisy, it takes everyone in the wrong direction. This moment

reminds us how easily fear or peer pressure can lead us in the wrong direction even when we know better. Compromising our principles might win us temporary approval, but it will damage our credibility as witnesses of Christ.

3. THE GOSPEL OF GRACE DEFENDED

A. Believers Are Not Justified by Works

Gal. 2:15-17

Galatians 2:15-17 is critical to understanding the relationship among faith, works, and justification in Christian theology. Paul stated, "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles" (v. 15). This is not meant to disparage Gentiles but to set the stage for his argument. Judaism, with its varied understandings of righteousness, had shaped Paul and his contemporaries' understanding of righteousness. However, Paul quickly pointed out that even those born under the law are not justified by its works but through faith in Jesus Christ (v. 16). Paul forcefully stated that obedience to the Law does not secure righteousness. Instead, a person is "justified" (declared righteous before God) only through faith in Christ. This was a radical departure from the belief of some Jewish teachers that adhering to the Jewish law code was the pathway to God's favor.

Paul's point was that while adherence to the works of the Law is not required for righteousness, faith in Christ does not nullify the moral law or encourage sin ("God forbid," v. 17); instead, it reveals humanity's need for grace. Paul was not saying the moral principles of the Law must be abandoned, since many of these are repeated in the new covenant. He was saying that while the Law exposes sin, it does not empower a person to overcome sin or live a righteous life. Only through Christ's atoning work can one be reconciled to God, and only through faith in the work of Christ can anyone be judged righteous before God. By placing faith above cultural or legal distinctions, Paul dismantled barriers between Jewish and Gentile people. Paul invited followers of Christ to rest in the sufficiency of His work on their behalf. It was a call to abandon self-reliance

and embrace the grace that justifies one through faith alone. In this manner, the gospel of Christ unites all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, by tearing down the wall that once divided them (Eph. 2:14).

Questions for Application

How does this passage challenge the idea of earning (or maintaining) salvation through good deeds or religious practices?

How do we guard against falling to prey to a works righteousness mentality?

B. God's Grace Is Enough

Gal. 2:18-21

Galatians 2:18-21 is a profound passage in which Paul addressed the essence of justification by faith and the life-changing power of Christ's work. Here Paul emphasized the folly and futility of returning to the Law after embracing salvation through faith. In verse 18, he stated that rebuilding what was torn down – namely, reliance on the Law – makes one a transgressor. This highlights the inconsistency of seeking righteousness through legalistic means after recognizing the sufficiency of the gospel to save.

Paul personalized this point in verse 19, explaining that “through the law” he was “dead to the law” so that he might live for God. This marks a decisive move away from the Law as a basis for justification, embracing a life anchored in divine grace instead. Verse 20 serves as a cornerstone of Paul's theology: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” This statement highlights the believer's union with Christ, wherein self-reliance gives way to the indwelling presence of Christ. This theological perspective redefines the believer's identity and purpose, centering it entirely on grace and divine empowerment.

Once again, in verse 21, Paul pointed out that righteousness cannot come through the Law; otherwise, Christ's sacrifice would have been in vain. If humanity had the ability to obey the Law and fulfill all righteousness perfectly, then there would

have been no need for Jesus to give His life on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. This passage serves as a cornerstone for understanding salvation as a gift rooted in faith and sustained by living in the power of God's grace through Jesus to transform lives.

Questions for Application

What does it mean to be “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20), and how can we live this out in our daily lives?

What do you think Paul meant when he wrote, “I do not frustrate [set aside] the grace of God” (v. 21)?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

The concept of being crucified with Christ challenges believers to examine how their lives reflect their new identity in Him. It calls for a life characterized by humility, selflessness, and dependence on God's grace. The Greek word translated as *I* is *egó*, a word used later in psychology to refer to the conscious part of one's personality. It is what we are aware of when we think about ourselves, and it is the side we usually show others. Paul was saying that because of his faith in Jesus, he wanted others to see Christ in him as the key to his character and his personality.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

As disciples of Jesus, we should always remain faithful to the teachings of our Lord Jesus. The world may try to turn us in different directions, but we must continue steadfast in the gospel. What can you do to maintain faithfulness to the truth of the gospel? It may be beneficial to join a Bible study at your local church. You may even consider taking a class or two at an evangelical college or seminary. We must certainly pray, asking the Holy Spirit to open our minds to understand God's Word and to live according to it. Look for opportunities to shore up your faith.

Ministry in Action

Teaching is an important spiritual gift in the church. We should offer many opportunities and venues for people to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Joshua Reviews God’s Faithfulness.**
Joshua 23:8-14

Tuesday: **David Praises God’s Word.**
Psalm 19:7-14

Wednesday: **Isaiah Declares God’s Supremacy.**
Isaiah 40:12-18

Thursday: **Apostles Defend the Gospel.**
Acts 5:17-18, 27-32

Friday: **God’s Spirit Affirms the Gospel.**
1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Saturday: **We Must Heed the Gospel.**
Hebrews 2:1-4

Lesson

6

Justification by Faith

Justification is being made right with God.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

In Galatians 3:1-25, the apostle Paul emphasized that salvation comes through faith in Christ, not by the works of the Law. He reminded the Galatian Christians that they had received the Spirit through faith, not by observing the old covenant Law. To illustrate that God's promise is fulfilled through faith and not by works, Paul used the example of Abraham, whose faith was credited to him as righteousness. Paul explained that the Law served as a schoolmaster until Christ came, enabling believers to be justified by faith and become children of God. Once Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, even becoming the "once for all" (Heb. 10:10) sacrifice for sin, the schoolmaster (Law) was no longer required.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. We Are Justified by Faith
Gal. 3:1-9
 - A. The Foolishness of False Gospels
 - B. The Faith of Abraham
2. Redeemed From the Law's Curse
Gal. 3:10-18
 - A. Living by Faith, Not by Law
 - B. The Promise Precedes the Law
3. The Law Points to Christ
Gal. 3:19-25
 - A. The Purpose of the Law
 - B. The Promise of Faith

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Encourage students to appreciate that faith in God's grace through Christ provides salvation and the ability to live godly lives.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Help students to see that salvation requires receiving by faith the work of Christ on their behalf.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Impress upon students that as they "grow in grace" (2 Pet. 3:18), they will grow stronger and more mature in their walk with God.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

Both Paul and James referred to Abraham to discuss the relationship between faith and works, but they emphasized different aspects of this relationship. Paul pointed to Abraham's faith as the basis of a Christian's justification, asserting that righteousness is credited through faith apart from works of the Law (Gal. 3; Rom. 4). However, James focused on Abraham's works as evidence of genuine faith in God (2:21-24). Together, they present a balanced view of faith.

GOLDEN TEXT: GALATIANS 3:8

The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. (KJV)

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (NIV)

King James Version

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

18 If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

New International Version

Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?

3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.

8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."

9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

11 Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because "the righteous will live by faith."

12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, "The person who does these things will live by them."

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole."

14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

18 If the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

22 But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.

24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “Can someone work his way into or out of spending eternity with the Lord?” On the one hand, no one can do enough or be good enough to merit being with the Lord. On the other hand, a person’s sinful lifestyle is evidence of a heart that does not love God; not loving God will keep one from spending eternity with Christ. These are not incompatible views. All Christians must respond to the gospel and believe that Jesus died for their sins. However, this relationship with Christ is maintained by ongoing faith in God’s grace.

1. WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

A. The Foolishness of False Gospels

Gal. 3:1-5

In Galatians 3:1-5, Paul confronted the Galatian churches with a strong rebuke, questioning their spiritual discernment and reminding them of the gospel they had first received. He began by calling them “foolish” and asking how they could so easily be misled despite receiving the clear message of Christ crucified for their sins (v. 1). Paul emphasized that their initial experience of the Spirit did not come through “works of the law” but through faith in the gospel (vv. 2, 5). Paul’s question challenged the Galatians to think about how their spiritual journey began and to consider whether they were abandoning the message of grace in favor of reliance on certain “works of the law.” By reminding them of their personal experience in the Spirit, Paul reinforced that their salvation and spiritual growth were rooted and grounded in faith in God, not in obedience to the old covenant law code.

Furthermore, Paul appealed to their past experiences of God’s power and provision, asking if these were achieved through human effort or by faith. This line of reasoning reveals the futility of attempting to perfect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit. Paul’s argument is both theological and practical, pointing out the inconsistency of their turning to legalism after witnessing God’s transformative work in their lives. His words

serve as a reminder that the Christian life is sustained by faith in God from beginning to end. By focusing on faith as the means of receiving God’s promises and experiencing His power, Paul sought to realign the Galatians with the truth of the gospel, urging them to resist any teaching that undermined the sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross.

Questions for Application

Why do you think Paul started this passage by calling the Galatians “foolish” (Gal. 3:1)?

How can remembering past experiences with God (like receiving the Spirit) strengthen our faith in Him?

B. The Faith of Abraham

Gal. 3:6-9

In Galatians 3:6-9, Paul emphasized the centrality of faith in establishing a relationship with God by using Abraham as a powerful example. Paul reminded the Galatians that “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness,” showing that the righteousness of God does not come through works or adherence to the Law but through faith in God (v. 6). By invoking Abraham, Paul connected the Galatian Christians to the broader narrative of God’s covenantal promises, illustrating that faith has always been the basis of justification, even before the Mosaic Law was given. This teaching served to dismantle the arguments of those who insisted that Gentile Christians must follow Jewish legal customs to be fully included in God’s family. The cultural implications of the Law of Moses in Jewish life ran deep. For thousands of years, they had based their relationship with God on the Law. There was nothing wrong with maintaining certain customs and laws, but these customs could never provide salvation for anyone, not even the Jewish people to whom they had first been given.

Furthermore, Paul extended this argument by proclaiming that those with faith “are the children of Abraham,” making faith – not ethnicity or legal observance – the defining mark of God’s people

(v. 7). Paul noted that the gospel was foretold in God's promise to Abraham: "In thee shall all nations be blessed" (v. 8). The universal scope of this blessing reveals God's redemptive plan to include all peoples through faith in Christ. By basing his argument on Scripture, Paul assured the Gentile Galatians that their inclusion in God's family was secure through faith alone. Therefore, he encouraged them to resist any teaching seeking to add requirements to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Application

What does it mean to be considered a child of Abraham through faith?

Why do you think Paul emphasized that the gospel was preached to Abraham in advance?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Paul was amazed and alarmed that the Christians in Galatia could be so easily convinced to embrace elements of the Law of Moses as a way to secure or maintain their salvation. The false teachers claimed to have received further instructions from Jerusalem, which were intended to supplement the teachings of Paul. However, Paul's response seems to be that if the Galatians had looked at the situation logically, they would have seen that this was false teaching. If they had already been redeemed by faith, as witnessed by their reception of the Holy Spirit, then why would they think anything should be added to remain saved? We do not need a degree in theology to identify the errors in most false doctrines. The Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the common sense God gave us can lead us to the truth.

2. REDEEMED FROM THE LAW'S CURSE

A. Living by Faith, Not by Law

Gal. 3:10-14

Galatians 3:10, 11 addresses the contrast between reliance on the works of the old covenant law and faith in Christ as the means of justification before God. Paul emphasized that those

who depend on the Law for righteousness are under a curse because the Law demands perfect obedience, which no one can achieve. Quoting Deuteronomy 27:26, he pointed out that failure to uphold every aspect of the Law results in condemnation. This passage highlights the futility of human effort in attaining and maintaining salvation and underlines the necessity for divine intervention. Paul contrasted this with the principle of faith, citing Habakkuk 2:4 to affirm, "The just shall live by faith," thereby establishing faith as the cornerstone of a right relationship with God (Gal. 3:11).

In Galatians 3:13, 14, Paul proclaimed the redemptive work of Christ as the solution to humanity's plight under the curse of the Law. Christ became a curse for sinners by taking upon Himself the penalty of sin through His crucifixion, fulfilling the promise of redemption. This act freed people from the curse and opened the way for Gentiles to receive the blessings promised to Abraham. Through faith in Jesus, both Jewish and Gentile persons gain access to the Spirit and the inheritance of God's promises. These verses encapsulate the heart of the gospel message, emphasizing that salvation is a grace gift received through faith, not a reward for human effort. Through Jesus, Christians are "redeemed... from the curse of the law..." (v. 13).

Questions for Application

Why is it significant that Christ "redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13)? How does this demonstrate God's grace and justice?

How does this passage help us understand the difference between living under the Law and living by faith? How can we apply this understanding to our daily walk with God?

B. The Promise Precedes the Law

Gal. 3:15-18

In Galatians 3:15-18, Paul drew on the analogy of a human covenant to emphasize the unchanging nature of God's promises. He explained that

once a covenant is ratified, it cannot be annulled or altered, emphasizing the permanence of God's promise to Abraham. Paul said that the promise was given not to Abraham's "seeds" (plural) but to his singular "seed," which he identified as Christ (v. 16). This distinction is crucial because it demonstrates that the promise was always meant to find its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, not through adherence to the Mosaic Law. By making this distinction, Paul revealed the permanency of God's redemptive plan, showing that the Law, which came 430 years later, did not invalidate the earlier promise.

Furthermore, Paul contrasted the Law and the promise to clarify their distinct roles in God's plan of salvation. He argued that the inheritance of God's blessing comes not through the Law but through the promise given to Abraham by grace. The Law served a different purpose and did not replace or nullify the promise. This argument reinforced Paul's broader message in Galatians: justification and salvation come through faith in Christ alone, not through works of the Law. By rooting his argument in Scripture and the covenants, Paul provided a compelling defense of the gospel and reassured believers that their inheritance is secure in Christ, based on God's unchanging promise.

Questions for Application

How does the distinction between "seed" (singular) and "seeds" (plural) in Galatians 3:16 shape our understanding of God's promise?

Why is it important that the Law, which came 430 years later, did not set aside the covenant made with Abraham?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

While some might equate a covenant with a contract, we should be aware there is a distinction. A covenant is not some fine-print agreement filled with loopholes where someone might find a way out. A covenant with God is as straightforward as possible: promises made by the Almighty with no wiggle room for creative

reinterpretation. For instance, God's covenant with Abraham was not a family heirloom to be passed down; it was focused on one descendant – singular, not plural. Paul pointed out that this descendant is none other than Jesus Christ. Why? Because only through Him can the blessings of salvation be available to all. And through faith in Jesus Christ, everyone who believes becomes a spiritual descendant of Abraham, a child of God.

3. THE LAW POINTS TO CHRIST

A. The Purpose of the Law

Gal. 3:19-21

In Galatians 3:19-21, Paul addressed the purpose of the Law and its relationship to God's promises. He explained that the Law was added "because of transgressions" until the coming of the promised seed, Jesus Christ (v. 19). This highlights the temporary and preparatory nature of the Law, serving to reveal human sinfulness and the need for a Savior. Paul emphasized that the Law was not given to replace or cancel God's covenant with Abraham, which was based on faith and grace. Instead, the Law acted as a guardian, pointing humanity toward the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan through Christ. This passage shows the distinction between the Law and the promise, showing that salvation is not achieved through adherence to the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Paul clarified that the Law is not in opposition to God's promises but operates within His divine purpose (v. 21). The Law could not impart life or righteousness; if it could, then righteousness would come by the Law. Instead, its role was to expose human beings' inability to achieve righteousness on their own, thereby driving people toward faith in Christ. Paul's commentary invites reflection on the sufficiency of Christ's work and the grace of God in providing salvation apart from human effort. It also challenges Christians to understand the Law's proper place: not as a means of justification but as a tool to lead them to a deeper reliance on God's promise

fulfilled in Christ. Through this passage, Paul reinforced the centrality of faith and grace in God's plan for redemption.

