

A Free ministry resource
-Not to be sold.

The background of the entire image is a close-up of sand with two distinct footprints. One footprint is in the upper right, and a larger, more detailed one is in the lower left. The text is overlaid on this background.

First Steps

in following

Jesus

- A Discipleship course
for new believers

English

This **First Steps** course is intended as a resource for Independent churches and small denominations within Central & East African countries.

The views expressed are based on our understanding of what scripture teaches. We consider our views to be in line with main stream teachings found within many denominations; however we do need to say that we are not promoting or expounding any particular theological view point or denominational interpretation of what the Bible says.

We have included many scriptures from God's Word (The Holy Bible) under each of the topics discussed within the course and pray that the Holy Spirit of God will speak truth powerfully into your life through His words as you look up scriptures and read out the verses.

We pray that God will give you complete Grace and that you will forgive us as authors, if we have expounded any view point with which you do not agree.

As authors we have written and distributed this course to be a blessing and encouragement to you and we give you the freedom to use it in the way that it is of greatest benefit to you and those with whom you may share it.

Where scriptures are quoted in this course, we have used the following Bible translations:

English – New International Version (2004)

We have written and distributed this course to be a blessing and encouragement both to you and those with whom you share it.

We give permission for you to make copies of this course and to make translations into your own local language and to distribute it; however, no permission is given to change either text or the course content.

All that we ask is that you send us a copy of your translation so that we may include it on our website that others may benefit from your work for the future.

May the Love of God be in your life...



Introduction

To the Pastor or group leader:

This ***First steps course*** has been written as an introduction to Christianity for new believers.

Jesus said to those who chose to follow him: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”* **Matthew 28: 18-20**

There is a big difference though between someone who just goes to church on a Sunday and a real disciple who is hungry for more of God.

This course is designed to be lead by a Pastor or Group leader, who should be both mature in their faith, have an understanding of the Holy Bible and most importantly have a heart to make disciples, true followers of Christ.

It aims to give pastors and group leaders a firm and consistent basis for discipling and bringing teaching into the church.

The course consists of 17 individual lessons, each lesson includes many Scriptures which should be looked up and read out aloud to the group. It also includes discussion questions, designed to get the group talking, thinking and reflecting together.

It is our prayer that this course will be an encouragement to both yourself in ministry and also to the new believers in your congregation who are hungry to learn more of Christ.

Blessings in Jesus,

Mana Rostand, Julie Young & Martin Baskerville

If you have found this course to be helpful, why not encourage us also

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First Steps in following Jesus

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Sharing Jesus!
Serving the Church!

Authors: Mana Rostand & Julie Young

Lesson 1

Sin and Salvation

Introduction

Welcome to this **First steps** Course in which we aim to help you have a better understanding of what it means to be a Christian and to help you grow spiritually as a disciple (follower) of Jesus Christ.

In the book of Genesis, the very first book in the Bible, we read the story of God's creation of the world and everything that is in it.

God made the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in His own image. He placed them in a beautiful and peaceful garden, called Eden.

God loved Adam and Eve so much that He gave them every kind of food that they needed and the complete freedom to move wherever they wanted, living without fear and in complete peace, joy and harmony with God.

God allowed them to eat every kind of plant, food and, fruit that they could desire.

He only forbade them to eat from one tree in the garden; a tree known as the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". God said that if they ate from this tree they would die.

Read out: Genesis 1:26-31, 2:8-9 & 2:15-17

From these scriptures we see that:

1. People (men and women) were created in the image of God.
2. Adam & Eve had a perfect place to live, and there was no harm, disease, or fear. They had complete freedom, with only one small restriction, not to eat the fruit from one certain tree.

Our First Parents Fall into Sin

Read out: Genesis 3:1-6

One day Satan (an evil angel) arrived in Eden in the form of a serpent. Satan tricked Adam and Eve, telling them that, if they ate fruit from the tree that God forbade them to eat, they would not die; but rather they would become like God.

Adam and Eve made a big mistake by listening to Satan and believing him. Sadly, they chose to listen to Satan rather than obeying God.

By disobeying God, Adam and Eve brought the first sin into the world.

God still had a deep love for them but, because of their disobedience they were taken away from the Garden of Eden, and they lost their close relationship with God. Their perfect world was destroyed by sin.

Human beings from that time on would have to wait for God's solution to their sin problem.

Read out: Genesis 3:14-15 God promised to send a Saviour for the people He created.

From the family line of Adam and Eve would become the One promised to crush the evil tempter, Satan, under His foot.

This promise came true when Jesus came, as is recorded in the New Testament.

We are All Sinners

Today we live in a world dominated by the consequences of sin; sin that has been committed by men and women over thousands of years.

The original sin of Adam & Eve has grown and grown over generations. People are still separated from God and the world, sadly, is very different from the paradise God originally gave to Adam and Eve.

The troubles, sorrows and sufferings that all of us face in today's world are a direct consequence of the first sin of Adam & Eve. Their bad choice separated them from God. Similarly our bad choices and sins also separate us from God, and produce bad and unhealthy things in our lives.

Question: Have you ever met a perfect person who has never done anything wrong in their entire life?

Of course not! Everyone has some bad things in their life, and everyone has made bad choices.

Read out: Romans 3:23 When we sin we experience destruction in our lives.

The following are examples of the consequences of sin that we often may see in our society:

- **Lying, cheating, stealing, bullying, -Worshipping idols or spirits.**
- **Not taking care of one's family; beating one's wife or children.**
- **Husband and wife divorce, - Children born to single mothers.**
- **Abortion being practiced and legalised in some countries.**
- **Rape, sexual abuse, homosexuality & immorality, - Violence & conflict.**
- **Children made homeless and living on the streets and often people do nothing to help them - Murder, drug abuse, drunkenness, prostitution, greed, corruption, war.**

All these bad things (and others) make the world a dangerous and unhealthy place to live; they are all the consequences and effect of sin.

Sin Must Be Punished

Satan continues today to deceive people just as he did Adam & Eve.

Sadly, though the majority of people in the world today continue to believe his lies. Satan lies to people and tells them that it is okay to live without God and to follow their own thoughts and desires. But the Bible tells us that to live without God is to rebel against God.

Proverbs 16:25 Says, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."*

When we live for ourselves, we cannot know God's wonderful plans for our lives. Selfishness and rebellion against God leads to destruction and pain for individuals and communities. As a result, people experience a life without hope, a life of confusion and emptiness, far away from the peace and joy God intended.

Read out: Ezekiel.18:4 Death is the penalty for our sins.

These verses tell us that we pay ourselves with bad consequences when we sin. The Bible also says that God has set a day in which all people (men and women) will be judged for their sins—and found guilty.

Read out: Acts 17:31: *For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."*

There is good news, though: God has made a plan to save us, to rescue us from sin and its power over us. His plan is meant to give us better lives both now & every day for our future.

God's Special Plan to Save Us

God has a plan. He saw that we were separated from Him by sin. He saw our pain, our confusion, and our attempts to live our own way. He saw us in our terrible condition and sent His Son Jesus to die for us.

Read out: John 3:16

God loved you so much that He sent Jesus to die for you so that you should not suffer the penalty for sin.