Questions for Application

What does Paul mean by saying the law was "added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19)?

What insights can these verses provide about the relationship among grace, faith, and obedience?

B. The Promise of Faith

Gal. 3:22-25

Galatians 3:22-25 highlights the pivotal role of faith in the believer's relationship with God. The passage explains that Scripture declares all are under sin, emphasizing humanity's universal need for salvation. The Law served as a "schoolmaster," revealing sin and pointing to the necessity of a Savior (v. 24). However, the Law was never intended to be the ultimate means of righteousness. Instead, righteousness comes through faith in Christ, who fulfilled the Law (and all the old covenant promises) and provided the way to justification. This reveals the transformative power of faith, which liberates believers from the bondage to sin and ushers them into the new covenant of grace.

Furthermore, the text illustrates the purpose of the Law as a temporary measure until Christ's arrival. It functioned as a tutor, guiding humanity toward the promise of faith. Once faith in Christ was revealed, believers were no longer under the Law's supervision (v. 25). This reminds the reader of the place of the old covenant code and of its limitations. It was intended to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah, and it was something God designed to come to an end, to be replaced by a new covenant. Galatians 3:22-25 serves as a reminder of the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and believers' freedom to live by faith, rooted in grace rather than human works.

Questions for Application

How do Paul's teachings concerning the Law relate to the way Christians should see obedience

to God's Word as it relates to salvation by grace through faith?

How does humanity benefit from the fact that, as Paul said, "the scripture hath concluded all under sin" (Gal. 3:22)?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

While we are no longer bound to keep the Law of Moses, we are not without a law. Paul said we are under "the law of Christ," which, he explained, is fulfilled through loving and supporting one another (Gal. 6:2). Rather than being a rigid list of dos and don'ts, this law can be summarized: love God and love others (Mark 12:30, 31). These two simple yet profound commandments form the foundation of everything taught in the Scriptures. As Jesus Himself said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40). The same grace that saves us also equips and empowers us to live out this love in our daily lives.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is a beautiful journey of following Jesus and living by His teachings. To do what Jesus did is not intended to be the means by which we remain in fellowship with God. This would be to make the same mistake many Jewish people made during Paul's day. To think that keeping commandments is what maintains our relationship with God (our justification) is to say the work of Christ was insufficient to secure our salvation. We do good works to show Christ has done all that is necessary for us to be saved. We do good works because we are now indwelt by the Spirit of God, showing we are His children. We keep Christ's commands because we love Him.

Ministry in Action

Holiness is the ongoing work of grace in our lives as we daily conform more to the image and likeness of Christ. Pray for Christ's life to be displayed in your life.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Abraham Was Justified by Faith.**

Genesis 15:1-6

Tuesday: **Christ Is the Justifier.**

Isaiah 53:10-12

Wednesday: **The Just Live by Faith.**

Habakkuk 2:1-4

Thursday: **The Just Live by Faith.**

Romans 1:13-17

Friday: **God Is the Justifier.**

Romans 8:28-34

Saturday: **Obedience to God Proves
Justification.**

James 2:18-26

Lesson

7

Children of God Through Faith

Christ makes us God's much-loved children.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, the apostle Paul continued his instructions on the nature of faith, Christian liberty, and sonship in Christ. To illustrate the centrality of God's grace, Paul emphasized that through faith in Christ, Christians are no longer slaves but adopted children of God and heirs of His promises. Paul urged the Galatian church to embrace the freedom they found in the gospel. He then contrasted the covenants of law and grace through the allegory of Hagar and Sarah, pointing out the superiority of the promise fulfilled in Christ. This lesson serves as a profound reminder of the life-changing power of faith and the believer's identity as a child of God.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. Made God's Children Through Faith
Gal. 3:26 – 4:7
 - A. Heirs of the Promise by Faith
 - B. Redeemed and Adopted by Christ

2. Do Not Abandon Faith
Gal. 4:8-20
 - A. Reject the Past
 - B. Return to the Truth

3. Children of Law and Faith Contrasted
Gal. 4:21-31
 - A. Two Women and One Promise
 - B. Christians Are Children of Promise

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Help students understand the significance of being adopted into the family of God.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Inspire students to let the Holy Spirit remind them they are God's children, and as such, they are loved and led into freedom and victory through Christ.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Encourage students to consider their status as children of God and to conduct their lives in a manner that honors their Father.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

The account of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar is important to this lesson. Because of her inability to conceive, Sarah told Abraham that he should father a child with her bondswoman Hagar (Gen. 16). When Ishmael was born, Sarah became jealous of Hagar and told Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Abraham sent them into the wilderness of Beersheba. God heard Ishmael's cry and provided for Hagar and her son (Gen. 21).

GOLDEN TEXT: GALATIANS 3:26, 27

Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (KJV)

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (NIV)

King James Version

Galatians 3:26 Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

4:4 When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

New International Version

Galatians 3:26 In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,

27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

4:4 When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.

23 His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

24 These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.

25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.

26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.

28 Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise.

29 At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

30 But what does Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “How can the clothes we wear affect how we act?” The clothes we wear to work can indicate what we do. What we put on before we leave the house often reveals what we will be doing. Paul stated that followers of Christ “have put on Christ” (Gal. 4:27). The imagery is that of someone taking off dirty old clothes, bathing, and putting on clean clothes. Putting on Christ means we will do those things that reflect our new life in Christ. Therefore, adding works of the Law is like putting on the old, dirty clothes we had already taken off.

1. MADE GOD’S CHILDREN THROUGH FAITH

A. Heirs of the Promise by Faith

Gal. 3:26-29

Paul continued to expound on the transformative nature of faith in Christ and its implications for Christians. Paul emphasized themes of unity, inheritance, and spiritual maturity. Beginning in Galatians 3:26, Paul declared, “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” The heart of Paul’s message is that faith in God’s grace, not adherence to the Mosaic Law, is the basis of one’s relationship with God. By placing one’s trust in Christ, Christians are adopted into God’s family, transcending ethnic, social, and gender distinctions. This is further illustrated in verse 27, where Paul said that by being “baptized into Christ [they] have put on Christ,” meaning they have been clothed in Christ. This imagery pictures Christians living with Christ as their covering and identity.

In verse 28, Paul proclaimed the spiritual equality found in Christ: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” This is an astounding declaration of unity within the body of Christ. It does not erase individual distinctions but rather nullifies the power of these distinctions to divide or determine one’s standing before God. The gospel, as Paul presented it, fosters a new community grounded

in faith. Through faith in Jesus, all Christians become “Abraham’s seed” (offspring) and therefore “heirs according to the promise” (v. 29). This verse reinforces the idea that faith, not lineage or Law keeping, is the basis of one’s salvation.

Questions for Application

How does the imagery of being clothed in Christ inform our understanding of our Christian identity (Gal. 3:27)?

How has the truth that you are a child of God shaped your life with God?

B. Redeemed and Adopted by Christ

Gal. 4:1-7

In Galatians 4, Paul used an analogy to illustrate the Christian’s journey from spiritual infancy under the Law to maturity in Christ. In verses 1 and 2, he compared an heir who is still a child to a slave, noting that although the child legally owns everything, he remains under guardianship until the appointed time. This metaphor reflects the purpose of the Law as a temporary custodian, preparing God’s people for the coming of Christ. Paul went on to note that as children, “we... were in bondage under the elements of the world” (v. 3). For Jewish Christians, the “elements” likely referred to basic principles or teachings, including the ceremonial laws and practices that governed Jewish life. For Gentiles, this could also have encompassed pagan rituals and philosophies. Both groups were under systems incapable of bringing true freedom or salvation.

The turning point comes in verses 4 and 5 with the arrival of Christ. Paul declared that at precisely the right time, “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (v. 4). The phrase “fullness of time” indicates that everything occurred according to God’s sovereign timing in His redemptive plan. Jesus’ incarnation and full obedience to God the Father were necessary for Him to secure redemption for humanity. Through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, His followers are no longer slaves but are adopted as sons and daughters.

The theme of adoption is central in verses 6 and 7. Paul explained that God sends the Spirit of His Son into Christians' hearts, enabling them to cry out, "Abba, Father" (v. 6). This intimate term for God signifies a profound relational shift. God being longer distant or frightening, Christians now approach Him with the confidence and affection of children calling out to a loving parent. The indwelling Holy Spirit serves as both the evidence and guarantee of this new relationship. Paul concluded by affirming that Christians are no longer slaves but heirs of God "through Christ" (v. 7). This inheritance encompasses eternal life, communion with God, and participation in His kingdom.

Questions for Application

How does Paul's analogy of an heir under guardianship help us understand the transitory nature of the old covenant law? Why was it transitory?

In what ways does the Spirit of God "crying, Abba, Father" within us shape our relationship with God?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Children have a special connection with their parents that no one else can replicate. When they call, the parents answer. When they visit, the door is always open. Parents show love and care to their children in ways that would not be the same for anyone else. Similarly, our relationship with God through faith in Jesus is one of a kind. No other belief system offers this kind of closeness with God because, as Jesus said in John 14:6, no one can come to the Father except through Him. Through Jesus, we come to God not as strangers but as His children, sharing in the promises and blessings that come with being part of His family.

2. DO NOT ABANDON FAITH

A. Reject the Past

Gal. 4:8-15

In Galatians 4:8-15, Paul reminded some of the Galatian Christians of their former state of spiritual bondage when they worshiped false gods who were powerless to save them. He contrasted this bondage with their current standing as those who had come to know the true God – or rather, to be known by Him. Paul expressed concern that they were returning to observation of special days related to pagan religious practices linked to the worship of heavenly bodies, like a slave once freed returning to his master (vv. 9, 10). This passage served to remind the Galatian Christians of the break they had made with their former way of life to embrace the freedom found only in Christ. Paul's tone is both pastoral and urgent, as he appealed to their shared history of faith in Christ and the redemption they had experienced through the gospel.

In the latter part of the passage (vv. 12-15), Paul reflected on the warm reception he had received from the Galatians during his initial visit despite an affliction with which he was dealing. He commended their willingness to overlook his weakness and embrace him as a messenger of God. This recollection served as a poignant reminder of their earlier zeal and gratitude for the gospel message. Paul's words encouraged self-examination, urging the Galatians to return to that initial fervor and reject any teaching (whether pagan, secular, or Jewish) that undermined the sufficiency of Christ's work. The passage challenges modern readers to resist falling back into a life of sin and to remain steadfast in the grace and freedom offered through faith in Jesus.

Questions for Application

How can you protect yourself from returning to the life you had before you met Christ?

How can we reject our past life apart from Christ and still reach out to those from our past who need the gospel?

B. Return to the Truth

Gal. 4:16-20

In Galatians 4:16-20, Paul expressed a deep pastoral concern for the Galatian Christians. He began by asking if he had become their enemy because he told them the truth. Paul's words remind the reader of the difficulty of maintaining relationships when correction is necessary. Yet Paul's unwavering commitment to the spiritual well-being of the Galatians revealed his genuine love for them. Paul contrasted his motives with those of the false teachers, who sought to alienate the Galatians from Paul in order to gain their loyalty. Therefore, Paul emphasized the importance of discerning true spiritual leadership, which seeks the growth and freedom of others in Christ rather than personal gain or control. Paul's concern was not for his own ego but for the spiritual well-being of the Galatian Christians (vv. 17, 18).

In verses 19 and 20, Paul used the metaphor of childbirth to describe his anguish and longing for Christ to be fully formed in the Galatians. This vivid imagery conveyed both the depth of his concern and the life-changing nature of spiritual growth. Paul's desire was not merely for external conformity to religious practices but for an internal, Christ-centered transformation. In a tone both urgent and tender, Paul wished he could be present with them to address their struggles better. These verses reveal the sacrificial nature of true discipleship and the responsibility of spiritual leaders to labor tirelessly for the maturity of those they shepherd. Paul's plea encourages followers of Christ to ensure that truth and love remain central in their pursuit of Christlikeness.

Questions for Application

Why did Paul ask if he had become their enemy by telling them the truth, and what did this reveal about his relationship with the Galatians?

What did Paul mean when he said he was in "travail of birth again" for them, and how did this reflect his care for their spiritual growth (Gal. 4:19)?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

It is tough to watch people we have led to the Lord drift back into their old ways. It can make us want to throw up our hands and say, "Well, I tried!" But not Paul. When he heard the Galatian Christians were turning from the gospel of grace, he did not give up on them. He sent a letter that was equal parts theological correction, heartfelt plea, and pointed reminder of God's promises through Christ. The word *surrender* was not in Paul's vocabulary. Instead, he tackled the issue head on, showing us that when people wander, we do not surrender them to the world; we fight for their faith with truth, love, and maybe some godly correction.

3. CHILDREN OF LAW AND FAITH CONTRASTED

A. Two Women and One Promise

Gal. 4:21-26

In Galatians 4:21-26, Paul used the story of Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac, to contrast the old covenant of the law and the new covenant of grace. Paul addressed those who desired to live under the Law, urging them to consider the implications of doing so. Hagar, the slave woman, represented Mount Sinai, which corresponded to "the present city of Jerusalem" (vv. 24, 25). These believed keeping the old covenant law *and* faith in Christ were the means to maintaining (or establishing) one's salvation. However, to take this view did not lead to freedom but to bondage. By contrast, Sarah, the free woman, represented the new covenant of grace alone, rooted in God's promise. Her son Isaac, born through divine intervention, embodied the freedom and inheritance that come through faith in Christ (v. 26). Paul emphasized that salvation cannot be attained (or maintained) through human effort but is a gift of God's grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ. This passage serves as a potent reminder that true freedom and righteousness are not achieved through any human effort but through faith in God and the faithfulness of God's redemptive work in Christ.

Questions for Application

Why do you think some of the Galatian Christians felt the need to add some aspects of the Law to the gospel of Christ?

How does the concept of freedom versus slavery apply to the message of salvation by grace through faith?

B. Christians Are Children of Promise

Gal. 4:27-31

In Galatians 4:27-31, Paul drew on his figurative reading of the Sarah and Hagar narrative to illustrate the distinction between those who live under the promise of God and those who remain bound by keeping the Law. Citing Isaiah 54:1, Paul focused on the miraculous nature of God's promise, likening the barren woman to Sarah, whose offspring were born not through human effort but through divine intervention. This serves as a metaphor for the new covenant, which is based on faith and grace rather than adherence to the Mosaic Law or any other human effort. By contrasting the children of the free woman (Sarah) with those of the slave woman (Hagar), Paul underscored that Christians in Christ are heirs of the promise, liberated from the bondage to sin and called to live in the freedom of God's grace (v. 27).

Paul concluded this section by urging the Galatians to recognize their identity as children of the free woman and to reject any return to spiritual bondage. He reminded them that, like Isaac, they were children of promise, born through the Spirit rather than through human effort (vv. 28, 29). The reference to Ishmael's persecution of Isaac served as a warning against those who sought to impose legalistic burdens on Christians. Paul called for a decisive separation from such influences, echoing Sarah's demand to cast Hagar and her son out. This passage ultimately reinforces the central message of Galatians, which is that salvation is found in Christ alone, apart from the works of the Law, and Christians are invited to live as heirs of God's eternal promise.

Questions for Application

How do the two women, Hagar and Sarah, represent two covenants, and what can we learn from this metaphorical reading?

Why did Paul emphasize the importance of casting out the bondswoman? What might this symbolize in our own spiritual lives?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Paul's statement that people who adhered to elements of the Mosaic Law in order to establish or maintain their relationship with God were the spiritual offspring of Hagar and Ishmael rather than Sarah and Isaac must have been shocking to those who thought they were improving on the gospel of grace by adding selected parts of the Law. Paul said all who accepted Christ by faith, even Gentiles, were heirs of the promises to Abraham, and those who refused this grace were the outcasts. Sometimes it takes a shocking revelation to get our attention and turn us in the right direction.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

We should never forsake God's grace by trying to improve upon what God has done through Christ. Instead, we participate in the work of Christ in us through trust and obedience. Although we may not find ourselves tempted to keep the Mosaic Law, whether in part or in full, to show that we are believers in Jesus Christ, we may use other ways to identify that we are His followers. If we are not careful, we can use godly practices like regular church attendance, Bible study, and sharing our faith, rather than God's gracious gift of His Spirit, to establish that we are God's children and identify us as members of His family.

Ministry in Action

Thank God that He has made you His child by faith in His Son. Thank Him for giving you the Holy Spirit as evidence that you are His child.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **God Pities Like a Father.**

Psalm 103:8-18

Tuesday: **God's Rebellious Children.**

Isaiah 1:2-9

Wednesday: **God, Father to Israel.**

Jeremiah 31:1-9

Thursday: **Behave as Children of God.**

Matthew 5:43-48

Friday: **Authority to Become God's Children.**

John 1:6-13

Saturday: **God's Great Love for Us.**

1 John 3:1-3

Lesson

8

Life in the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit-led living is Christlike living.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, we see Paul's focus on the importance of remaining faithful to the gospel of Christ, through which the Galatians were saved. Paul warned against reverting to spiritual bondage by attempting to combine the works of the law with God's grace. He encouraged believers to walk in the Spirit, who helped them stay on the path of righteousness and resist the pull of the flesh and sin. Living by the Spirit produces fruit in a Christian's life that glorifies God and edifies the church. Paul also stressed the value of supporting one another, gently restoring those who stumble, and being kind and generous within both the church and the wider community.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Protect Your Freedom in Christ**
Gal. 5:1-15
 - A. Resist Going Back to Bondage
 - B. Paul's Message Never Wavered

2. **Walk and Live in the Spirit**
Gal. 5:16-26
 - A. Flesh Works Against the Spirit
 - B. The Spirit and Righteousness

3. **Do Good to All**
Gal. 6:1-10
 - A. Restoring Fallen Saints
 - B. Sowing and Reaping Without Fainting

TEACHING GOALS

1. Impart and Reinforce Knowledge: Help students to understand the nature of the Christian life as a product of God's grace and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit.

2. Influence Attitudes: Encourage students to maintain a spirit of humility, reach out to others who stumble in their faith, and encourage one another to walk in the Spirit.

3. Influence Behavior: Inspire students to examine their own lives to assess the presence or absence of the fruit of the Spirit.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

The Holy Spirit is emphasized throughout the letter to the Galatians, with 16 references to the Spirit in the letter, 10 of which are found in chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters, Paul promoted the ongoing role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. He presented the Holy Spirit as both a guide to and an enabler of righteous living, empowering believers to resist sin and faithfully reflect Christlike character.

GOLDEN TEXT: GALATIANS 5:16, 25

...Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ... If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (KJV)

...Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (NIV)

King James Version

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

13 Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

New International Version

Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “How do you balance firmness with compassion when correcting someone?” Paul addressed the Galatian Christians with strong words, confronting their decision to follow false teachers and abandon the pure gospel of grace for a distorted message that incorporated elements of the Mosaic Law. He concluded on an uplifting note, urging them to walk in the Spirit, cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, and support one another by restoring those who had stumbled, always with a spirit of humility. By ministering to one another, they were sowing the seeds of a harvest of blessings.

1. PROTECT YOUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST**A. Resist Going Back to Bondage***Gal. 5:1-10*

In Galatians 5:1-10, Paul highlighted the profound freedom believers have in Christ, urging them: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (v. 1). This freedom is not merely a release from legalistic practices but a liberation of the soul, empowering a life lived in grace through faith. Paul warned against the danger of requiring circumcision for justification because it symbolized a return to reliance on the Law rather than on the sufficiency of Christ’s redemptive work on the cross. To embrace such works is to forfeit the grace that sets believers free, reducing the life-changing power of faith into a burdensome yoke. True freedom in Christ is marked by reliance on His finished work and the Spirit’s guidance, not by external rituals or human efforts.

In addition, Paul pointed to the centrality of faith expressing itself through love. He noted that righteousness comes from trusting in Christ rather than adhering to the old covenant law. Paul cautioned against being influenced by false teachers who distorted the gospel and led followers of Christ back into spiritual bondage. This passage serves as a reminder that Christ’s sacrifice has permanently broken the chains of sin and legalism,

granting Christians the privilege of living in the liberty of God’s grace. To return to the bondage of the Law is to fall “from grace,” but standing firm in freedom allows believers to experience the abundant life God intends (v. 4). In Christ, freedom is not only a release from bondage but an invitation to live boldly in His truth and love.

Questions for Application

Why do you think Paul warned so strongly against returning to the “yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1)? What might that look like in our lives?

In verse 7, Paul asked, “Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” How can we stay focused on God’s truth amidst distractions or false teachings?

B. Paul’s Message Never Wavered*Gal. 5:11-15*

In Galatians 5:11-15, Paul vigorously reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to the message of freedom in Christ, rejecting any notion of returning to the bondage of the Law. He addressed the accusations that he might still be advocating for circumcision, making it clear that such claims were false (v. 11). For Paul, the message of the cross was inherently offensive to those who clung to the Law because it invalidated the notion that human effort could produce righteousness. By standing firm on the truth that salvation is through faith in Christ alone, Paul stated that salvation is achieved not through external rituals or works but through the life-changing freedom that comes from God’s grace. His refusal to compromise on this point demonstrated his dedication to preserving the purity of the gospel message even in the face of opposition and misunderstanding.

However, Paul also cautioned believers against using grace as an excuse for sin and self-indulgence. Instead, he called them to serve one another in love, fulfilling the spirit of the Law through selfless actions (v. 14). By emphasizing love as the guiding principle of Christian freedom, Paul observed that true liberty in Christ leads not to chaos or selfishness but to a life

marked by mutual care and edification. His message remained consistent: freedom in Christ is not about abandoning moral responsibility but about the liberty to live in a way that reflects God's love and grace. Through his unwavering stance, Paul reminded the Galatians – and all Christians – that the gospel is a call to both freedom from sin and faithful service, rooted in the power of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Questions for Application

In Galatians 5:11, Paul mentioned persecution for preaching the cross of Christ. Why do you think the message of the cross was controversial during his time and remains so today?

How does fulfilling the law through loving one's neighbor as oneself challenge or deepen your understanding of what it means to follow Christ (v. 14)?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Paul found it baffling that someone who had been set free from the burden of trying to keep all of the Law would willingly return to that same bondage. To him, it seemed both irrational and unwise: Why would anyone choose bondage over freedom or works over grace? Yet, Paul said, some of the "foolish Galatians" had been misled into doing just that (Gal. 3:1). While his words may come across as stern, they reflect the loving concern of a spiritual father urging his children to return to the path of grace, faith, and life in the Spirit. His message was a call to rediscover the beauty of freedom and the life-changing power of faith in Christ.

2. WALK AND LIVE IN THE SPIRIT

A. Flesh Works Against the Spirit

Gal. 5:16-21

In Galatians 5:16-21, Paul stressed the importance of walking in the Spirit as a means of aligning one's life with God's will and resisting the desires of the flesh (one's sinful and fallen nature). To walk in the Spirit is to live under the

guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, allowing His presence to shape one's thoughts, actions, and character. Paul contrasted this with the works of the flesh, which are characterized by selfishness, immorality, and discord. The flesh represents the sinful tendencies inherent in human nature, which are in direct opposition to the Spirit. Indeed, "these are contrary to one another," meaning they lead in two opposing directions (v. 17). By yielding to the Spirit, followers of Christ are empowered to overcome their destructive desires and live in a way that reflects God's holiness and love. This passage reveals the power of the Spirit to transform Christians, empowering them to pursue righteousness and bear spiritual fruit that glorifies God.

Paul warned of the consequences of indulging in the works of the flesh and listed behaviors that lead to spiritual ruin and exclusion from God's kingdom (vv. 19-21). These acts not only harm individuals but also disrupt relationships and communities. Walking in the Spirit, on the other hand, fosters unity, peace, and spiritual growth. It requires intentionality and daily surrender as Christians choose to follow the Spirit's leading rather than surrender to their own desires. This passage challenges followers of Christ to examine their lives and consider whether their actions reflect the Spirit's leading or the lusts of the flesh. Ultimately, walking in the Spirit is a call to live in faithful obedience to God, allowing His Spirit to guide every aspect of life and thereby produce a testimony that honors Him.

Questions for Application

What does it mean to "walk in the Spirit," and how can we apply this in our daily lives (Gal. 5:16)?

Which "works of the flesh" stand out to you, and why does Paul warn against them (vv. 19, 20)?

B. The Spirit and Righteousness

Gal. 5:22-26

Galatians 5:22-26 highlights the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians, emphasizing the virtues that are produced when one walks in the Spirit rather than in the flesh. Verses 22 and 23 list “the fruit of the Spirit . . . love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith[fulness], meekness, temperance.” These qualities reflect the character of Christ and stand in stark contrast to the works of the flesh mentioned earlier in the chapter. These virtues are not merely moral goals; they are evidence of a life surrendered to the Spirit. Paul taught that those who belong to Christ “have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,” meaning a break from sinful tendencies and a commitment to walk by faith through the power of the Spirit (v. 24).

Furthermore, Paul exhorted Christians to “walk in the Spirit,” which is a call to active participation in cultivating the fruit of the Spirit through daily dependence on God’s power (v. 25). This requires humility and focus, as believers are encouraged to avoid “vain glory, provoking one another, envying,” which disrupt unity within the body of Christ (v. 26). The passage serves as both an encouragement and a challenge, reminding Christians that spiritual growth is a continuous journey marked by cooperation with the Spirit. Ultimately, Galatians 5:22-26 invites Christians to reflect on their own lives, examining whether their actions and attitudes align with the Spirit’s work and bring glory to God.

Questions for Application

We cannot earn our salvation, but how can we participate with the Spirit to produce the spiritual fruit listed in Galatians 5:22 and 23?

How does a follower of Christ crucify “the flesh with the affections and lusts” (v. 24)?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Paul clearly distinguished between a life driven by the desires of the flesh and one guided by the Spirit, leaving no room for compromise or

ambiguity. For him, it was a matter of choosing either to embrace grace and walk in the Spirit or to fall into fulfilling the cravings of the flesh. He likened the decision to follow the Spirit to crucifying the flesh, along with its inherent appetites and desires (Gal. 5:24). This radical decision is possible only through wholehearted surrender to God, faith in His grace, and reliance on the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

3. DO GOOD TO ALL

A. Restoring Fallen Saints

Gal. 6:1-6

In Galatians 6:1-6, Paul revealed the delicate yet essential responsibility of restoring those who have stumbled in their walk with Christ. Paul exhorted Christians to approach such situations with a spirit of gentleness, recognizing their own vulnerability to sin. This call to restoration is not one of harsh judgment or condemnation but of compassionate care, aligning with the humility and grace that Christ Himself exemplified. Paul reminded the church that those who are spiritual – those who are in step with the Spirit – are called to bear the burdens of others, fulfilling “the law of Christ,” which is rooted in love (v. 2). This process requires wisdom and self-awareness. Paul warned against pride or self-deception, urging Christians to examine their own hearts and actions. Restoration, then, is the responsibility of the entire church; the body of Christ works together to uphold one another in faith, always mindful of mutual dependence on God’s grace.

Paul also pointed to the importance of personal responsibility in the life of every Christian. Although the community of faith plays a vital role in supporting and restoring the fallen, all Christians must also carry their own loads and take accountability for their actions (v. 5). This balance between mutual burden-bearing and personal responsibility reflects the dynamic nature of Christian fellowship. The instruction to share all good things with those who teach the Word further emphasizes the connection within the body of Christ and the value of mutual edification.

Galatians 6:1-6 calls Christ's followers to embody a spirit of humility, love, and accountability as they seek to restore fallen brothers and sisters in Christ, fostering a community that reflects the redemptive and restorative heart of God.

Questions for Application

Why is an attitude of humility and self-reflection so important when one is trying to reach out and restore a fallen saint?

What is the significance of sharing "in all good things" with those who teach the Word, and how can we apply this in the church today (Gal. 6:6)?

B. Sowing and Reaping Without Fainting

Gal. 6:7-10

In Galatians 6:7-10, Paul taught the principle of sowing and reaping, urging followers of Christ to persist in doing good, "especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (v. 10). The imagery of sowing to the Spirit expresses the necessity of consistent, Spirit-led effort to live a life dedicated to God and Christ. Paul reminded the Galatian Christians that God is not mocked, and the seeds they sowed – whether for the flesh or the Spirit – would bear fruit in accordance with their nature (v. 7). This serves as both a warning and an encouragement to remain steadfast in living for Christ, trusting that God's timing and purposes will bring forth a harvest (experiencing in full "life everlasting," v. 8) in due season.

Paul also instructed Christians not to grow weary in doing good, recognizing the fatigue that can arise from prolonged efforts without apparent success (v. 9). "Well doing," in context, seems to refer to confronting believers who needed correction (v. 9; cf. vv. 1, 2). This is difficult work to which Paul could relate, as he was in anguish to see Christ formed in the Galatian Christians (cf. 4:19). However, it is work worth doing, for those who remain faithful in this work will "in due season ... reap" (6:9). What one reaps is not stated. It might refer to restoring a wayward brother or sister in Christ or simply to one's final reward for faithfulness to Christ and His commands. This

passage calls believers in Christ to endure with hope, knowing that their labor in the Lord is never in vain.

Questions for Application

What does the principle of reaping what you sow teach us about the consequences of our actions (Gal. 6:7)?

Given that Paul said not to be weary in doing good, how can we stay motivated to continue doing good?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

The fruit of the Spirit is most evident in how we conduct ourselves in our various relationships. The way we treat and engage with others, particularly fellow believers in Christ, clearly indicates whether our actions stem from self-centered motives or are guided by the Spirit. The world observes our behavior, and as Jesus declared, our love for one another is a defining mark that demonstrates we are truly His disciples (John 13:35). By approaching others with a spirit of humility and a willingness to serve, we not only reflect the character of Christ but also strengthen the credibility and impact of our testimony to a watching world.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Disciples are called to walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. Human determination alone cannot do this; it can be accomplished only through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. This is necessary for all of the Christian life, including reaching out to a brother or sister in Christ who may have strayed from his or her walk with the Lord. Those who are mature in the faith ought to confront such a person lovingly for that person's good, that is, for full restoration to Christ. Be in prayer for such people that their hearts may be receptive to receive the Lord's correction and return in full obedience to His lordship over their lives.

Ministry in Action

Consider identifying and reaching out to church members who have been absent for an extended period of time from your fellowship. They may need restoration.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **The Spirit-Anointed Messiah.**
Isaiah 11:1-5

Tuesday: **A Spirit-Empowered Prophet.**
Ezekiel 3:10-14

Wednesday: **The Holy Spirit Promised.**
Joel 2:23-29

Thursday: **Life in the Spirit Described.**
Romans 8:1-9

Friday: **Be Led by the Spirit.**
Romans 8:12-17

Saturday: **The Spirit Prays for Us.**
Romans 8:24-28

Unit 3

Bible Lessons From the Animal Kingdom

In the larger Christian tradition, *natural revelation* refers to the way God reveals something of Himself in the world He has created, in the things He has made. Passages like Psalm 19 and Romans 1 attest to the reality that God has made Himself known in the world He made, and this revelation of Himself is clearly evident to all people.