Read out: Luke 23:32-24:9

Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to bring us back to God.

Read out: 1 Peter 2:24 Every sin we have committed was placed on Jesus, and He suffered in our place. Jesus died for us, and was buried. But after three days, God raised Him from the dead! Now He lives and will never die again! **This message is called the gospel, or good news.**

God loves us and He does not want us to suffer punishment for eternity, separated from His presence. It is for this reason He made a way for our sins to be paid for fully and completely - Jesus Christ died on the Cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sin.

Jesus lived a perfect life as only He could do so. His blood was shed as a sacrifice, to redeem us from the bad consequences of sin and going to hell as our punishment.

It is through repentance and putting our trust in Christ that we can receive God's forgiveness and receive new life eternal life.

Why is this Good News?

This is good news because now God can forgive our sins!

He sent Jesus to die in our place.

If we are sorry for our sins, and turn away from our sins (repent), we can ask Jesus to forgive us. Because Jesus suffered in our place on the cross, we will not have to suffer and die for our sins! But we must accept what Jesus has done, and agree with God that we are sinners.

Read out: Romans 6:23. Our sins accuse us before God; but God wants to forgive us and give the gift of His life to us.

Read out: 1 John 5:11-12 When you ask Jesus to forgive you and come into your heart, you receive the life of God inside you.

Read out: John 10:10 Jesus came to give us abundant and full life!

We do not have to pay for the new life God offers. It is a free gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot earn it. We cannot sacrifice for it. We can only agree with God that we are sinners and need someone to rescue us.

That Person who rescues us is Jesus.

Read out: John 1:12. When we receive Jesus into our hearts and lives we become part of God's family-sons and daughters!

The Bible also says: **Read out: Colossians 1:13-15** We have been taken out of darkness and brought under Jesus' protection.

When we experience these things, the Bible calls it Salvation.

You have been saved by Jesus?

How Does this Salvation Happen?

If you have already asked Jesus Christ into your life, then you know freedom from the guilt and punishment which sin brings. Right now you have the risen Jesus living inside of you to guide you, love you, help you, and live with you every day.

Pastor/Leader: Are there any in your group those who have not met Jesus?

Now is the time to ask them if they have made a commitment to accept Jesus.

You can say: *"If you have never asked Jesus to forgive your sins and received eternal life, you can pray this prayer right now: **Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. I believe you died on the cross for me, and that you rose from the dead. Please forgive all my sins. Cleanse me. Set me free. I open the door of my heart and ask you to come in. Help me to live for You every day. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me. Amen.**"*

Summary

We have learned that:

1. When we ask Jesus to forgive our sins, we can be forgiven, because Jesus paid the price to take the sin away.
2. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we get a new, abundant life. Jesus Himself comes to live in us.
3. We have been taken out of darkness and now live in Jesus' kingdom.
4. We are now sons and daughters of the God who made the world and everything in it.

Questions

Pastor/Leader, ask these questions and let the group discuss them:

1. What have you learned about sin today?
2. What have you learned about salvation?
3. Who can you tell about this good news?

Lesson 2

The New Things in Christ

We learned that when we asked Jesus to forgive our sins, He came to live inside us. We gave our lives to Him. He lives in us with a new life, by His Holy Spirit.

But what is this new life He gives us?

Read out: 2 Corinthians 5:17

A new life starts for us when we give ourselves to Jesus.

Before we knew Christ, we did sinful things. We lived in spiritual darkness. But now we have God's light in us.

God says we have a clean record. Our life is to start anew. Our lives are now different. Who we were, what we did, are all made new in Christ. We can now go forward and live with the blessing of God.

What are some of the new things God has provided for us as new believers?

We Are Now Part of God's Family

Read out: Romans 8:15

We have been adopted into God's family. He is our Father.

As a new Christian, we made a decision to follow Jesus. We have become part of God's family, and He promises to look after us. He will take care of us. He will guide us with wisdom. Other people in the church have become our brothers and sisters, our fathers and mothers.

Read out John 13:34-35.

Jesus told us to love one another. We are to help each other. We are to care for each other because we are God's family on this earth.

God Has Given Us Peace

As a believer in Jesus we receive peace in our hearts. God is no longer angry at our sin, for it has been forgiven, paid for.

Read out: Romans 5:1

We are justified; declared not guilty of sin, and now we are in a right relationship with God—all because of what Jesus did on the cross. Knowing this truth brings us peace.

Read out: 2 Thessalonians 3:16 Peace comes from God only. Because God now shares our life with us, He can give us peace inside even when we are in trouble or pain.

We Talk With God

Read out: Jeremiah 29:12

God wants us to pray to Him. Prayer is simply talking to God.

We can pray silently in our minds, or out loud. We can talk to God alone, with several others, or in a larger group. God loves to hear us talk to Him.

Read out: Matthew 7:7

God invites us to ask Him for what we need in our lives.

Now that we belong to Him, He is our good Father. We can ask Him for anything we need. We can talk to God about anything we are thinking about. We can tell Him how we are feeling. Even more wonderful: as we quiet ourselves and listen, we can hear Him speak to us! He speaks deep within our souls, where He has placed His Holy Spirit.

Read out: Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus tells us to come to Him with our problems. He will give us rest in our souls.

When you have a problem, we can pray right away and listen to God's Spirit inside us give us wisdom and counsel. God's word, the Bible, has many answers to our problems and questions.

When We Sin

Read out: 1 John 1:9

We should confess our wrongdoing right away, praying to God. Jesus will then clean us of that sin. In this new life, we sometimes slip and fall into a sin. We might do something that we know is wrong.

We are just beginning this new life in Christ and God encourages us to come to Him and ask forgiveness.

He makes us clean again. This is like being washed on the inside.

Isn't this a wonderful thing God has provided for us?

Your Family Can Be Saved

We know Jesus personally now. But we are concerned for our family—we want them to know Jesus, too! We want our friends and neighbors to know Jesus, too!

Read: Matthew 7: 7-8 & Acts 4:12.

God gives us a promise: as we obey and trust Him, our family can also come to know Jesus. This is wonderful news!

How does this happen? We can pray for those we love. God hears our prayers and will begin to work in that person's life. He is working to bring them to salvation, to faith in Jesus. We can tell our family about how we met Jesus, and what He has done for us.

Don't be discouraged if they seem careless, or angry. Jesus' power to save your family is working because you belong to Jesus.

God loves you deeply. He loves your family, also. Obey Jesus and show God respect. Jesus is working in your family to bring His salvation.

Free From Evil Spirits

Many people experience attacks from evil spirits. The Bible tells us about these spirits, and they are called demons. When we belong to Jesus, we do not need to be afraid of demons.

Read out: 1 John 4:4

God is much greater than the power of evil spirits.

Read out: Matthew 8:16

Jesus made the demons leave the persons who were troubled by them. Jesus also healed all sicknesses.

The four gospels (stories of Jesus) tell how Jesus cast out demons many times. Jesus has complete authority over evil spirits and He demonstrated this many times.

Read out: Luke 10:1-9 and 16-19

Jesus has given believers power over evil spirits. Satan is mentioned here as the leader of all the demons.

Jesus has given His power to you. You can command evil spirits to run away from you. As you speak “in Jesus’ Name”, the evil spirit must obey you and leave.

Jesus wants you to have victory in your home, in your family and in your life. He is God and He is powerful over false gods and evil spirits.

You Have a Special Purpose

God has a special purpose for your life.

When you become a Christian, you begin to understand the purpose God has for you.

What is your purpose? As you grow in knowing Jesus, as you understand more, and as you obey Jesus’ word, you will begin to find the purpose God has for you. As you pray, you will hear from God what He wants for your life.

God’s plan for you is special and is yours alone.

Do not be afraid to begin to do what God asks you to do. The more you obey Jesus, the more He will help you understand the purpose He has for you.

Questions:

1. What did Jesus do on the cross for us?
2. Name one benefit you have received through Jesus Christ.
3. What have you prayed about today?
4. Has God answered any prayers for you?
5. Tell of a time when Jesus gave you peace in your life.

Lesson 3

Jesus is the Only Way

There are many religions in the world and many beliefs. Some of these religions are: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, native customs, spirit worship and many others.

All of these religions ask us to follow their ways. All of these beliefs have followers.

In this lesson we will learn that only Jesus Christ can save, forgive, and set someone free.

Jesus is the only true way to know God. We were born again and received eternal life only from Jesus. We cannot receive the life of God by following religion or custom.

Jesus Is God

No other religious leader claimed to be God.

Jesus died for us and rose from the dead to live forever! Only Jesus has power over evil spirits. Jesus told people to follow Him because He is God. Jesus tells us He alone can show God to people.

Read out: John 14:6-7

People can find God only by coming to Jesus.

Jesus is the Only Way to God

Read out: John 14:6

Jesus is the only way to know God.

Jesus is the way to God. Jesus spoke the truth about God. Everything about Jesus is truth and shows us the truth about God, about people, about our world.

Following Jesus is the only way to have the life of God Himself.

Read out John 10:7-11

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He leads, feeds, and protects the sheep. Jesus says He is the only gate for the sheep to find life. The sheep do not follow anyone else, no matter who they claim to be.

When you accept Jesus, you become one of His sheep. Wow!

That is a wonderful blessing from God! Now God will take care of you.

Read out: Romans 1:1- 4

By raising Jesus from the dead, God proved that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus is not a religion. Knowing Jesus as our Lord and Master is a relationship.

Other people may believe firmly in their religion or worship. They may be reasonable or good people. But Jesus tells us that only He is the true way to God. Without Jesus no one can truly know God. Without Jesus no one can have their sins forgiven. Without Jesus no one can escape the punishment of hell.

Good Deeds Cannot Save Us

Read out Ephesians 2:8-9

Being saved is God's gift to us. We received this gift when we trusted Jesus as our Saviour. We did not receive the gift of salvation by our good works. No one can boast that they saved themselves.

Read out Titus 3:5

Our good actions did not save us. Trying to be good did not bring us God's salvation. Only the mercy of God brings us salvation.

This is possible because Jesus died for us on the cross. We could never do enough good to rescue our soul from the punishment of hell.

Aren't you glad that you gave your life to Jesus?

Going to Church Cannot Save Us

Some people believe that being a member of a church will save us.

Some believe that they have salvation because they have been baptized in water.

The Bible does not teach this. The Bible tells us that it is only by putting our whole trust (Faith) in Jesus that saves us.

Read out: John 3:15-16

Those who believe in Jesus are saved. Those who refuse to believe in Jesus will be condemned, now and for eternity.

Attending a church will not save us, but God wants us to go to church.

Why is church important?

Read out: Hebrews 10:24

We should always take time to meet with other believers so that we can encourage each other.

In our church we grow in knowledge and find help for our difficulties. We learn the disciplines that make us strong and successful believers in Christ.

We have something we can give at church: we give our love, our encouragement for others. We give our support to our leaders and pastors.

The Worship of Spirits and Witchcraft are Sins against God

Read out: Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

God detests and hates these practices.

This list of practices are all under the curse of God. They have nothing to do with serving the true God, Jesus Christ.

Working with spirits shows that we do not trust God to take care of us. Any spirits we serve will eventually turn on us because they are really evil spirits, working with Satan. These spirits will try to get us away from Jesus and the Bible.

Read out: Leviticus 20:6-8.

If we continue to consult witchdoctors or healers about our problems, God says he will turn away from us and cut us off from family and kin.

These verses show how much God hates witchcraft and the worship of spirits. God wants us to live happy, fulfilled lives.

Involvement with spirits and witchcraft will harm us and our families. That is why God hates it. He hates the darkness that comes into our lives when we become involved with evil spirits.

Read out: Exodus 20:1-6

God commands us to worship Him alone. To worship idols or spirits is to commit a terrible sin against God.

God want us to live in His blessing, not under His anger. To worship an idol is to sin against God Himself.

Satan is the leader of all evil spirits, or demons.

Read out: John 8:44

Jesus spoke to the religious people who did not believe in Him. He told them that Satan is the father of lies. And that Satan works in people to lie.

Satan lies through the spirits. If you have served spirits, you need to be set free from them. They will lie to you. They will tell you that you can serve them and Jesus also.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 11:14

Satan and his demons can disguise themselves as angels. We cannot trust spirits who speak to us. Only the words of the Bible are true words. We must always follow what the Bible tells us. Also, God's Holy Spirit will speak to us inside our hearts. He will show us right from wrong.

Read out Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters. You cannot be a true Christian and serve spirits. You cannot use witchcraft and serve Jesus at the same time.

Witchcraft will bring evil spirits into your life and family. Evil spirits bring darkness and fear and torment.

Spirits may appear helpful and good at first, but after a while they will torment you. These spirits want to bring you under their power.

Only Jesus Christ can set someone free of evil spirits.

We Cannot Serve Idols**Read out: Zechariah 10:2**

Those who talk to spirits and pray to idols are told lies. God does not lie. We should listen to God through the words of the Bible.

Read out: Mark 9:2-7

God spoke from the cloud and said to Peter, James, and John: "This is my beloved Son; listen to Him!"

Read out: 1 Corinthians 10:20-21

Idols that are worshipped are really demons. We cannot participate in the life of Christ and the work of demons.

Demons are the real power behind idols and spirits. We should renounce these things and turn away from them.

Read out: Acts 19: 18-19

The new believers asked forgiveness for serving idols and spirits. They burned all the occult objects they had used.

When the Ephesians became Christians, they destroyed all objects, books and totems (talismans) that they had worshipped and used. They did not want to have anything to do with these objects and spirits. They had received Jesus and did not need them. They realized they were in slavery to these objects and books. They wanted to destroy them.

Pray To Be Released From Idols and Spirits

This is what we should do if we have used or worshipped these things before we met Jesus:

1. Repent of your sin in serving idols or spirits. Ask the Pastor/Leader to lay hands on you and pray for you. Pray this prayer together:

"Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me, and shedding your blood for me.

Thank you for coming into my life and forgiving me my sins. I repent of participating with evil spirits. I know that this is sin.

I know that You hate these things. I renounce [name the activities].

I renounce Satan and any hold he has on me through these things.

I rebuke Satan and any demonic spirits that have had a place in my life.