What God has revealed about Himself in this world is varied. This world does not simply declare that God exists, but “his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Rom. 1:20, ESV). “Baked into” the earth are undeniable truths about God. His fingerprints are all over creation. When we deny those truths, we set ourselves up to have our “foolish hearts . . . darkened,” and we “[exchange] the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” (vv. 22, 23, ESV). Unbelief in God – denying that He exists, or professing that He is other than He has revealed Himself to be in His *two books* (Scripture and nature) – is the road to idolatry and places a person under His righteous judgment (v. 27; cf. 3:10-18).

This unit on “Bible Lessons From the Animal World” touches on some of God’s “invisible attributes, . . . his eternal power and divine nature” that are made known through some animals that He has made (Rom. 1:20, ESV). Care is also taken in these lessons to make distinctions between God’s image bearers, human beings, and the rest of the animal world. Unlike some popular views that human beings are merely one of many animals produced by random evolution, and so are not endowed with worth or value greater than any other creature found in the world, the Bible from its earliest pages attests to the value and dignity attributed to human beings because they are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26, 27). This does not mean animals are not valued and worthy of care, though. After the Flood, God made a covenant with Noah *and* with every other living creature, a promise to refrain from flooding the earth in judgment (9:9-17). God’s care for the animals He has made is further attested in His words at the close of the book of Jonah: “Should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, *and also much cattle?*” (Jonah 4:11, ESV, emphasis added) This all makes sense because from the beginning, God established that Adam and his offspring would tend and steward the garden (the ground/the earth), which includes animals (Gen. 1:26-30).

If this world and all that is in it “declare the glory of God,” then ought not we who desire to see His glory made known throughout the world do our part to steward His creation to maximize His glory being revealed in it (Ps. 19:1)?

–Keith Marriner

Lesson

9

Consider the Birds

God's great love includes every human being.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson explores how the Bible uses birds as symbols to illustrate God's care and protection for humanity. For example, God's provision for sparrows serves as a reminder of His greater concern for humans. The eagle, a symbol of strength, represents God's ability to lift His people above earthly dangers and keep them from harm in His presence. Jesus likened His care to a hen gathering her chicks under her wings, signifying His desire to draw His people close for safety and guidance. However, this metaphor also highlights humanity's tendency to resist His protective embrace. These examples reveal God's promise to care for and protect His creation.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. Provision and Place – Sparrows
Ps. 84:1-4; Matt. 10:29-31
 - A. Place to Praise
 - B. God's Caring Attention

2. On Eagles' Wings
Exod. 19:3-5; Deut. 32:10-12; Isa. 40:27-31
 - A. God Lifts Up His People
 - B. God's Strength for His People

3. Under God's Wings
Ps. 91:1-4; Matt. 23:37, 38
 - A. Abiding Close to God's Heart
 - B. Refusing Shelter Near God's Heart

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Help students to see and appreciate the biblical use of birds as symbols of God's care of humanity.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Encourage students to take note of birds in the wild, observe that God has provided for them, and be assured that He will also provide for His children.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Counsel students to find strength in God's presence and draw closer to Him for protection and provision when trials come in life.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

In the Bible, birds frequently serve as symbols reflecting spiritual truths, divine care, and moral lessons. Doves embody peace, purity, and the Holy Spirit, as seen at Jesus' baptism. Ravens reveal God's provision, feeding Elijah in the wilderness. At the same time, eagles represent strength and divine protection, as in Isaiah 40:31. Some birds, like vultures, signify judgment and desolation. Approximately 17 types of birds are mentioned in the Bible.

GOLDEN TEXT: MATTHEW 6:26

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? (KJV)

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (NIV)

King James Version

Psalm 84:3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.

4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Exodus 19:3 Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.

Deuteronomy 32:10 He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

11 As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:

12 So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

Isaiah 40:30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Psalm 91:3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

New International Version

Psalm 84:3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God.

4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.

30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Exodus 19:3 Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel:

4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine...'"

Deuteronomy 32:10 In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye,

11 like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft.

12 The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him.

Isaiah 40:30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Psalm 91:3 Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Matthew 23:37 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

38 Look, your house is left to you desolate.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “What is your favorite bird, and why?” God’s creative power can be seen in the large variety of birds in creation. From the large ostrich to the tiny hummingbird, from the basic brown sparrow to the colorful peacock, God’s artistry is on display throughout many species of birds. In the Bible, God’s attention to the details of a bird’s existence is intended to express His greater care and concern for the people He created to represent Him in the world. Each time we see a bird finding food in the wild, we should be comforted, knowing that God will likewise care for us.

1. PROVISION AND PLACE – SPARROWS

A. A Place to Praise

Ps. 84:1-4

Psalm 84 is a poetic celebration of God’s dwelling place, presenting a beautiful image of birds finding shelter in His house (Tabernacle/Temple). The psalm begins with the writer’s expression of his desire to be in the presence of the Lord, his longing for the presence of the Lord, and then his observation that even the birds find their way into His courts. In verse 3, he wrote, “The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.” This imagery is deeply symbolic. Often seen as small and insignificant, birds represent those who might feel unworthy or overlooked. Yet even the humblest creatures find a home in God’s house. These birds found their way into the Tabernacle.

The altar, a place of worship and sacrifice, becomes a sanctuary for the birds – a reminder that God welcomes everyone into His presence. The birds’ nearness to the altar symbolizes intimacy with God, a closeness all people long for. The fact that seemingly insignificant birds could dwell in the Tabernacle and nest near God’s altar encouraged the psalmist to believe he could likewise draw near to God. As readers of Psalm 84, we find this passage to be an invitation. Like the sparrow and the swallow, the reader is called

to seek refuge and belonging in God’s presence. No matter how small or unworthy one may feel, His house is open to all who would come to it as a place of peace, safety, love, and praise of the Lord (v. 4).

Questions for Application

What do you think the psalmist meant by saying, “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God” (Ps. 84:2)? Have you ever felt that kind of longing for the Lord? Explain.

Verse 4 mentions the blessing of those who dwell in God’s house. How can we apply this idea to our own spiritual journeys?

B. God’s Caring Attention

Matt. 10:29-31

In Matthew 10:29-31, Jesus illustrated the profound worth of people (and specifically His disciples, cf. vv. 1-5) with the example of the sparrow, a small, inexpensive bird. Although sparrows were considered insignificant and sold cheaply in ancient markets, Jesus emphasized that no one escapes God’s attentive care. The illustration causes one to ask: If God watches over even these humble creatures, how much more does He care for His image bearers? This powerful metaphor expresses the unconditional value people hold in the eyes of God – not for their achievements, but because they are deeply known and cherished by the Creator. The passage highlights God’s oversight, reminding the reader that he is never overlooked, even in moments of fear or doubt. Every lowly sparrow picking seeds and insects from the grass reminds one of God’s love and provision for human lives.

The detail that God numbers the very hairs on one’s head reveals His intimate knowledge of and care for people (v. 30). If a single hair falls from one’s head, He knows. In a culture that often assigns value to productivity, wealth, or status, these verses provide a striking contrast: worth is innate, gifted by God’s unwavering love. Sparrows also embody resilience. Despite their smallness, they flourish under God’s provision. This offers hope in

challenging moments, to reassure us that nothing escapes God’s notice, and no life is too insignificant in His eyes. Ultimately, Matthew 10:29-31 calls one to rest in the comfort of a Creator whose profound care for sparrows reflects His infinite care for each person. As such, His own need not fear, for Jesus said they “are of more value than many sparrows” (v. 31).

Questions for Application

How does knowing that God values you more than “many sparrows” impact your self-worth?

How can we be a consistent reflection of God’s care for others in our daily lives?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

In a world that often feels like a race for Facebook likes, followers, and external validation, it is reassuring to know that God is a constant source of love and acceptance. His attention is steadfast, His care is unconditional, and His love does not need to be earned or measured. No matter how much we might try to hide parts of ourselves, He sees us fully – our strengths, our flaws, and even the struggles we keep tucked away. Still, He remains with us, offering grace, understanding, and the strength to rise above life’s challenges. Isn’t it comforting to know that He loved us enough to give His only begotten Son to save us? We can take heart in this truth today. We are seen. We are loved. We are never alone.

2. ON EAGLES’ WINGS

A. God Lifts Up His People

Exod. 19:3-5; Deut. 32:10-12

In Exodus 19:3-5, God’s statement that He delivered the Israelites “on eagles’ wings” is a profound metaphor that conveys both His power and His tender care (v. 4). Eagles are known for their strength, soaring to great heights, and their ability to carry their young on their wings, symbolizing God’s protection and guidance. This imagery captures the essence of God’s relationship with His

people, illustrating the way He lifted them out of bondage in Egypt with unmatched might and unwavering love. It speaks to His role as a deliverer who not only rescues but also nurtures and sustains. Eagles’ wings evoke a sense of divine elevation, to remind us that God raises His people above their struggles and carries them toward His covenant promises. This passage invites God’s people to reflect on the security and purpose found in trusting the one who carries them with such care and strength.

In Deuteronomy 32:10-12, the imagery of an eagle caring for its young illustrates beautifully God’s tender and protective love for His people. Just as an eagle hovers (“fluttereth”) over its nest, feeding, guarding, and guiding its young, God watches over His children with unwavering attention (v. 11). The eagle stirs its nest to teach its young to fly yet remains close, ready to catch them if they falter. In a sense, Egypt had become Israel’s nest, but God stirred them up, motivating them to leave. Sometimes His children become nested and comfortable where they are spiritually, and God has to stir them up to move out and into the plans He has for them.

This metaphor reflects God’s nurturing guidance, encouraging growth and progress while also ensuring His constant presence for support and rescue when His people need it. The passage is a reminder of the balance between discipline and compassion in God’s care, expressing His desire for His people to thrive under His protection and provision. Through this illustration, one sees a powerful depiction of divine love – both fierce and gentle, challenging yet comforting.

Questions for Application

How does the metaphor of eagles’ wings inspire you to trust in God’s plan even during difficult times?

What does God sometimes do to stir up our nests and get us out of our comfort zones and into our Kingdom roles? Can you share an example of this in your life?

B. God's Strength for His People

Isa. 40:27-31

Isaiah 40:27-31 offers a profound reminder of God's unwavering strength and faithfulness, especially in moments of weariness and doubt. The passage begins by addressing the feelings of abandonment and despair that many experience, reassuring the people of Judah that God does not grow tired or weary, nor does He overlook His people's struggles. He is not indifferent to His people's situation. His understanding is infinite, and His power is boundless. For those who feel faint or powerless, this Scripture serves as a beacon of hope, promising that God will renew their strength. It challenges His people to trust in Him even when circumstances seem overwhelming and to remember that His timing and provision are perfect.

The imagery of mounting up with wings like eagles is particularly striking, symbolizing a divine empowerment that lifts one above life's challenges. Eagles soar effortlessly, carried by the wind rather than their own strength; this is a beautiful metaphor for what happens when people place their trust in God. By waiting on the Lord – seeking Him in prayer, worship, and dependence – His people are given the strength to “mount up with wings as eagles ... run, and not be weary ... walk, and not faint” (v. 31). This passage invites those who follow God to exchange their limited strength for His limitless power, encouraging each one to rise above adversity with the confidence that He will sustain them every step of the way.

Questions for Application

How can we apply the promise of renewed strength in our daily lives when we feel weary or burdened?

How does it look to “wait on the Lord” in your life?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

To be delivered by God means to experience His saving power when we face challenges, dangers, or burdens we cannot overcome alone.

Deliverance is His loving intervention, pulling us out of despair, sin, or difficult situations and placing us on a path of hope and purpose. Once delivered, being strengthened by Him means receiving the grace, courage, and resilience we need to move forward, grow, and thrive. God does not rescue us and then leave us to figure things out alone – He equips us with His wisdom, peace, and unwavering presence to face life's battles confidently. Through His strength, we find the ability to endure, overcome, and live with a renewed sense of faith and joy.

3. UNDER GOD'S WINGS

A. Abiding Close to God's Heart

Ps. 91:1-4

Psalm 91 paints a beautiful picture of God's protection and care for those who trust in Him. To “abide under the shadow of the Almighty” is to dwell in His constant presence, finding refuge in His strength and love (v. 1). It speaks to a relationship of intimacy and trust in which one chooses to stay close to Him, allowing His power to overshadow one's fears and uncertainties. Just as a shadow provides relief from the heat of the sun, God's presence offers comfort and peace in the trials of life. This abiding is not a fleeting moment but a continual posture of reliance on Him, finding safety and rest in the one who is greater than any challenge one may face.

The imagery of being covered by His wings further emphasizes God's tender care and protective nature (v. 4). Like a mother bird shielding her young, God surrounds His children with His faithfulness, offering them security and warmth. His wings are not just a barrier against harm but also a place of nurture and closeness, reminding His people that His protection is deeply personal. In this covering, believers are reminded that God is their refuge, fortress, and safe place in every storm. These verses invite the believer in God to trust Him fully, resting in the assurance that His love and power are more than enough to sustain one through life's uncertainties.

Questions for Application

What does it mean to “dwell in the secret place of the Most High,” and how can we apply this daily (Ps. 91:1)?

Verse 4 describes God covering us with His feathers and being a shield. How does this image symbolize His protection over our lives?

B. Refusing Shelter Near God’s Heart

Matt. 23:37, 38

Only days from His crucifixion, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37, 38, the city symbolizing the Jewish people’s persistent reluctance to embrace Him as their Messiah. His heartfelt cry – “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings...” – revealed the depth of His love and desire to protect and nurture the Jewish people (v. 37). Yet their unwillingness to come to Him expressed their tragic resistance rooted in hardened hearts and misplaced priorities. Despite the countless miracles, teachings, and acts of compassion Jesus demonstrated, many rejected Him, clinging instead to their traditions and preconceived notions of what the Messiah should be. This reluctance was not merely an intellectual misunderstanding but a spiritual refusal to surrender to the truth Jesus embodied.

The consequence of this rejection is poignantly stated in verse 38: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” This desolation reflects both the immediate and eternal repercussions of turning away from the Savior. For the Jewish people of that time, it foretold the destruction of the Temple and the scattering of their nation that happened in A.D. 70. Spiritually, it underscores the emptiness that comes from rejecting God’s presence and grace. Jesus’ lament was not one of anger but of sorrow, a divine yearning for a people He loved deeply despite their resistance. It serves as a sobering reminder that God’s invitation is always extended, but a willing heart must respond. The reluctance of the Jewish people in this passage reflects humanity’s broader tendency

to resist surrendering to God’s will, even when it is for humanity’s ultimate good.

Questions for Application

What did Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem reveal about His heart and character toward those who reject Him?

How do these verses reflect the consequences of rejecting God’s messengers and His call to repentance?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

When we draw close to God, we find ourselves wrapped in unwavering love and a peace that surpasses all understanding. Near His heart, there is no fear too great, no burden too heavy, for His protection is steadfast, and His care is boundless. He invites us to rest in His embrace and trust Him with our worries and dreams, knowing He is our refuge and strength. In His presence, we are reminded that we are never alone; we are cherished beyond measure and guided by a hand that knows the way even when we cannot see it. We should learn to lean into His grace and find comfort in the shelter of His unfailing love.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Being a disciple of Christ means following His teachings with faith and letting Him guide our steps. Staying close to Him is about building a daily connection through prayer, trust, and living out His example. If you struggle with regular times of prayer, make a plan to pray. You may want this plan to coincide with your regular times of Bible reading. If so, look for ways to incorporate Scripture into your prayers so they are less by rote and are closely tied to God’s own words. You may even consider reaching out to a trusted brother or sister in Christ and asking that person to keep you accountable for spending time daily with the Lord in prayer.