Together we command spirits, in the name of Jesus, to leave.

My life is closed to him forever.

Thank you, Jesus, for delivering me. Thank you for setting me free from Satan's power. I ask that you fill me up with Your Holy Spirit. I give myself totally to you. Amen."

2. Command the demons, in the name of Jesus, to leave your family and your house. Tell them never to return.
3. Thank Jesus for giving all His blood for you on the cross. Thank Him that He has set you free from sin and witchcraft.

Questions:

1. What is an idol? Give an example.
2. How many religions can save us?
3. Who are we to worship and follow?
4. What idols are in your community?
5. How has the worship of spirits or idols affected you, your family, or your community?
6. How does a person get free from spirits?
7. Can we serve two religions or two beliefs? Why?

Memorize John 14:6 (Pastor, help your people memorize Bible verses. Have them repeat the verse after you until they know it. Review the verses each time you meet.)

Lesson 4

Water Baptism

Note to the Pastor/Leader:

Before you begin this lesson, you should make arrangements for a baptism to take place. You can then tell those who wish to be baptised when and where this will happen.

This should be a time of celebration and joy for the new believers.

Take care to plan and celebrate this special day.

Remember that you are baptising the people into Christ, not into your church. Church membership is a good step for them, but it is not linked to water baptism.

Church membership is a separate step for them to take.

(We make this clear so that the person does not confuse joining a church with becoming a Christian.)

Introduction

You made a decision to accept Jesus Christ into your life as your Lord and Saviour. You have learned some of the things God has provided for you. And you have learned why Jesus is the only way to know God. You have begun a new life! The next step you should take is to be baptised in water.

Baptism is a Command

Read out: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16

Jesus commanded his disciples [followers] to be baptised.

These verses clearly show that Jesus expects those who follow Him to be baptised in water.

Jesus also tells us that baptism should be made in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Water Baptism is something Jesus wants for every person who follows Him.

What is Water Baptism?

To be baptised means to be dipped, or placed fully in water. Biblical baptism is not merely sprinkling water over someone.

The Bible teaches that baptism is given only to those who have confessed their faith in Jesus.

Read out: Romans.10:9-10

A person confesses their faith in Christ when they have believed on Him inside their heart.

Read out: Acts 8:35-38

Philip the evangelist told the official from Ethiopia about Jesus. The official believed the word about Jesus, Then he asked to be baptised- to be put under the water and brought out. This was a sign or statement that the man had believed in Jesus.

Since Jesus' time, people who believe in Him have been baptised.

Water baptism involves your full immersion into water- in a river or stream, in the sea, lake, or church baptism pool. The pastor dips the believer into the water. Then the pastor quickly brings them up out of the water.

The symbolic action of water baptism shows that you want to be closely identified with Jesus. It means that you are declaring in public that you have turned from sin to follow Jesus.

Baptism itself does not save us. We are saved when we accept Christ. But baptism is a public declaration telling everyone that we intend to follow Jesus and live for Him.

You are immersed into water but, it is not the water which brings change, rather it is the power of God through His Holy Spirit at work in your life—this brings change.

Water Baptism is a Picture

When we come to Christ we repent of our sins. Jesus forgives our sins, and gives us new life.

Read out: Romans 6:3-8

Christ died for sin. We are to be dead to sin and its power over us. We can only do this because Jesus' power is in us. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, never to die again. Now we also rise into a new life, living a pure and pleasing life to God.

Our baptism is a picture of what Jesus did for us.

He suffered and died on the cross at Calvary, He was buried, and He rose again. Similarly we go down into the water (this is a picture of Jesus dying and being buried). We are brought out of the water (this is a picture of Jesus rising from the dead).

Our baptism shows that we have died to sin and our old way of living. We rise in God's power to live a new life. This is a life that pleases God, living in obedience to the Bible.

Our lives can now be a blessing to those around us, our families, and our communities. As we are baptised, we are showing in public that Jesus died and rose for us.

Read out: 1 Peter 2:24-25

Jesus died so that we could live a holy life and not be sinners any more. This is God's will for us.

Read out: Ephesians 2:1-7 We can live a pure and good life with God's many blessings because:

1. Christ died and rose for us, and
2. We are alive in Jesus and live with His power in us to change us.

Baptism is a picture of our decision and intention to die to sin and live the new life Christ has bought for us on the cross.

Now that God's power is in us, we can resist sin and evil. We have power to say "no" to sin when the devil tempts us.

Water Baptism is Important

We read about the first Christian church in the book of Acts in the New Testament.

These are the first people who accepted Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

Read out: Acts 2:36-42

When the people heard the message Peter preached. They repented of their sins and believed in Jesus. Then Peter, a pastor in the church, said that these people should be baptised.

When people receive Christ, they should be baptised as soon as possible.

Baptism was important to Jesus, and it is important that new believers are baptised in water.

Philip baptised the Ethiopian official immediately. Peter said that the new Christians should be baptised. They did not wait a long time. You can ask your pastor to baptise you. He will know and will tell you when this can be done.

Sometimes at a baptism, the person being baptised will tell others how Jesus changed their life. The person may tell what they were like before they met Jesus, and what their life is like now they know Jesus.

This is a short speech given right before the pastor baptises you.

This encourages others who have come to see the baptism.

Have You Been Baptised?

It is your responsibility to ask your pastor to baptise you.

This should be your decision, not forced on you by someone else. And you should not be baptised just so you can follow others.

Only be baptised because you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and you wish to obey Jesus. It is a holy and special day for you when you are baptised.

Some churches baptise people on the very same day that they have accepted Jesus. Other churches provide new Christians with further teaching before they are baptised. Either way is good but we encourage you to take this step of faith as soon as possible.

Everyone who believed in Jesus from the first century to today were baptised in water. In this very same way you can join the millions throughout history who have made this outward expression of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Don't be frightened- Being baptised is a wonderful and exciting experience. But if you have a real fear of being immersed in water, speak to your pastor about it.

The day of baptism is a time of celebration for the church family. It is a day that you will remember throughout your life as the date on which you followed the Lord Jesus, obeying His words, Praise the Lord!

Pastor/Leader – After reading this lesson and making your own comments, ask again if anyone wishes to be baptised. Then tell them a date & place where they may be baptised.

Questions:

1. Who should be baptised in water?
2. Why is it important for a new Christian to be baptised?
3. If you have been baptised, tell the group what it meant to you.
4. Explain why we can overcome sin and temptation now that we are Christians.



Lesson 5

Talking to God and Learning to Worship

Introduction

In this lesson we will learn about prayer and worship. These are ways we can speak to Jesus and our Heavenly Father.

Prayer is talking with God, and listening for God to speak to us.

Worship is something we were created to do. Worship is an expression of our love and appreciation for God.

Jesus Prayed

Read out: Luke 5:16 and Luke 6:12

Jesus prayed often. Many times He went to a place where he could be alone with God.

When you pray, go to a quiet place where you can take time to talk with Jesus.

Go where there are no distractions such as other people, talking, or activities.

As in any conversation between two people there is always one person who is doing the speaking and another who is listening to what is being said.

It is because of Jesus, that we can have a two-way conversation with God our heavenly father. This is called prayer.