Ministry in Action

A ministry focused on staying close to Jesus encourages daily prayer, studying His Word, and obeying His teachings with love and grace.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Noah Sends Out Birds.**

Genesis 8:6-14

Tuesday: **Elijah Fed by Ravens.**

1 Kings 17:1-6

Wednesday: **Parable of the Eagles.**

Ezekiel 17:1-10

Thursday: **Pair of Birds Sacrificed.**

Luke 2:21-24; Leviticus 12:8

Friday: **Like a Dove.**

Matthew 3:15-17; John 1:31-33

Saturday: **Birds Used for Judgment.**

Revelation 19:17-21

Lesson

10

Donkeys and Divine Providence

God is sovereign over His entire creation.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

The Bible features numerous references to donkeys, but this lesson focuses on three specific instances. First is the story of Balaam's talking donkey, which illustrates God's ability to convey His message through extraordinary means. Second is the account of Saul's search for his father's missing donkeys, a quest that led him to Samuel, whom God told to anoint Saul as Israel's first king. Last is the prophecy and fulfillment of Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. These stories show that God can work through even the humblest beings to fulfill His purposes, reminding us of His power to act through those who choose humility and submission.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. Balaam's Talking Donkey
Num. 22:15-38
 - A. The Donkey Saw
 - B. The Donkey Spoke

2. When Donkeys Lead to Crowns
1 Sam. 9:1-20; 10:1
 - A. Looking for Lost Donkeys
 - B. Finding God's Man

3. A Donkey Carried the Messiah
Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:1-11
 - A. The Messianic Prophecy
 - B. The Messiah Comes on a Donkey

TEACHING GOALS

1. Impart and Reinforce Knowledge: Help students see that God can work through humble beasts and humble people to fulfill His plans and purposes.

2. Influence Attitudes: Encourage students to consider which characteristics of a donkey they display when circumstances are challenging: humility or stubbornness.

3. Influence Behavior: Inspire students to surrender themselves to God's purposes for their lives, which may include speaking for or following Him.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

The word *donkey* or *donkeys* occurs 142 times in the Bible (NIV). Typically, donkeys symbolize humble service and perseverance. They are contrasted with horses, which typically represent war and pride, while donkeys embody peace and servitude. Donkeys are depicted both literally as essential beasts of burden and metaphorically to illustrate human stubbornness or endurance. Their frequent presence in biblical stories reflects their importance and commonness in ancient society.

GOLDEN TEXT: MARK 11:2

Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. (KJV)

Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. (NIV)

King James Version

Numbers 22:21 Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

27 When the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

32 The angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me:

33 And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

1 Samuel 9:3 The asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.

18 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.

19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Matthew 21:1 When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them.

New International Version

Numbers 22:21 Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials.

27 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff.

32 The angel of the Lord asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.

33 The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it."

1 Samuel 9:3 Now the donkeys belonging to Saul's father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys."

18 Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and asked, "Would you please tell me where the seer's house is?"

19 "I am the seer," Samuel replied. "Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will send you on your way and will tell you all that is in your heart.

20 As for the donkeys you lost three days ago, do not worry about them; they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line?"

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Matthew 21:1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,

2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.

3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

5 "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “When you think of a donkey, which characteristic first comes to mind?” Donkeys (and their hybrids, mules) are often misunderstood as stubborn, but they have long been loyal companions to humans. Historically, they were relatively inexpensive and easier to maintain than horses. Donkeys may be humble and perhaps less majestic than horses, but they have been and still are valuable in human service. They serve as a fitting metaphor for human service in the kingdom of God. We do not have to be wealthy, come from a famous family, or have the right connections; we need to be available and submissive to God’s will.

1. BALAAM’S TALKING DONKEY

A. The Donkey Saw

Num. 22:15-27

The account in Numbers 22:15-27 offers a fascinating contrast between the spiritual awareness of Balaam’s donkey and Balaam’s blindness to divine intervention. The donkey, often considered a lowly and unremarkable creature, perceived the angel of the Lord standing in its path, armed with a drawn sword. Three times, the donkey reacted to the danger ahead – turning aside, pressing against a wall, and finally lying down under Balaam. Although seeming stubborn to Balaam, the donkey’s actions were acts of wisdom and self-preservation prompted by supernatural awareness. The irony here is striking: the donkey, a humble beast of burden, saw what the renowned prophet Balaam did not. This comparison highlights the fact that spiritual insight is not reserved for the powerful or gifted but is granted to those who are sensitive to God’s presence.

Balaam’s inability to see the angel exposed profound spiritual blindness, one clouded by his own ambitions and desires. Despite Balaam’s being a prophet, his heart was divided, swayed by the promise of wealth and favor from Balak. It was only after the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth and then Balaam’s eyes that he realized the gravity of his situation. This passage gently reminds

the reader that true vision comes not from status or intellect but from humility and alignment with God’s will. Balaam’s frustration with the donkey serves as a metaphor for impatience when circumstances do not align with one’s plans. Sometimes people fail to see that God is guiding them away from harm. In this story, the donkey became an unexpected teacher, illustrating that even the most unlikely avenues can reveal divine truth if one is willing to listen and see.

Questions for Application

Do you think Balaam’s response to Balak’s request to curse Israel was appropriate? Why or why not (Num. 22:18, 19)?

How does this passage challenge us to remain attentive to God’s guidance even when circumstances seem unclear or frustrating?

B. The Donkey Spoke

Num. 22:28-38

Continuing in Numbers 22:28-38, the donkey played a pivotal role as an unexpected voice of reason and divine intervention. When Balaam’s donkey saw the angel of the Lord blocking their path, it stopped three times, frustrating Balaam. The donkey’s actions seemed stubborn but were guided by a divine awareness that Balaam lacked. When God opened the donkey’s mouth to speak, the pitiful beast challenged Balaam’s mistreatment and forced him to confront his blindness to the spiritual reality before him. This moment demonstrates the unassuming nature of God’s methods – using a lowly animal to give wisdom and redirect Balaam’s misguided path. The donkey became a vessel for divine insight, reminding readers that God can use even the most unexpected means to accomplish His purposes.

On the other hand, Balaam’s rage reveals the human tendency to react with anger and frustration when plans are disrupted. His repeated beating of the donkey exhibited his impatience and inability to see the larger picture. Only when his eyes were opened to the angel of the Lord did Balaam realize the seriousness of the situation

and his error in judgment. This interaction served as a humbling moment for Balaam as he went from anger to submission, acknowledging God's sovereignty. Together, the donkey's role and Balaam's rage create a powerful narrative about seeing beyond immediate circumstances, listening to divine guidance, and recognizing that even apparent obstacles can be instruments of God's grace and protection.

Questions for Application

How did the talking donkey reveal God's ability to use unexpected means to communicate His will to humans?

How did Balaam's reaction to the donkey's speech reflect his spiritual awareness or lack thereof?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Sometimes we can become so focused on pursuing our goals and tackling the tasks before us that we fail to notice the Holy Spirit guiding us toward God's will. In moments like these, God often uses unexpected people or circumstances to catch our attention and redirect us. It is worth thinking about the possibility that obstacles in our path might be a sign that God has a different plan for us. His guidance may come from sources we do not anticipate, but if we remain open and attentive to the Spirit, we can recognize His voice, offering wisdom either to move forward with confidence or to embrace a new direction.

2. WHEN DONKEYS LEAD TO CROWNS

A. Looking for Lost Donkeys

1 Sam. 9:1-10

In 1 Samuel 9:1-10, we are introduced to Saul, "a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher [taller] than any of the people" (v. 2). These qualities set him apart as a choice candidate to be king. The passage begins with a seemingly ordinary task: Saul was sent by his father, Kish,

to search for their lost donkeys. However, this ordinary errand became the background for a divine appointment. Accompanied by his servant, Saul demonstrated diligence and respect for his father's concern by traveling through multiple regions searching for the animals. This account shows how God often works through the ordinary and unexpected moments of life to guide individuals toward His greater purposes. Saul's humility and willingness to listen to his servant's suggestion to seek out the prophet Samuel also revealed his openness to guidance, a quality not always shown in his later role as king.

Additionally, the interaction between Saul and his servant revealed his faith and resourcefulness. When they decided to consult Samuel, the servant's willingness to offer a small gift showed both respect for the prophet and an understanding of cultural customs. This gesture reflected the importance of honoring spiritual leaders and seeking wisdom in times of uncertainty. The passage subtly reminds the reader that even small acts of preparation and thoughtfulness can open doors to divine encounters. As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that God was orchestrating events behind the scenes, using an ordinary search for lost donkeys to bring Saul into Samuel's path. This story serves as a beautiful reminder that God's plans for His people often unfold in ways they least expect, transforming everyday situations into pivotal moments of purpose.

Questions for Application

What qualities of Saul and his family stand out in this passage, and how might they have resulted in God's choice of him as king?

Why do you think the servant suggested seeking guidance from the man of God, and what does this teach us about seeking wisdom?

B. Finding God's Man

1 Sam. 9:11-20; 10:1

In 1 Samuel 9:11-20, the reader witnesses a remarkable example of divine arrangement as God guided Samuel to recognize Saul as His chosen

man (v. 17). This passage highlights the interplay between human action and divine providence. Saul, searching for his father's lost donkeys, was unknowingly led by God to encounter Samuel, the man of God. Meanwhile, God prepared Samuel by revealing that Saul would arrive and was to be anointed as the leader of His people. This moment shows how God works behind the scenes, aligning circumstances to fulfill His purposes. Samuel's obedience and attentiveness to God's voice allowed him to discern Saul's significance, even though Saul himself seemed unaware of the extraordinary calling awaiting him.

This passage also emphasizes the importance of spiritual perception and trust in God's guidance. Samuel could have dismissed Saul as an ordinary young man on a mundane errand, but his relationship with God enabled him to see beyond appearances. God's declaration that Saul would be the one to deliver Israel from the Philistines revealed His sovereign plan and intimate involvement in the lives of His people. This encounter between Samuel and Saul serves as a reminder that God, in ways that may be unexpected, often chooses for His purposes individuals who may seem ordinary at first glance. It encourages the reader to remain open to His leading, trusting that He sees what humans cannot and works all things according to His divine wisdom.

1 Samuel 10:1 marks a pivotal moment in Israel's history when Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. This act signified God's choice and divine appointment of Saul to lead His people, symbolized by the anointing oil poured on Saul's head. The gesture not only set Saul apart for his role but also represented the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to guide him in his kingship. Samuel's declaration – "Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?" – emphasized that Saul's authority came from God, and his leadership was meant to serve God's purposes for His people (v. 1). This verse reminds the reader of the importance of divine calling and the responsibility that comes with it. It also discloses God's sovereignty in raising leaders to fulfill His plans. Despite Saul's later

failings, this moment reflected a fresh beginning for Israel, showing God's care and provision for the nation.

Questions for Application

How does the encounter between Saul and the young women at the well reflect the importance of divine timing in this passage?

How does this passage illustrate the role of humility and service in leadership, as seen in Saul's initial task of searching for his father's donkeys?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Sometimes the tasks we are called to do, whether on the job or in the church, may seem unimportant, but when we are serving God, all that we do is significant. God can use anything we do to accomplish His plans and purposes if we give our best and remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit as we perform our roles and responsibilities. If we are setting up chairs for a church service, we should pray for the people who will sit there, or if we are serving in the nursery, we should pray for the parents who will receive the Word without distractions. There are no small jobs in God's kingdom, but there are often people with small visions.

3. A DONKEY CARRIED THE MESSIAH

A. The Messianic Prophecy

Zech. 9:9

Zechariah 9:9 is a profound and prophetic verse that speaks of the coming of a humble and righteous king. Historically, this prophecy was written during a time when Israel was facing turmoil and yearned for deliverance from foreign oppression. Kings and conquerors of that era typically rode mighty horses or chariots as symbols of power and dominance. However, the imagery of the Messiah riding on a donkey conveys a stark contrast. A donkey was often associated with peace rather than war, symbolizing humility and servanthood. This prophecy pointed to a leader who would not come to conquer through force but to

bring salvation and peace in a manner that defied worldly expectations.

Zechariah 9:9 portrays a profound image of leadership rooted in humility and peace, exemplified by Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. This deliberate act portrayed a kingdom built not on domination or violence but on renewal, compassion, and justice. By redefining the concept of power, Jesus presented an alternative vision, where grace and humility triumph over force and intimidation. For Christians, this passage serves as a timeless reminder of the values central to a life of faith: humility, peace, and God's justice.

Questions for Application

Why is the concept of rejoicing emphasized at the beginning of the verse?

Why do you think the king is described as "righteous and having salvation" (ESV) yet riding on a humble donkey?

B. The Messiah Comes on a Donkey

Matt. 21:1-11

The story of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, as found in Matthew 21:1-11, is rich in symbolism. Jesus knew where the foal of the donkey would be, and He knew how to address the owners, who would inquire as to why His disciples were borrowing it. Jesus was aware of the prophetic moment that was about to unfold, and either through divine foreknowledge or preplanning, this young donkey was stationed where it needed to be for this moment. By riding on the humble colt of a donkey, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, revealing that He is a King of peace and humility, unlike the grandiose displays and attitudes of earthly rulers.

The crowd laid down cloaks and palm branches before Him, shouting "Hosanna," recognizing Him as the Messiah (v. 9). However, most of them misunderstood His mission because they were seeking a political savior rather than a spiritual one. This moment exposed the tension between their expectations and the reality of Jesus' purpose. It also challenges readers to reflect on their

faith and ask themselves whether they are steadfast when God's plans do not align with their own. It is a reminder to welcome Jesus with genuine trust and celebrate Him as the Prince of Peace.

The detail of Jesus riding an unbroken foal adds another layer of meaning. In Jewish tradition, animals unused for ordinary tasks were considered sacred, and this untouched foal symbolized purity and submission. It also shows Jesus' authority over creation, as the untrained animal submitted to Him peacefully. Instead of choosing a warhorse, Jesus chose a humble donkey, emphasizing His kingdom of peace and servanthood over power and conquest. This scene invites one to embrace Jesus' humility and trust in God's greater plan.

Questions for Application

How does the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy reveal Jesus' identity as the Messiah?

What does this passage teach about the contrast between the crowd's expectations of Jesus and His actual mission?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt contrasts sharply with the pomp and circumstance of worldly events like inaugurations or coronations. It highlights His humility and unwavering dedication to His Father's mission. This story challenges us to examine our motives. Do we seek human approval, or do we serve with hearts in harmony with God's will? True service in God's kingdom seeks faithfulness, not recognition, even when the path is difficult or expectations go unmet.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

As disciples of Jesus, we need to be aware of those around us whom God may call to serve in His kingdom. Our job is to encourage them while we help them grow in God's grace. Such encouragement should also be coupled with training and preparation. Jesus spent several years with the apostles before they were set loose to change the

world. We too need time to prepare for how the Lord might use us and those around us. Let us be patient enough and humble enough to receive the training we require so that we might accomplish all that God has in store for us and for His Church.