We should speak out our requests to God. Then we should take time to listen to the voice of God so that we hear His response to our prayers.

Hearing God's voice takes practice and learning to be still, with our minds focused always on God, not wandering.

Are there not many things you would like to talk to Jesus about?

Jesus Taught His Disciples to Pray

Read out: Matthew 6:5-13

Jesus tells us how we should pray, and encourages us to pray. God loves us so much and already knows what we need, but invites us to talk with Him.

When we pray it is a time when we come before God and seek him and his direction for our lives. It is a time when we can pour out our heart, lifting our hopes and desires. We can cry out to him for our needs, or for His forgiveness.

We can ask him to guide and help us in our daily needs.

Examples of prayer:

1 Samuel 1:9-11 and 26-27. (Hannah prayed for a son and received a son from God.)

Acts 10:9. (Peter spent time regularly to pray.)

Daniel 6:10. (Daniel prayed when there was a danger to himself and others.)

Read out: Philippians 4:6-7

God wants us to tell Him our needs in prayer.

As God's children we know that our heavenly Father is always willing to listen to our prayers. We should seek Him because only He can bring lasting solutions to our challenges.

We should not just rely on our own thoughts and abilities; but, instead take those things to God first by praying.

Read out: 1 Peter 5:6-7 God loves you and wants you to give Him your problems and burdens. You can throw your heavy cares on God, because He cares about you and whatever you are experiencing.

Praying Brings God's Answers

Read out: Matthew 7:7-8

God wants to answer our prayers, and invites us to come asking and having faith in Him.

Pastor/Leader: Ask the group to answer these questions:

Read out: Psalms 116:1-6

What is happening in these verses? What do these verses tell us about the man speaking? What do these verses tell us about God?

Read out: John 14:12-15

Who does Jesus tell us to ask for what we need? (Jesus tells us to ask His Father God for anything and it will be done. We should ask using Jesus' name.)

Read out: Acts 12:1-11

Who was in prison? What were the Christians doing? What did God do? (The Christians were praying to God for Peter to be set free. God answered their prayers that night.)

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 As God's people, we should never stop praying.

Prayer should be like breathing: you breathe in God's word (the Bible), then you breathe out, praying. Then you breathe in, listening to God speak. Then you breathe out your thanks to God.

Praying brings hope where there is hopelessness. When we pray God heals the body and the soul.

When we pray God gives solutions where things appear to be impossible.

Prayer is powerful!

Sin Blocks our Prayers

God will not hear our prayers if our lives have sin. If we are serious in wanting God to hear our prayers and bring us an answer, then it is important that we confess any sins and forsake them.

Read out: Proverbs 15:29 (God hears the prayers of those in right relationship with Him.)

Read out: Isaiah 59:2 (Our sins make a great distance between us and God.)

Read out: James 5:13-16 (Sin can prevent our prayers from being answered. We should pray if we have needs, and ask others to pray for us.)

Read out: Matthew 5:8 (Those with pure hearts free from sin, will be able to see and know God)

Is there something in your life that needs to be confessed as a sin?

Pray right now and ask Jesus to forgive you. Get rid of that thing in your life. When your soul is clean you have a clear path to God in prayer.

How Should We Pray?

1. Pray specific prayers.

Read out: Luke 11:1-13

We should be persistent in prayer. God loves to give to us the way a father wants to give to his children.

Don't be shy in asking for your needs or desires from God. He welcomes you as you pray.

Jesus teaches us to ask for what we need. We can expect Him to answer our need, because He loves us and He has taught us to ask for what we need.

When we do this we are asking in faith. We trust the person we are asking because He is the great and good God above all things.

2. Don't Give Up

Read out: Luke 18:1-8

Be persistent in your prayers. Continue praying until your prayers receive an answer. Do not give up but keep on praying and believing.

Wait on God. This means you ask, then thanking the Lord for the answer He is sending.

Spend time listening as God wants to instruct you. Because God is so wise, He may not necessarily answer your prayers in the time frame or in the manner that you expect. Sometimes God brings answers in the most unexpected way.

Read out: Matthew 6:25-34

It is good to ask for the will of God to be done. Remember, God is great and wise. He will answer your prayers as He knows is best for you. His time and His answer may not be what you wish, but it will be the best answer for you!

3. Pray in Faith.

James 5:13-16 (Prayers of faith will be answered.)

Faith means that you trust God, that you know Him. Faith means you are trusting the One who can change anything for the better.

You can say, "God in Heaven, I want to have a child. You gave Hannah a child, so I know that when I ask you will hear me and give me a child."

You can pray, "God my Father, you fed the widow who had no food. I trust you to feed me and my family. Thank you for being so good to us. I trust you."

This shows you have faith. You can ask God to give you a job, to heal your body, to solve a problem in your family or church. This is praying in faith. It means that you know God well enough to be able to speak to him as a family member.

You don't have to speak to God like a beggar. You may speak to God as a child asking for bread. He loves you and wants to meet your needs.

Prayer strengthens us.

When we pray we are spending time with God and that makes us wiser and stronger. When we pray we learn to trust God more. When we pray we see our prayers being answered and that makes our faith grow. We can encourage others by our prayers.

4. Pray in Jesus' Name

Read out: John 14:13-14

To pray in Jesus' name means to ask God for something because of Jesus.

We expect God to answer us, not because we are great, or because we deserve God's help, but because of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus has redeemed us, He has made a way into heaven for us, so God in heaven hears us because of Jesus.

Using Jesus' name as we pray is like having papers to prove that we own something.

It means Jesus has written our papers that allow us to go to God and ask Him for help. We can pray, **"God, I ask You to heal my body, in Jesus' Name."**

God listens to these prayers and answers them.

Your Prayer Time

If you are serious in speaking to God and hearing from God, then it is good to set aside a daily time for prayer. Some people take time in the morning; some pray in the evening.

How long should you pray? You may begin with 10 minutes- and you will find that there is so much to talk to God about that you need a lot more time. Be generous in your time with God.

You can also make time to pray with your family or other Christian friends.

You may begin by singing songs of praise to God. This prepares your heart for prayer and hearing from God before you bring your needs and requests to Him.

Questions:

1. Do you already have a daily time of prayer? At what time of day is best for you?

2. Do you pray with others? Who are they?

3. Think about two or three other people that you ought to pray for. Pray for these every day this week and watch God work.

You can pray for anything. Your church, your pastor, your unsaved friends & family members, your village, area, or country.

4. Can you find a prayer partner? (Someone of the same sex that you can pray with on a regular basis). God will direct you to the right person to pray with. Each of you can help the other learn to pray and encourage each other.

Praise & Worship

Praising God and worshipping God come out of a heart that is thankful.

Praise comes from us when we see the good things God has done.

We worship to tell of the goodness and greatness of God. We worship from a heart full of love for the One who has made us, the One who has died for us.

We worship in church and we should worship in our own private times of prayer.

To praise means to say aloud the great things God has done. You may repeat in song or words the wonderful things God has done for you.

To worship means to give Jesus your love, your heart, your mind, your soul. You tell God how wonderful and mighty and good he is to you.

Examples of people praising and worshipping God:

Read out: Psalm 86:9 (An example of worship) You speak to Him about how much you love Him, and you say words such as: **“I adore You, Jesus. I praise you, I lift You up. Jesus, I give You honour and glorify You.”**

Read out: Psalm 100:1-5 We begin by thanking God for what He has done for us.

We can then come closer in His presence by telling of the wonderful and important things He has done for us. And we give Him our love and appreciation. We can enter into God's presence through times of praise and worship, using words from our mouths, music, songs, or recordings.

The next time that you are singing a praise song, think about the meaning of the words, so that your praise is genuine.

Questions:

1. What words would you like to say to Jesus?
2. Read out aloud these two psalms of praise: Psalm 138; Psalm 145

Worship

When we worship God we sing or speak out our appreciation to Him. We sing about how Jesus died on the cross to forgive our sins, how Jesus set us free from the devil, or how thankful we are for Him. We can worship the eternal God who created everything around us.

God is not limited as human people are, He knows everything, He is everywhere, and He has neither beginning nor end. No living creature can be compared to Him. By your worship you show that God Himself is the only one who deserves to receive your love, devotion, and adoration, declaring to Him that there is no one else you love and serve.

Why Do We Worship?

We have been created by God with a built in longing to worship. Each of us feels within our heart a desire to worship the creator (God Almighty).

People who do not know the one true God usually find a something else to worship. This might be a physical object such as a carved stone image, a tree, a mountain, or a material possession. Some worship a pop star, a famous person, or a set of beliefs. Some people worship power or money. Whatever you give your love to, your time, your devotion—that is what you worship.

Christians are to worship God alone.

Questions:

1. **Read out: John 4:23-24** What kind of worshipper is God looking for?
2. What does **Psalms 100** tell us about how we should worship God?
3. What things have you worshipped in the past? Who made you to worship Him?

If you are still worshipping anything or person other than the Lord Jesus Christ, it is time to repent and make Jesus Lord of your life.

(Pastor/Leader: be ready to lead this person to Christ.)



Lesson 6

Hearing God's Voice

Introduction

You are a child of God and a new Christian believer. Every child knows his father's or mother's voice.

The goal of this lesson is to help you to begin listening to the voice of God.

As you learn to hear the Lord, you will not have to rely on your own thinking to live your life. You will have your heavenly Father to guide you and help you.

God wants to help you with the decisions and challenges you face. He does this by sharing His thoughts through the word of God (the Holy Bible). He also helps you by speaking to you personally as His son or daughter.

Learning to listen to the voice of God will give you the ability to make good decisions every day.

God desires that you prosper. Listening to God speak and then obeying His direction will bring blessing to you, your family, your job, and your community.

Question: Read out: Proverbs 3:5-6

What does God want you to do? What does God promise to do for you?

God's Thoughts

Read out: Isaiah 55:8-9

God's thoughts are higher, greater, and better than ours. God knows how to help us and will tell us the way we should go. He will give us answers that we need.

Read out: Jeremiah 33:3

Call to God and He will answer you and show you many things that are greater than you could imagine.

Read out: Jeremiah 29:11-12

God has good plans for you. He wants you to pray [talk] to Him; He will listen as you speak to Him.

God, your heavenly Father, wants to be involved in every aspect of your life, in the big decisions as well as the small ones.

Read out: John 10:2-5

We can learn to know and follow the voice of our Shepherd, Jesus.

As you learn to hear and listen to God's voice, you will discover that He really will speak to you. You will then experience changes and grow in your spiritual walk. This is a most exciting and fulfilling experience.

God Speaks to His People in Different Ways

The Bible shows us that God speaks in many different ways. He sometimes speaks out loud to people. Sometimes He speaks through a vision or a dream.

Just as it is written in the Bible, God can speak through angels. God may speak through prophetic words spoken by another person. Most of the time, God speaks directly to us inside our spirit.

Here are some of the ways in which God may speak to us:

1. God Speaks Through the Bible:

God continually speaks to people through the words of the Holy Bible.

Read out: Psalms 119:105 God's Word guides our steps in life.

Read out: Psalms 119:7 and 9 As we hear and obey God's Word, it keeps us from sinning.

The Bible is God's message of love to all people of the world; the people of all languages, all colours, and all generations. If we ignore the words of the Holy Bible then we are missing one of the most important ways of hearing from God.

You should make a habit of reading your Bible each and every day. In so doing you will start to learn what God is saying through His holy words. If you have no Bible, pray for one! God wants you to have His words! Or go to a place where people are reading or reciting the word of God.

It is also very good to memorise the words of the Bible. It will make you strong in the Lord if you do this. Often Christians are given insight, promises, or encouragement as they read or listen to the Bible.

Read out: 2 Timothy 3:15-17

The words of the Bible teach us, guide us, correct us, and lead us to salvation, and the Bible helps us to live good lives for God.

Read out: Psalms 119:9-18

The man who wrote these words tells how important God's Word is to him.

2. God Sometimes Sends an Angel to Speak For Him

Read out: Revelation 1:1

John received a long message from an angel sent to him. John saw many things in a vision and wrote these things down for us to read. What John wrote is called the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible.

Read out: Acts 12:5-11

Peter is rescued by an angel sent from God. The angel speaks to him.

3. God Speaks to Us through His People

God may allow another Christian to share a teaching from the Bible with you. Or God may have a person encourage you when you are experiencing difficulties. Or God may speak to you by giving you a message from another person in your church or group (this is called a word of prophecy or a prophetic word).

4. God Speaks to Us through Dreams and Visions

In the Bible you can read how God used dreams (at night) and visions (during the day) as a means of giving instructions and warnings to people.

Read out: Matthew 1:18-21

Joseph, husband of Mary, had a dream from God.

Dreams – Read out: Genesis 37:5-9. (a different Joseph had a dream.)

Visions – Read out: Isaiah 6:1-4, Acts 10:1-11, Jeremiah 1:11-14

5. God Can Speak to Us with an Audible Voice

One of the most amazing ways that we can hear from God is when He speaks to us audibly. Although this is less common, God sometimes speaks in this way.

Read out: 1 Samuel 3:4-10

The boy Samuel hears God speaking to him in an audible voice.

Read out: Exodus 3:4-20

Moses speaks with God and God replies to him in an audible voice.

You will learn how God speaks to you as you pray, obey, and grow in your relationship with the Lord. God has messages to give to you about your life. God also wants to use you to help others.

6. God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit: God's voice comes to us through the Holy Spirit living inside us.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 2:9-12

The Holy Spirit inside us tells us the thoughts and wonderful things God has for us.

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, His Holy Spirit comes and dwells inside us. He guides us and encourages us to always make good choices. He guides us to choose right ways.

The Holy Spirit is God in us speaking to us. As we spend time with God, seeking Him and listening, we are able to hear the still small voice of God, and so receive what we need to know.

Wait Quietly to Hear God

Read out: Psalm 4:4 (Be still and hear God.)

So often people make the mistake of rushing and making decisions based on their own thinking and desires. They only seek God's guidance as an afterthought. Then they hope that He will pour out His blessing on their plans.

If we exclude God from our daily decisions, from our thoughts and life, then there is a great chance that our plans and hopes will fail. As a result we will end up feeling disappointed and confused.