Ministry in Action

The church should not only focus on ministries that are most often in the spotlight but should also recognize and praise the people who faithfully complete humble tasks behind the scenes.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Absalom's Last Ride.**
2 Samuel 18:9-15, 32-33

Tuesday: **On a King's Mule.**
1 Kings 1:32-38

Wednesday: **The Horse – Creation of God.**
Job 39:19-25

Thursday: **Camels as Symbols.**
Matthew 19:23-25; 23:23-24

Friday: **Horses of Judgment.**
Revelation 9:13-19

Saturday: **Victors on White Horses.**
Revelation 19:11-16

Lesson

11

Oxen and Offerings

Christians should express devotion to God through sacrificial giving.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson examines various sacrifices, particularly those involving oxen. It explores David's offering at Araunah's threshing floor to end Israel's plague. David would not offer God something that cost him nothing, revealing that authentic sacrifice is an investment in worship. Solomon's Temple dedication, with the sacrifice of sheep and oxen, was an example of worship through extravagant giving. Elisha's response to Elijah's call was marked by a gesture of commitment as he sacrificed his oxen and burned the plow. Paul's illustration of the ox eating from the grain it grinds reveals the appropriateness of ministerial support.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. Royal Offerings
 - 2 Sam. 24:18-25; 2 Chr. 5:1-6
 - A. Offerings to End Judgment
 - B. Offerings to Dedicate the Temple
2. Forsaking Farming to Follow God
 - 1 Kgs. 19:14-21; Prov. 14:4
 - A. The Future Prophet's Sacrifice
 - B. The Proverbial Profitable Oxen
3. Supporting Ministers of the Gospel
 - 1 Cor. 9:4-14
 - A. The Ox Eats as It Plows
 - B. The Right to Reap

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Help students understand the importance of old covenant sacrifices as examples of the people's commitment to God through dedication.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Inspire students to be willing and cheerful givers in support of the ministries of the local church.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Motivate students to offer their time, talents, and resources selflessly in devoted service and commitment to God.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

The ancient Jewish sacrificial system featured various animals, each carrying distinct symbolic and ritual significance. Bulls, goats, and lambs were commonly presented as offerings for sin, burnt sacrifices, and peace offerings, with the lamb particularly symbolizing redemption during Passover. To accommodate the poor, turtledoves and pigeons were accepted, emphasizing the system's inclusivity across social strata. Rams and heifers were integral to purification rites and covenant ceremonies.

GOLDEN TEXT: 2 SAMUEL 24:24

...Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. (KJV)

...“No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. (NIV)

King James Version

2 Samuel 24:18 Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the Lord commanded.

24 The king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

25 And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

2 Chronicles 5:1 Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the Lord was finished: and Solomon brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God.

6 Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

1 Kings 19:19 So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

New International Version

2 Samuel 24:18 On that day Gad went to David and said to him, “Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.”

19 So David went up, as the Lord had commanded through Gad.

24 But the king replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.

25 David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the Lord answered his prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

2 Chronicles 5:1 When all the work Solomon had done for the temple of the Lord was finished, he brought in the things his father David had dedicated—the silver and gold and all the furnishings—and he placed them in the treasures of God’s temple.

6 King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted.

1 Kings 19:19 So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.

20 Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. “Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,” he said, “and then I will come with you.” “Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?”

21 So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.

1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned?

10 Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “What sacrifices are Christians asked to give in the New Testament?” The sacrifice for sin was satisfied by Christ alone, and nothing we give adds to His perfect sacrifice. However, Jesus did indicate that we should count the cost of following Him (Luke 14:28). Furthermore, the Bible tells Christians to give themselves as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12:1) and to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually” (Heb. 13:15). The idea of sacrifice by Christians is the idea of willingly giving ourselves and our praise to God in response to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ to redeem us from our sins.

1. ROYAL OFFERINGS

A. Offerings to End Judgment

2 Sam. 24:18-25

In 2 Samuel 24:18-25, the reader witnesses a profound moment when King David took decisive action to end a divine judgment upon Israel. After David’s census of the people, which displeased God, a pestilence (plague) swept through the land (vv. 1-17). At the instruction of the prophet Gad, David went to the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite to build an altar and offer sacrifices to the Lord (vv. 18-24). This shows the significance of offerings as an act of repentance and reconciliation. David’s willingness to follow God’s directions and his insistence on purchasing the threshing floor and oxen at full price highlight the principle that sacrifices to God should be something of value. David’s act reflected his devotion and humility.

The story concludes with David’s heartfelt sacrifices, which ultimately led to God’s mercy as the plague came to an end (v. 25). This illustrates the power of sincere worship and obedience in repairing a broken relationship with God. David’s actions remind the reader that genuine offerings are not about convenience or token gestures but about giving one’s best to God even when giving it requires sacrifice. This account also reveals God’s grace, showing that while His judgment is

just, His mercy is greater for those who turn back to Him with contrite hearts. This passage encourages believers to approach God with humility, offering not only material gifts but also their lives as acts of worship and commitment to His will.

Questions for Application

What is the significance of David’s insistence on paying for the threshing floor and oxen rather than accepting them as a gift?

Discuss how David must have felt for causing the plague and how it motivated his sacrifice.

B. Offerings to Dedicate the Temple

2 Chr. 5:1-6

The completed construction and dedication of Solomon’s Temple recorded in 2 Chronicles 5:1-6 marked a pivotal moment in Israel’s history. The text highlights the immense number of sacrifices offered before the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the Temple. These sacrifices were not merely ceremonial; they symbolized the people’s deep desire to honor God and seek His presence among them. The abundance of offerings, described as so many “sheep and cattle that [they] could not be counted or numbered for multitude” (NKJV), emphasizes the magnitude of their devotion and the desire of the congregation to express their worship to the Lord (v. 6).

The sacrifices in this passage also serve as an example of lavish worship. Each offering represented a significant act of surrender as the people gave from their flocks and herds – valuable resources in a society dependent upon animals for farming and livelihoods. This act of giving demonstrated their willingness to prioritize God above material possessions. Also, these sacrifices foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the need for atonement once and for all. This passage invites reflection on what it means to offer one’s best to God. Although Christians no longer bring sacrificial animals, they are called to present themselves as living sacrifices in response to God’s saving grace and goodness.

Questions for Application

What can we learn about worship from the abundance of sacrifices offered by Solomon and the people at the dedication of the Temple?

The people gave of their livelihoods at the dedication of the Temple. How does our giving reflect the ways that our livelihoods are tied to our worship of God?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

2 Samuel 24:18-25 and 2 Chronicles 5:1-6 show that sacrifices in the Bible held profound significance. One illustrates repentance to halt God's judgment, while the other expresses gratitude to invite His presence. The former occurred on a humble threshing floor, while the latter took place during a grand Temple celebration. Yet both emphasize commitment and devotion, urging us to leave our comfort zones, deepen our faith, and affirm our relationship with God. Through such acts, we welcome His presence into our lives with lasting impact.

2. FORSAKING FARMING TO FOLLOW GOD

A. The Future Prophet's Sacrifice

1 Kgs. 19:14-21

The story of Elisha's transition from farming to becoming a prophet is a powerful testament to the unexpected ways God calls individuals to serve Him. At this point in the narrative, the prophet Elijah was grappling with feelings of despair and isolation, believing himself to be the last faithful servant of God (1 Kgs. 19:14). However, God reassured him that His work was not yet finished and instructed Elijah to anoint Elisha as his prophetic successor (v. 16). Elisha was plowing his family's fields with 12 yokes of oxen when Elijah approached him and placed his cloak upon him (v. 19). This symbolic act signified the passing of prophetic authority and marked the beginning of Elisha's extraordinary journey.

Elisha's response to this calling was both immediate and wholehearted. After Elijah placed

the cloak on him, Elisha did not hesitate; he ran after Elijah, indicating his willingness to follow. However, before leaving, he asked to say goodbye to his parents, a gesture that reflected both respect for his family and the weight of his decision. Elijah's reply – "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" – suggests that the choice rested with Elisha (v. 20). In a remarkable display of commitment, Elisha slaughtered his oxen, burned the plowing equipment, and cooked the meat, which he shared with the people around him (v. 21). This act is deeply symbolic; by destroying his farming tools, Elisha demonstrated that he was leaving his old life behind and embracing his new role as a prophet. It is a vivid reminder that answering God's call often requires sacrifice and a willingness to let go of what is familiar and comfortable.

The story concludes with Elisha following Elijah and becoming his attendant, marking the beginning of a great mentorship that prepared Elisha for his future role as a prophet. Elisha's immediate and decisive actions show what it means to respond to God with faith and determination. His story also invites personal reflection: Are we prepared to sacrifice anything that holds us back in order to embrace a higher purpose? Elisha's journey reminds the reader that God often sees in people potential that they may not see in themselves, and when they step out in faith, He equips them for the work He has planned for them.

Questions for Application

What did Elisha's immediate response to Elijah suggest about Elisha's relationship with God even before this encounter with Elijah?

The calling of Elisha in verses 19-21 demonstrated a significant transition in leadership. What leadership lessons can be drawn from Elisha's willingness to become Elijah's apprentice?

B. The Proverbial Profitable Oxen

Prov. 14:4

Proverbs 14:4 states, "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength

of the ox.” This simple verse illustrates the essential role of oxen in ancient agricultural societies. It encapsulates a timeless truth about productivity and the necessary messiness that often accompanies meaningful work. In ancient times, oxen were needed for farming and food production. They were the engines of the agricultural economy, pulling plows to till the soil and hauling heavy loads during harvest. Without oxen, the fields would remain unplowed, and the harvest would be meager. While the absence of oxen might mean a cleaner “crib” (stall), free from the daily toil of feeding and cleaning up after these animals, it would also mean a lack of provisions and prosperity. The verse reminds the reader that meaningful achievements often require hard work, dedication, and a willingness to embrace inconvenience.

In a broader sense, this proverb also speaks to the necessity of investment and effort in any fruitful endeavor. For ancient societies, owning and caring for oxen demanded resources, time, and labor. Yet the returns were undeniable because oxen multiplied a farmer’s capacity to produce food and sustain the community. Similarly, in modern lives, pursuing growth and success often involves embracing challenges and enduring some level of discomfort. Whether the task is managing a busy workplace, raising a family, or pursuing personal goals, one must recognize that production and progress often come with their own version of a messy stall. Proverbs 14:4 encourages the reader to see beyond the temporary inconvenience and focus on the greater reward that comes from diligent effort. It is a reminder that while the path to success may not always be tidy, the effort is worthwhile.

Questions for Application

In what ways can this proverb apply to modern work environments and personal productivity?

In what ways can ministry sometimes be messy yet also productive?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Elisha’s story beautifully illustrates how God meets us in the ordinary and calls us to extraordinary purposes. Elisha’s act of burning his plowing equipment symbolizes trust and surrender, challenging us to consider what we must leave behind to embrace God’s call. This story reminds us that answering God requires faith, sacrifice, and stepping into the unknown. Yet, like Elisha, we too can trust that God equips us for His purposes and recognizes our potential – even when we may not realize it ourselves. Are we ready to respond “yes” with the same faith and commitment as Elisha?

3. SUPPORTING MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

A. The Ox Eats as It Plows

1 Cor. 9:4-10

In 1 Corinthians 9:4-14, the apostle Paul expressed an important principle: those who minister to others in spiritual matters have a right to material and financial support. Paul began by asking the Corinthian church whether he and Barnabas had the right to provisions in places where they ministered (vv. 4-6). By way of comparison, he asked whether a soldier serves at his own expense (v. 7). Paul emphasized the fairness of compensating those who dedicate their lives to advancing the gospel. Just as a farmer expects to partake of his crops, and a shepherd benefits from the milk of his flock, ministers of the gospel should receive provisions for their labor.

Paul’s argument was rooted in both logic and Scripture, as he drew upon Deuteronomy 25:4, which states, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (1 Cor. 9:9). Though seemingly about animals, this Old Testament command carries a broader principle: those who work deserve to benefit from their efforts.

Paul’s use of this metaphor emphasized the dignity and value of ministerial work. He reminded the Corinthians that spiritual labor is no less demanding than physical toil and that it is only right for those who sow spiritual seeds to reap

material blessings. By referencing Scripture, Paul elevated this concept beyond mere human reasoning; it is a divine principle established by God. Notably, Paul's tone is not one of entitlement but rather one of fairness and mutual respect. Ministers dedicate themselves to nurturing the spiritual well-being of others, often at significant personal cost. Supporting them ensures they can continue their work without undue hardship. For modern readers, this passage serves as a gentle reminder to honor and care for those who invest in the spiritual lives of the church community and to recognize that those efforts are crucial to the growth and well-being of the church community.

Questions for Application

What are some practical ways we can honor and support those who dedicate their lives to ministry of the Word in our own lives or communities?

In 1 Corinthians 9:9, Paul referenced a Law about not muzzling an ox while it treads grain. How do you interpret this metaphor with regard to supporting those who serve?

B. The Right to Reap

1 Cor. 9:11-14

Paul continued his compelling argument in 1 Corinthians 9:11-14 for the rightful support of ministers who dedicate their lives to the work of the gospel. Paul began by drawing a parallel between spiritual and material investments, stating, "If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?" (v. 11, NKJV) Here Paul pointed to the natural exchange between those who labor in spiritual matters and those who benefit from their ministry. Just as a farmer reaps a harvest from the seeds they sow, ministers who tirelessly nurture the spiritual growth of their communities deserve to share in the material blessings of those they serve. This is not a transactional relationship but rather a recognition of the mutual responsibility within the body of Christ. Paul's tone is not one of entitlement but of reason, reminding believers

that supporting their leaders is both logical and biblical.

Paul further reinforced his point by appealing to broader principles rooted in Scripture and everyday life. He referenced the practice of priests in the Temple, who partook of the offerings brought to God (v. 13), and concluded with the directive: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (v. 14). This command shows that providing for ministers is not merely a suggestion but a divine principle established by God Himself. By supporting their leaders, believers enable them to focus fully on their calling without undue concern for material needs. Paul's teaching encourages a culture of generosity and mutual care within the church, where ministers can thrive in their mission, and congregations can flourish under their guidance. In essence, 1 Corinthians 9:11-14 serves as a timeless reminder that investing in those who labor for the gospel is an act of worship and gratitude, reflecting the heart of God's kingdom.

Questions for Application

How do you interpret the idea of sowing "spiritual things" and reaping "material things" in the context of modern ministry?

Paul referenced both Scripture and everyday practices to make his case. Which of his examples do you find most convincing, and why?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

In 1 Corinthians 9:4-14, Paul emphasized the need to support those devoted to God's work, likening it to the way soldiers, farmers, and shepherds deserve sustenance from their labor. This passage reveals the spiritual significance of generosity and gratitude, urging us to care for those who nurture our faith, such as pastors and missionaries. Support goes beyond finances to include prayer, encouragement, and appreciation, fostering unity in the body of Christ. By living out this principle, we honor God's design for community and show love in action.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

As followers of Christ, we must be an example to others with regard to our sacrifices in service to Him. As Paul stated, we should be cheerful in all that we give (2 Cor. 9:7). If you are not already, how can you become a cheerful giver? Becoming a cheerful giver begins with giving regularly so that money does not hold primacy of place in one's life. As we give, we can ask the Lord to help us enjoy giving to His people and for His kingdom purposes. We can also ask Him to guard our hearts from ingratitude and miserliness.