Read out: Psalm 46:10 (Quiet yourself and know that God is near.)

God wants to be involved in every aspect of your life. Make room for Him by learning how to listen to His voice. This will take time and patience, but you will soon hear God talking to you.

God Speaks to Me

The Bible tells us that God is speaking to us. Why is it we fail to hear Him?

We can fail because we don't try.

We can fail because we are afraid.

We can fail to hear God because we are too busy to stop our activities. Or we don't set time aside to pray and quiet ourselves to listen to God speak.

Read out: John 10:2-5

Jesus said that His sheep know His voice. We can practice listening to God and we will learn to know His voice.

Read out: Mark 1:35

Jesus got up early to go somewhere quiet to meet with God and talk to Him. Jesus regularly spent time with His Father in prayer and quietness, in the morning and at other times of the day. During these times God spoke to him clearly and told him all that He should do.

Read out: Acts 10:9

Peter went on to the rooftop [a quiet place] to pray.

Read out: Colossians 1:9

Paul prayed for the believers in Christ to know God's Will for them.

Read out John 12:49-50

Jesus says He taught only the things He received from spending time with His Father. We should do as Jesus did. We must find a quiet place alone to talk with God. We should listen after we pray.

As you sit here today and listen to this lesson, you have to focus your mind on the person speaking to you and give your full attention to what is being said.

If you do not listen attentively, or you are distracted by things going on around you, you may miss something important. You will not have a full understanding of the lesson.

It is the same for us as we seek to hear God's voice. We need to listen and be attentive, or we may miss what God is saying to us.

Read out: Acts 13:2-3

The Holy Spirit spoke to the men who were praying and seeking God's plans.

Read out John 10:28-29

Christians will know the voice of the Good Shepherd and will be able to follow His directions.

When you pray, find a quiet place, a room or an area outside where you will not be disturbed by others. This is what Jesus did. This is what Peter did when he went to the rooftop to pray.

During this time read God's Word or recite verses that you have memorized. Sing a Christian worship song. Give Him praise and thanks for all He is doing in your life, and talk to him about your hopes, dreams and plans. Ask for His direction for your work, for your plans. Then quiet yourself and ask God to speak to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you listen.

Conclusion

If you want to hear God speak to you, then begin to be disciplined and regular in praying and listening for Him.

A. Set aside a daily prayer time. (More than a few minutes.)

B. Read the Bible. (Or go to where the Bible is being read or recited.)

C. Give thanks and praise to God for the way He has blessed and encouraged you.

D. When you are still and quiet, thinking about Him, He will speak.

God speaks to everyone; He uses different ways to speak to each one of us. We can't tell God the way He should speak! But we can be confident that God will speak with us.

He speaks to all people who earnestly seek him. He does not regard your age, gender, social position, colour of your skin, or what your family is. He will speak to you. Over time you will learn to know the voice of God when He is speaking to you.

Questions:

1. What do you need to do to begin to hear God's voice?
2. How do you know it is God speaking to you? (The words you hear or the ideas you receive always agree with the teachings of the Bible.)
3. Why do you need to hear what God is saying to you?

Knowing the voice of God

If you think God is speaking to you but you are not sure, use this guide to help you:

- Make sure that you have peace in your heart about what you feel God is saying to you. God gives peace; the devil brings confusion and fear.
- You might seek confirmation from other godly people about what you think God has said to you.
- God brings confirmation of what He is saying through prophetic words.
- What you hear should bring joy in you, and should not bring division amongst God's people.
- When God speaks to us it produces respect and honour for the Lord.
- God's word does not cause pride in us.
- God will never say something to you which contradicts the words of the Holy Bible. God's words always agree with the teachings of the Bible.

Lesson 7

God's Word

Introduction

In lesson 6, we looked at the many ways in which we can hear God's voice.

One of the main ways we hear from God is by reading His words that are written down in the Bible. We can also meditate on God's Word, which brings us closer to Jesus.

Read out: 2 Timothy 3:16 (The Bible is, literally, "breathed by God." God gave us His words that have His life and Spirit in them.) We can trust God's Word, the Bible, because God Himself gave it to us.

God's Word Will Change Our Lives

To meditate on God's Word means to fill your mind with the words that you read or know; to think on them, to consider what they mean.

Meditating means opening your heart to God as you read or listen to the Bible.

The Bible is God's Word to us. We must fill our minds with God's words the way we would fill our stomachs with food at a feast. The words of the Bible go in deeper than our minds—they go into our inner man, our spirit, and change us from the inside out.

When we eat God's words we become full of life, power, and wisdom, because God's very life has been breathed into those words.

God wants to speak to you about your daily activities, plans, hopes, decisions, and the difficult issues you are facing so that you may understand His will for you in every situation.

God's Word is Powerful

Read out: Hebrews 4:12

God's Word is alive and active in our lives. It can do powerful things in us and for us.

As we read the Bible, we should note that its words are both "living and active" and also that they can judge our thoughts and attitudes. God's Word leads us in what is right and wrong, and makes a division between God's ways and human ways and thoughts.

Read out: Isaiah 55:10-11

The purposes of God come to pass when God speaks His words. When God says He will do something, it will be done. His Word never fails; it is through His Word that God works out His purposes in each of our lives.

Read out: 1 Thessalonians 2:13

When we receive the word of God and put it into practice, the Word works God's plans and purposes in us. God's Word works for our good and the good of others.

Jesus said, "My words are spirit and life." (John 6:63)

God's Words can deliver a person from demons.

God's Word can raise the dead, and heal the sick.

God's Word can make those who suffer dance for joy.
God's Word can give you wisdom and strength to follow Jesus.
The words of God have the power to change a man or woman, and the Word of God can change a village or a nation.

Questions: (Let the group discuss these questions.)

1. What needs to change in your life?
2. What wisdom do you need from Jesus?

The Bible is not like any other book. When we read and meditate on God's Word, the Holy Spirit uses the written word to speak to our hearts in a special and unique way. The words become alive and relevant to us and our life situations. God intends for it to be so. Whenever God speaks, things begin to happen.

Read out: Matthew 4:4

It is very important to take in God's Word every day just as our body needs to take in food.

God's Word Reveals Jesus Christ to Us

If we want to know Jesus better, we must read the Word of God.

Read out: John 1:1-14

These verses tell how Jesus, who made the world and everything in it, came into the world. Jesus was rejected by the people He created. Jesus is called the Word of God. Jesus is the Light of the world.

By learning the Word of God we know Jesus, God's Son, even better. The book of Genesis tells us that God spoke the whole universe into being by His Word, done through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Read out: Hebrews 1:2-3

Although God has spoken in many different ways to people over the centuries, He has delivered a final message to people through His Son, Jesus Christ. Knowing this, we should pay close attention to what Jesus tells us in His Word, the Bible. And we should pay close attention to what the Bible tells us about Jesus.

God's Word Saves Us

Read out: 1 Peter 1:23

God's Word caused us to be born again, to be alive to God.

Just as God brought all things into being through His Word, so He also brings salvation to those who believe in Him through His Word. It is the power of God's Word which creates faith in our hearts to trust Jesus. Without this Word we would never turn to God.