Ministry in Action

It is a given that Christians will give of their finances generously and sacrificially. But we must not neglect also to sacrifice our time and talents to the Lord to further gospel ministry.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Obedience Better Than Sacrifice.**

1 Samuel 15:12-23

Tuesday: **Cattle on a Thousand Hills.**

Psalms 50:7-15

Wednesday: **Living With Cattle.**

Daniel 4:24-33

Thursday: **Excuses Are Inexcusable.**

Luke 14:16-24

Friday: **Driving Out Animals and Merchants.**

John 2:13-17

Saturday: **Honoring Elders.**

1 Timothy 5:17-19

Lesson

12

Spiritual Truths From Fishing

Breakthroughs come to those who follow Jesus.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

The recurring theme in this lesson is fish and fishing, showcasing God’s miraculous provision and call to faith. From the massive catch of fish from the Sea of Galilee that led Peter and the other fishermen to become Jesus’ disciples to the post-resurrection miraculous catch of fish, these stories reveal Jesus’ divinity. The coin found in a fish’s mouth demonstrates Jesus’ power to provide even in practical matters, while the parable of the dragnet illustrates the reach of the kingdom of God and the ultimate separation of good and evil. Collectively, these accounts inspire trust in God, submission to His call, and devotion to His grace.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. A New Kind of Fishing
Luke 5:1-11
 - A. The Ministry of Jesus
 - B. The Mission of the Disciples

2. Miraculous Catch of Fish
John 21:1-14
 - A. Fishermen Fishing Again
 - B. Fish for the Fishermen

3. Taxes and a Dragnet
Matt. 17:24-27; 13:47-51
 - A. The Coin in the Fish’s Mouth
 - B. The Many Fish in the Sea

TEACHING GOALS

1. Impart and Reinforce Knowledge: Make students aware of passages in which Jesus used fish to make a powerful point about His provision and plans for the lives of His disciples.

2. Influence Attitudes: Encourage students to be fearless as disciples of Jesus, knowing He will provide the resources they need to be effective in the Kingdom.

3. Influence Behavior: Inspire students to embrace God’s call to make more disciples of Jesus (cf. Luke 5:10).

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

Fishing in the Sea of Galilee (also called Lake Gennesaret or the Sea of Tiberias) was essential to the region’s economy and culture. This lake, teeming with fish such as tilapia, sustained villages like Bethsaida and Capernaum, where Jesus ministered. Fishing was often a family trade, and families owned boats and nets. However, fishermen faced burdens such as taxes imposed by the Romans and local leaders like Herod Antipas.

GOLDEN TEXT: MATTHEW 4:19

He [Jesus] saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (KJV)

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” (NIV)

King James Version

Luke 5:4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

6 When they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

John 21:5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Matthew 17:24 When they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

13:47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

New International Version

Luke 5:4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,

10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."

11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

John 21:5 He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

6 He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

Matthew 17:24 After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

25 "Yes, he does," he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?"

26 "From others," Peter answered. "Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him.

27 "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

13:47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.

48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.

49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous

50 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51 Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “How is attempting to reach the lost like going fishing?” Reaching the lost can be like fishing because it requires understanding of what will draw people closer to Christ. As fishermen use the right bait to attract fish, we reach out to others with love, concern, prayers, and kindness to make them more receptive to the gospel. It is also important to consider where we are most likely to find those who are spiritually searching, such as in places like prisons or among the sick, areas where hearts may be more open to hope and healing (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

1. A NEW KIND OF FISHING

A. The Ministry of Jesus

Luke 5:1-7

Luke 5:1-11 is an exciting account that contains the themes of faith, obedience, and the transformational nature of discipleship. This passage recounts the moment when Jesus, teaching by the Lake of Gennesaret, performed a miraculous act that led to the calling of Simon (Peter), James, and John as His first disciples. As the crowd gathered to hear the Word of God, Jesus used Simon Peter’s boat as a platform to teach the people who were standing along the shore (vv. 1-3). This act shows that seemingly ordinary tools and lives can be employed for God’s purposes. The scene set the stage for a miraculous event that not only demonstrated Jesus’ divine authority but also called ordinary individuals into an extraordinary mission. Jesus’ call of these fishermen to be His disciples was also strategic in that Jesus utilized the Sea of Galilee to move efficiently from one area to another. Therefore, experienced sailors were a significant asset to Jesus’ ministry. Likewise, God can use our vocations for His purposes in reaching lost humanity.

The account unfolds with Jesus stepping into Peter’s boat and, after teaching the crowd, telling Peter to put out into deeper water to let down the nets for a catch. Peter was an experienced fisherman who had fished through the night, and Jesus was raised as a carpenter in Nazareth, far from

the sea. Despite Simon’s initial reluctance – having labored all night without success – he obeyed Jesus’ word. The resulting catch was so abundant that it nearly broke the nets and filled two boats with fish to the point of sinking (vv. 4-7). This miracle is a vivid illustration of the blessings that come from trusting and obeying Christ even when circumstances seem unfavorable. It also foreshadows the spiritual harvest that Peter and his companions would experience as “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). For example, in Acts 2, after Peter’s first sermon as a Spirit-filled preacher, “about three thousand souls” were added to the church (v. 41).

Questions for Application

Why did Peter initially seem hesitant to let down the nets again after fishing all night without any success?

How do you interpret the miraculous catch of fish? What might it symbolize in the context of Jesus’ ministry?

B. The Mission of the Disciples

Luke 5:8-11

Simon Peter’s response to the miracle is particularly striking. It seems that Peter saw more than a carpenter in his boat at that moment. He saw Christ’s divinity, and – overwhelmed by awe and a sense of his own unworthiness – he fell at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). This moment reveals a key theme in Luke’s Gospel, namely, the recognition of one’s sinfulness in the presence of divine holiness. Yet, rather than turning Peter away, Jesus called him into a deeper relationship and a more purposeful life. The response of Peter and his companions – leaving everything behind to follow Jesus – represents the radical commitment required of discipleship (vv. 9-11). Saying yes to Jesus means saying no to things that distract one from being a disciple of Christ.

In this passage, one sees how an encounter with the power of Christ can truly transform one’s life. Jesus took ordinary fishermen, burdened by their

limitations and failures, and called them into an extraordinary mission to spread the gospel. The story reminds readers that God often chooses unlikely people engaged in seemingly insignificant vocations to accomplish His purposes, not because of their qualifications but because of their willingness to follow Him. This account challenges believers to trust in Christ's authority, respond to His call with obedience, and embrace the life-changing mission of discipleship.

Questions for Application

How did Peter's reaction after the catch of fish and Jesus' response to him reveal the divinity of Christ?

Discuss how this passage encourages us to trust Jesus even when things seem unlikely or impossible and we are weary from our efforts.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

The story of the miraculous catch of fish, followed by a call to discipleship, shows what happens when we trust God and take steps of faith. After an unproductive night of fishing, Peter obeyed Jesus' unusual instruction to cast his net again and witnessed an astonishing miracle. This challenges us to trust Jesus even when His guidance seems illogical or the results are not immediate. It is a call to step out of our comfort zones and fully follow Him as Peter, James, and John did. Whether in our work, relationships, or personal struggles, we are reminded by this story to listen to the voice of Jesus and trust His plan, which is far greater than our own.

2. MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISH

A. Fishermen Fishing Again

John 21:1-8

John 21:1-14 describes one of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus when He revealed Himself to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. This account opens with a scene of the disciples, including Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two others, returning to their familiar

occupation of fishing (vv. 2, 3). Despite their expertise, they labored throughout the night and caught nothing, a failure which highlighted their human limitations. Jesus appeared on the shore at dawn, although they did not initially recognize Him. His instruction to cast the net on the right side of the boat resulted in an overwhelming catch of fish, a miraculous sign that opened their eyes to His identity (vv. 4-6). This miracle revealed Jesus' authority over creation and His ability to provide when His followers rely on His guidance rather than their own efforts alone.

The passage also carries profound spiritual symbolism. Peter's impulsive response – leaping into the water to reach Jesus – demonstrated both his zeal and his recognition of Christ's lordship (v. 7). The abundant catch of fish represents the fruitfulness of obedience to Christ and serves as a reminder of the disciples' calling to be “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). This account is not merely about physical provision but also about spiritual renewal and mission. By appearing to His disciples during their ordinary activities, Jesus affirmed His presence in their daily lives and work, transforming even the most mundane moments into opportunities for divine encounter and purpose. This account is a powerful testament to Christ's care, concern, and call to faithful service.

Questions for Application

Why did the disciples decide to go fishing in Galilee after everything that had recently happened in Jerusalem?

Why do you think Peter jumped into the water instead of waiting with the others?

B. Fish for the Fishermen

John 21:9-14

John 21:9-14 depicts a moving post-resurrection encounter between Jesus and His disciples beside the sea. Upon returning to the shore, the disciples found Jesus preparing a meal of fish and bread over a charcoal fire (v. 9). This scene is rich in symbolism and meaning. The image of Jesus serving His disciples emphasized His role as the Servant-King, a theme that was consistent

throughout His ministry. Despite His resurrection glory, Jesus remained deeply relational and attentive to the needs of His followers. The meal itself echoed earlier moments in the Gospels – the feeding of the 5,000, the Last Supper, and Jesus’ washing the disciples’ feet – reminding them of His genuine desire for fellowship. Also, the charcoal fire might have aroused Peter’s memories of his denial of Jesus, setting the stage for his later restoration in the chapter (cf. 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:15-19).

This passage also contains themes of care and divine concern. After their fruitless labor, the disciples were directed by Jesus to cast their net on the right side of the boat, resulting in a miraculous catch of 153 fish (21:11). Symbolically, this act reinforced the disciples’ dependence on Christ for success in their endeavors, foreshadowing their future mission to “catch men” (Luke 5:1). The invitation, “Come and dine,” revealed Jesus’ desire for communion with His followers by bridging the sacred and the ordinary with a simple meal (John 21:12). In this simple act, Jesus demonstrated that He is not only Lord over spiritual matters but also intimately involved in the daily lives of His disciples. This passage serves as a reminder of Christ’s enduring presence, abundant supply, and call to fellowship even in the most routine aspects of life.

Questions for Application

What does the abundance of fish symbolize in this passage, and how does it relate to Jesus’ earlier promise to make the disciples fishers of men?

What can we learn from the fact that Jesus prepared breakfast for His disciples?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

John 21:1-14 shows that trusting Jesus during times of frustration and failure can bring renewal and abundance. His care extends to both our physical and spiritual needs, as demonstrated by His preparing breakfast for His followers. This story encourages us to invite Jesus into our everyday tasks, trusting His guidance and timing. Whether we are facing challenges at work, in relationships,

or in pursuit of personal growth, this story inspires us to remain attentive to His presence even in the seemingly routine moments of life.

3. TAXES AND A DRAGNET

A. The Coin in the Fish’s Mouth

Matt. 17:24-27

In Matthew 17:24-27, Jesus addressed the issue of the Temple tax after tax collectors questioned Peter about whether their teacher paid it. Peter told the men who collected the Temple tax that his Master (Rabbi, Teacher) paid the tribute (tax). Jesus used this encounter to teach a profound lesson about His identity and the nature of His mission. He began by asking Peter a rhetorical question: “What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?” (v. 25) Peter rightly answered, “Of strangers,” to which Jesus responded, “Then the children are free” (v. 26). Here Jesus revealed His divine Sonship and authority. As the Son of God, He was not obligated to pay the Temple tax because the Temple was His Father’s house. This statement revealed His unique relationship with God and pointed to the new covenant He was instituting, in which the Temple’s role would be fulfilled by Him.

Nevertheless, Jesus chose not to offend the tax collectors and instructed Peter to catch a fish, in the mouth of which he would find a coin sufficient to pay the tax for both of them (v. 27). This miraculous event demonstrated Jesus’ sovereignty over creation and His willingness to humble Himself for the sake of others. By paying the tax, He modeled submission to earthly authorities without compromising His divine identity. The passage invites the reader to think about the balance between asserting one’s rights and choosing humility for the sake of peace and a positive witness. It also reminds believers of God’s providence, as Jesus supplied exactly what was needed in an extraordinary way. Ultimately, this passage points to Jesus’ selfless nature and calls His followers to live with a similar attitude of humility and trust in God’s provision.

Questions for Application

How did the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth demonstrate God's power? Have you ever experienced a moment when God provided for you in an unexpected way? Explain.

This passage highlights the balance between exercising freedom and respecting societal expectations. How can we apply this principle in our daily lives as Christians?

B. The Many Fish in the Sea

Matt. 13:47-51

Matthew 13:47-51 presents the parable of the dragnet, a powerful metaphor used by Jesus to illustrate the nature of God's kingdom and the final judgment. In this parable, Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a fishing net thrown into the sea, a net that caught all kinds of fish. Once the net was full, it was drawn to shore, and the fishermen sorted the good fish into containers while discarding the bad. Jesus explained that this imagery reflects the end of the age, when angels will separate the righteous from the wicked. This parable reveals that God's kingdom is available to all people, without discrimination, when they respond by faith to the gospel. It also warns of the coming judgment, when a separation based on righteousness and wickedness will occur. As Jesus would later warn in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen."

This passage serves as both a warning and a call to self-reflection. It reminds believers of the seriousness of living a life aligned with God's will because there will come a time when accountability cannot be avoided. The parable also emphasizes the role of divine justice, assuring us that God's judgment will be fair and impartial. For modern readers, it invites contemplation of one's spiritual state and encourages the reader to pursue righteousness in preparation for the final judgment. At the same time, it reveals God's grace in inviting all to come into His kingdom and benefit from His grace before judgment is executed. The dual themes of grace and judgment make this parable a profound teaching on the balance between divine mercy and divine justice.

Questions for Application

In the parable of the dragnet, what does the net represent, and what does its imagery help us to understand about the kingdom of heaven?

Why do you think Jesus emphasized the separation of the "good" and "bad" fish? How does this relate to our understanding of judgment and accountability?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

In Matthew 17:27, Jesus casually told Peter to retrieve tax money from a fish's mouth, proving that even divine solutions can be oddly specific and hilariously creative. God often provides for His people in ways that logic alone cannot explain. To his credit, Peter believed Jesus and did as he was told, thereby finding the coin to pay the Temple tax. God will never violate His Word when guiding us to obtain the resources necessary for our personal needs or the needs of the church. However, He may lead us to unusual methods or sources to obtain the needed resources.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we have been called to follow Him and to make evangelism a priority in our lives. God often uses our places of employment as a place to fish for souls. This may be easier said than done, however. Some places of employment forbid *proselytizing*, that is, sharing your faith with others in order to win them over to join you. If you are employed at such a place, consider how you can still be a minister of the gospel without violating your company's policy. It may be possible for you and other Christians at your workplace to gather together weekly during your lunch break for prayer over the lost in your workplace. Think of other creative ways to be salt and light.

Ministry in Action

Every church should seek creative ways to reach the lost and be willing to cast a net that may draw in all manner of people. We must then trust God to separate the believers and unbelievers.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Life-Giving River.**
Ezekiel 47:1-10

Tuesday: **Unexpected Rescue.**
Jonah 1:7-17

Wednesday: **Cry From the Fish Gate.**
Zephaniah 1:1-10

Thursday: **A Few Small Fish.**
Matthew 15:32-39

Friday: **A Son's Request.**
Luke 11:11-13

Saturday: **Evidence From the Resurrected Savior.**
Luke 24:36-45

Lesson

13

Learning From Lions

God grants victory over Satan's lionlike attacks.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson examines biblical accounts of lions to illustrate God's power and deliverance. David credited God with saving him from a lion's paw. In like manner, Paul figuratively spoke of God rescuing him from the "mouth of the lion" (2 Tim. 4:17). Benaiah, one of David's mighty warriors, overcame lionlike foes and defeated a lion in a snowy pit. In Psalm 22, David likened his oppressors to ravenous lions (v. 13), yet he trusted God and prayed for deliverance. Ultimately, as the prophet Isaiah illustrated, Scripture envisions a future of universal peace when even the lions will live in harmony with calves, symbolizing the end of violence and bloodshed (11:6-10; 65:24, 25).

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. Defeating Lions
 - 1 Sam. 17:33-37; 2 Sam. 23:20-22
 - A. God Delivers From Lions
 - B. In a Pit With a Lion
2. Deliverance From Lions
 - Ps. 22:13-21; 2 Tim. 4:16-18
 - A. Men Like Lions on the Hunt
 - B. The Lion Denied a Meal
3. Resting With Lions
 - Isa. 11:6-10; 65:24, 25
 - A. The Picture of Peace
 - B. Enmity Ended

TEACHING GOALS

1. **Impart and Reinforce Knowledge:** Help students to see the various ways the Bible uses lions as metaphors and to appreciate that God's people can trust Him for deliverance in all things.
2. **Influence Attitudes:** Encourage students to place their confidence in the Lord and use their testimonies to strengthen their own faith and the faith of others.
3. **Influence Behavior:** Inspire students to have peace in every circumstance, looking forward to God's promise of final victory and peace.

TEACHING RESOURCES

See your *Adult Teaching Resources* book. For use with this lesson, there is one **Info Sheet** and one **Work Sheet** (front and back, one page). You will need to make photocopies for your class. Determine how and when you will use each of these resources for the lesson today, whether in class as a complement to the lesson or as a take-home learning resource for your students.

HISTORICAL-LITERARY BACKGROUND

In the Bible, the lions symbolize strength, courage, and authority, often representing God's might and protection. In Proverbs 28:1, the righteous are compared to a bold lion. On the other hand, lions can also signify danger, oppression, or judgment. For example, in 1 Peter 5:8, the devil is described as a prowling lion seeking someone to devour. In Revelation, Jesus is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," a title that reveals His kingship and divine power (5:5).

GOLDEN TEXT: 1 PETER 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (KJV)

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (NIV)

King James Version

1 Samuel 17:34 David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

2 Samuel 23:20 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow.

Psalms 22:13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

19 But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

2 Timothy 4:16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

Isaiah 11:6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

New International Version

1 Samuel 17:34 David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock,

35 I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it.

36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God."

2 Samuel 23:20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, performed great exploits. He struck down Moab's two mightiest warriors. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion.

Psalms 22:13 Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me.

15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.

18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

19 But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

20 Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs.

21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

2 Timothy 4:16 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.

17 But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

Isaiah 11:6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

65:25 "The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the Lord.

(Note: Only representative verses for the lesson are printed on the The Holy Scriptures page of the lesson.)

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask the class, “Have you ever seen a lion in person? What did you think?” The lion’s roar is not merely nature’s wake-up call; it is a chilling reminder that the king of the jungle does not take second place. With claws sharper than your best carving knife and teeth rivaling the sharpest blades, lions exude fearsomeness and majesty. No wonder they are divine symbols of power, capable of crushing any adversary! Remember David? When facing Goliath, David’s boldness came from God’s history of rescuing him from lions and bears. When life feels wild, trust the one who is mightier than the king of the jungle.

1. DEFEATING LIONS

A. God Delivers From Lions

1 Sam. 17:33-37

In 1 Samuel 17:33-37, the reader witnesses David’s unwavering faith in God’s deliverance as he prepared to face Goliath. Recalling his experiences as a shepherd, David testified about how God delivered him “out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear,” instilling in him a profound confidence that the same God would deliver him from the Philistine giant, Goliath (v. 37). David’s testimony was so persuasive that even Saul began to believe that David could do what Israel’s army would not do. This passage demonstrates the power of trusting in God’s faithfulness and provision, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. David’s unwavering reliance on God’s strength rather than his own abilities serves as a compelling reminder that victory comes not from human might but through divine intervention.

By remembering God’s past faithfulness and trusting in His strength rather than his own, David could step out in faith when others refused to take that first step. This account is a powerful encouragement for believers today. Just as David trusted in God’s past deliverances to face his present trial, Christians too can draw strength from remembering how God has worked in their lives. Challenges may come in physical, emotional, or spiritual

forms, but God’s power remains unchanging. By placing trust in Him, believers can confront “lions” and “giants” with courage, knowing that God is faithful to deliver. David’s story reminds the reader that when a person steps out in faith, he or she can experience God’s deliverance time after time because God’s strength will always prove sufficient to overcome challenging obstacles.

Questions for Application

What does David’s response to Saul teach us about the power of our testimony to encourage ourselves and others?

What testimonies or Bible passages do you use to encourage yourself when faced with overwhelming challenges?

B. In a Pit With a Lion

2 Sam. 23:20-22

Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, is depicted in 2 Samuel 23:20-22 as a figure of remarkable bravery and unwavering loyalty. His deeds are recorded with a sense of awe, focusing on his valor and skill in battle. Among his notable exploits, he “slew two lionlike men [ferocious warriors] of Moab,” a feat that demonstrated not only his physical strength but also his tactical skills (v. 20). Furthermore, his encounter with a lion in a snowy pit revealed a rare combination of courage and resourcefulness (v. 20). The imagery of a man willingly descending into such treacherous conditions to face such a ferocious opponent speaks volumes about his invincible spirit. These acts elevated Benaiah beyond the ordinary ranks of soldiers, earning him recognition as one of David’s “mighty men” (v. 22).

What set Benaiah apart was not merely his remarkable strength but the depth of character and unwavering faith that likely inspired his actions. His victories were not pursued for personal recognition or glory but carried out in service to King David and, by extension, in devotion to the God of Israel. This selfless dedication and sense of higher purpose earned him the trust of his king and eventually elevated him to the esteemed position

of commander of David's royal guard. Benaiah's life is a powerful reminder that true greatness often emerges not from a desire for fame but from a commitment to principles and a willingness to face extraordinary challenges with courage and integrity. His story challenges the believer to reflect on the way courage, when aligned with purpose and guided by faith, can create a legacy that endures long after the moments of triumph have passed.

Questions for Application

What kind of person would be described as "lionlike"? How would such a person attack a child of God?

How many people in the Bible who came face to face with a lion and lived to talk about it can you recall? What can we learn from their examples?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Courage often shines brightest in the midst of challenges. In those overwhelming moments when we feel backed into a corner, we truly experience what is possible with God by our side. When life's difficulties roar like a lion, remember that Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, has never been and will never be defeated. Reflect on the times He has already carried you through seemingly impossible trials. Let those memories strengthen your faith. When the next challenge comes, share your testimony: tell your friends and your family and even remind yourself of God's faithfulness. The Lamb who is also the Lion has already prevailed and redeemed us (see Rev. 5). With Him you can trust that deliverance is always near.

2. DELIVERANCE FROM LIONS

A. Men Like Lions on the Hunt

Ps. 22:13-21

Psalm 22:13-21 vividly portrays the anguish and vulnerability of the psalmist David, who was surrounded by enemies likened to "a ravaging and a roaring lion" (v. 13). The imagery of a lion with

a gaping mouth emphasizes the ferocity and merciless nature of these adversaries and symbolizes overwhelming forces of persecution and hostility. This passage captures the raw intensity of human suffering when the psalmist felt utterly exposed, as if his life were being torn apart. Yet amidst this vivid depiction of peril remained a desperate reliance on God. The cries for deliverance reflected his profound faith even in the face of imminent destruction. This contrast of fear and trust showed the psalmist's unwavering belief that God alone could rescue him from the jaws of these metaphorical lions.

In a broader sense, the idea of one's opponents as ravenous lions serves to remind one of the spiritual battles one faces. For example, Peter said the Christian's "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Psalm 22 reminds the believer that while life may often feel like a battle with relentless and powerful adversaries, faith offers an anchor in the storm. David's plea for divine intervention was not just a cry for physical rescue but an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over all circumstances. This psalm invites the reader to consider his own struggles, encouraging the reader to turn to God in moments of despair. Ultimately, this passage transforms the imagery of lions from one of terror to testimony of divine deliverance, revealing that even in the darkest valleys, God's strength and presence remain a refuge and salvation.

Questions for Application

In what ways does Psalm 22 foreshadow the crucifixion of Jesus? What lessons might we learn from Jesus' example during His crucifixion?

How does deliverance from the lion's mouth suggest a situation worse than being delivered from the lion's paw?

B. The Lion Denied a Meal

2 Tim. 4:16-18

In 2 Timothy 4:16-18, the apostle Paul reflected on his experiences of abandonment and divine

deliverance. He recalled how, during his first defense against unfounded accusations, no one stood by him, but rather all deserted him. Yet Paul did not dwell on resentment; instead, he prayed that it might not be held against them (v. 16). This response revealed the depth of his Christlike character, rooted in forgiveness and grace. Paul's reliance was not on human support but on the unwavering presence of the Lord. He confidently declared that God stood by him, strengthening him so that his proclamation of the gospel might be effective. Even in moments of isolation and trial, Paul's focus remained on the mission entrusted to him, showing his steadfast faith and trust in God's sovereign plan.

Paul's words about being "delivered out of the mouth of the lion" highlight God's power to rescue His people from even the most dangerous situations (v. 17). While Paul did not shy away from the reality of suffering, he confidently declared God's ultimate deliverance from earthly troubles and into His heavenly kingdom (v. 18). This passage is a comforting reminder of God's unwavering faithfulness even when human support falls short. It encourages followers of Christ to trust in God's constant presence and to face challenges with the assurance of His eternal salvation. Paul's testimony reassures believers that God is not only one's source of strength in the here and now but also one's eternal deliverer. It also was a lesson for Timothy to trust God in every situation.

Questions for Application

Who or what was "the lion" from which Paul said he was delivered?

How would Paul's testimony of God's deliverance in his life encourage Timothy?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Being in the jaw of a lion seems to be an impossible situation to escape, yet both David and Paul trusted God to deliver them from such dire circumstances. Their unwavering confidence reminds us that nothing is too difficult for God.

Whether a person is in the paw or the jaw of the lion, God's power remains the same. Daniel's story in the lions' den shows us that God – not earthly kings or kings of the jungle – is in control. God can shut the lion's mouth to protect us or open it to lead us out unharmed and transformed. The key is never to lose faith or stop praying, regardless of how overwhelming the situation may seem. Trust that God is with you, working in ways you may not see, and He will carry you through, whole and renewed.

3. RESTING WITH LIONS

A. The Picture of Peace

Isa. 11:6-10

Isaiah 11:6-10 paints a vivid image of harmony in which natural adversaries coexist in peace. The wolf dwelling with the lamb, the leopard lying with the goat, the young lion and fat calf together, etc. (vv. 6, 7), and a young child leading them (v. 8) all symbolize a world transformed by divine intervention. This prophetic vision rises above human understanding of nature's order, offering a glimpse of a restored creation under God's perfect reign. It reflects not only peace in nature but also the reconciliation of human beings with God and one another. The imagery promises the end of fear, hostility, and division, which are replaced by trust and unity – a foretaste of God's ultimate plan for redemption.

This passage also points to the messianic hope embodied in Jesus Christ, the "root of Jesse," who ushers in this era of peace (v. 10). His reign is marked by justice, wisdom, and righteousness, uniting all nations under His banner. The animal kingdom serves as an example of the diverse and often conflicting elements of humanity, reconciled through Christ's transformative power. Isaiah's vision challenges Christians to strive for peace in their relationships and communities, embodying the values of God's kingdom even now. It serves as a reminder that true peace is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of divine harmony that restores creation to its intended purpose.

Questions for Application

How does the picture painted by Isaiah, with predators no longer preying on weaker animals, convey a sense of peace and harmony in the age to come?

How is the depiction of Jesus (the “root of Jesse”) standing “for an ensign [a banner] of the people” a promise of peace in the age to come (v. 10)?

B. Enmity Ended

Isa. 65:24, 25

Isaiah 65:24, 25 provides a powerful picture of divine restoration and true peace. The promise that “before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” reveals a God who is intimately attuned to the needs of His people (v. 24). This anticipates a time when the barriers between the human and the divine are entirely removed, and communion with God becomes seamless and immediate. Such a promise signifies not only the end of spiritual alienation but also the assurance of God’s proactive care and responsiveness. It is a vision of a reconciled relationship when trust and harmony replace fear and estrangement.

The picture of the wolf and lamb feeding together and the lion eating straw like the ox symbolizes the end of enmity in all creation. This prophetic vision extends beyond human relationships to include the natural world, where violence and bloodshed are abolished. It is a foretaste of a new order in which peace reigns and the destructive forces of sin no longer hold sway. This passage calls the believer to reflect on God’s plan of redemption, which seeks to restore not only humanity but all creation to its intended state of harmony. It is a reminder that the ultimate hope lies in the power of God’s peace, which is a peace that surpasses all understanding and heals every division.

Questions for Application

What is the significance of God promising a time when, before His people call upon Him, He will answer them?

What is the significance of the promise that “the lion shall eat straw like the bullock” (Isa. 65:25)?

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

A lion often symbolizes power and violence, but the image of lions resting peacefully with lambs or calves represents harmony and tranquility. It is a beautiful picture of a world restored to its original, perfect state before sin entered and disrupted everything, from humanity to nature. The sin of Adam and Eve brought brokenness to the earth, leaving all of creation groaning for restoration (cf. Rom. 8:22). Yet this is not the end of the story. A day is coming when heartache, sorrow, and tears will be no more. The world will be renewed, and peace will reign. As the song joyfully proclaims, “What a day that will be!” It is a hopeful reminder of brighter days ahead for humanity and creation alike.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

We know that as we follow Christ, our adversary, the devil, will try to intimidate us, but we can testify with confidence that God is greater than all the lions that open their mouths to destroy us. Satan is a powerful adversary, but his power is limited. He is not omnipresent, omnipotent, or omniscient like our God. Further, the devil must submit to God’s will. So we may have confidence that although the enemy may appear to be winning in our lives or in this world, he is already a defeated foe. His end is soon and certain. Trust in God.

Ministry in Action

We need to be aware of those around us who may be going through times of intense trials and be willing to stand alongside them to fight against ravenous lions.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday: **Enemies Like Lions.**

Psalm 57:1-5; 58:6-8

Tuesday: **Lions and Laziness.**

Proverbs 22:13; 26:13, 14

Wednesday: **A Place Without Ravenous Lions.**

Isaiah 35:8-10

Thursday: **Shutting Lions' Mouths.**

Hebrews 11:32-34

Friday: **Satan Prowls Like a Lion.**

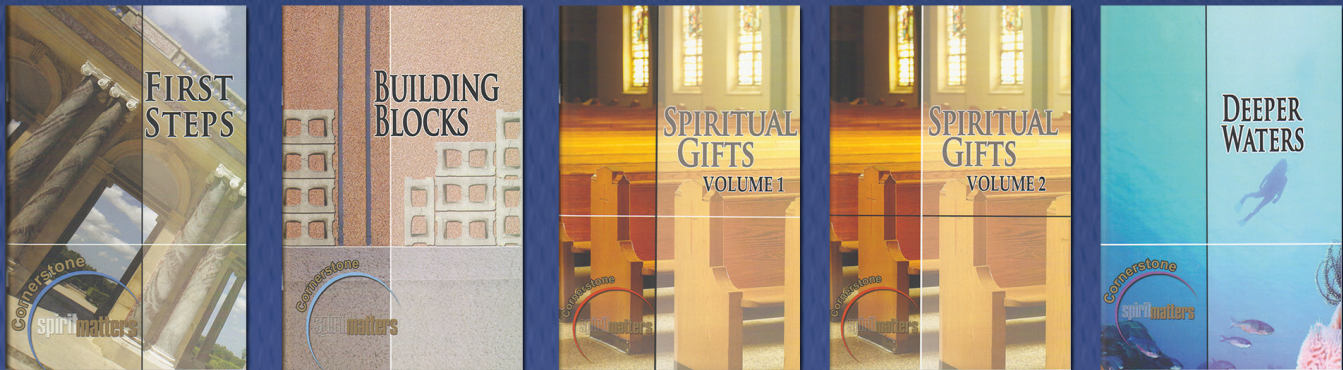
1 Peter 5:8-11

Saturday: **The Lion From Judah's Tribe.**

Revelation 5:1-5

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