Read out: Romans 10:17

Faith to be saved, and faith to live well comes from hearing and obeying the Word of God. In fact, Jesus Christ is the Living Word. It is in Jesus and through Him that the Father has accomplished the great work of salvation.

The book of Revelation says that Jesus' Name is "The Word of God."
(Revelation 19:13.)

God's Word Strengthens Us

Read out: Psalm 119:28

When we are in pain God's Word makes us wise and strong.

Turn to the words of the Bible when things are not going well for you; also turn to the Word of God when life is going well.

Read out: 1 John 2:14

The Word of God living in us makes us strong; it defeats the power of the devil.

God's Word Guides Us into Success and Blessing

Read out: Joshua 1:8-9 (Following God's words and His commands will bring us success in life. Meditation on God's word will bring increase and blessing to us.) These are God's promises in the Bible.

Do you want to succeed in life? Do you want to prosper? Then memorize and meditate, read, listen, and obey everything God has written for you in the Bible.

Every day you have an opportunity to learn more about Jesus and to obey what He tells you. God's ways are not complicated, but you must do what God speaks to you.

Obey God's Word

Read out: John 3:36 Obeying Jesus brings life; disregarding Jesus and His words brings the wrath of God.

Read out: Luke 11:28 We are blessed by God when we hear the word of God and obey it.

Read out: Acts 5:29 Peter knew it was most important to obey God.

God tells us about Himself and about His Son Jesus in His words of the Bible.

God tells us about our duties to Him and our blessings from Him in the pages of the Bible.

This is the reason Peter said to Jesus, "You have the words of life." (John 6:63)

Read out: John 1:1-14

When we look to and listen to Jesus, we are seeing and hearing what the Father wants us to know regarding Him.

Some people hear or read the Bible and then do not do what the Bible tells them. Their lives do not change, they stay the same.

When we fail to obey the Word of God, we lose our opportunity to know God better and to have a better life. Obedience to the teachings of the Bible always brings God's blessing on us.

The Word of God is very powerful. It unlocks the problems of life and gives us hope. This is why Psalms 1:1-2 says *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditate day and night."*

Do you want to be blessed? Then meditate, read, and obey the Word of God, the Bible.

Meditate on God's Word

Meditation is the practice of going to a quiet place and prayerfully reading your Bible. As you do this you respectfully consider the things that you are reading.

Ask God to speak to you as you read. Meditation is like chewing something carefully over and over to understand and apply it to your life.

Read out: 1 Peter 2:2

We should desire God's Word like a new baby desires milk. This will make us grow in God.

Read out: Colossians 3:16

To meditate is to let the words of the Bible live inside you: teaching you, advising you, and feeding your heart like good food feeds your body. Eat God's Word!

Meditation is like looking at a picture and noticing every detail and how each part is connected to the other. As you consider the words of the Bible, you begin to see truth that makes an impact on your life. God speaks to you in this process.

Remember that Jesus wants to speak to you more than you want to hear from Him.

If you want to be close to God and have success in life (for yourself, your family, your job, your ministry, your health), you need to spend time reading and meditating on the words of the Bible. As you devote yourself to the Lord in this way you will see positive change beginning in your life.

Read out: Psalm 19:7-8

God's Word will bring refreshing, wisdom, and joy to you as you consider it carefully.

Read out: Romans 12:1-2

We are changed because our minds are made new through the Word of God. We cannot change ourselves for the better, just as we could not save ourselves. The words of the Bible can bring change in us and to our communities.

How to Meditate on the Word of God-- Some Practical Help

1. Be Regular. Fix the time that you have set aside for Bible meditation, preferable in the beginning of the day (Try for 30 minutes). Do not begin and then stop. Don't let days go by without taking time to seek the Lord by prayer and in His Word.

Have a definite reading programme – choose a Bible book to read, chapter by chapter, or ask the Lord where to begin?

For new believers, it is good to begin with the gospels in the New Testament. The Gospel of John is a good starting place.

2. Find a quiet Place. Go to a quiet place when you meditate on God's Word. Get away from others to be alone with God. Turn off anything that might distract you during your time with God (the radio, your phone, any music, etc).

3. Prepare. Have your Bible, pen, and paper. While reading, mark any verses in the Bible that you feel God is drawing your attention to. Make notes of what God speaks to you.

4. Ask yourself these questions when you read:

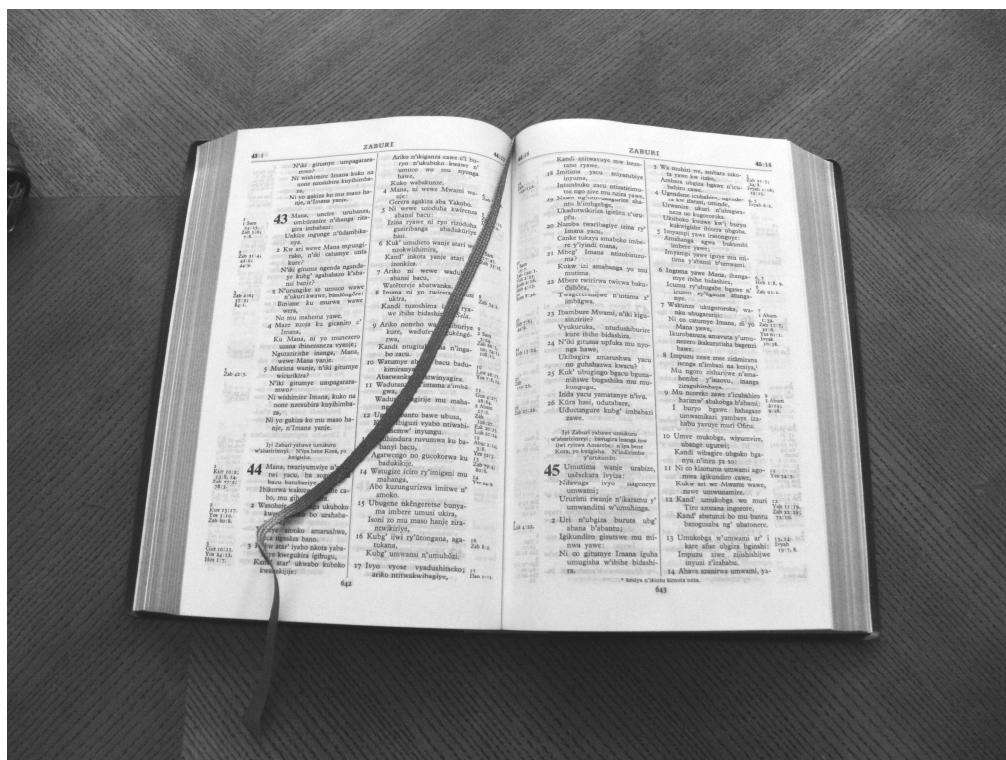
- What do these verses say about God?
- What do these verses say about you? Or your family, your church, your neighbours, your country?

5. Ask God to speak to you. Write down any verses that God draws your attention to and memorise them.

6. Pray. As you learn from God, pray about what He has shown you. Obey what you have been shown. Put it into practice.

Questions:

- What is the most important thing you have learned about the Bible in this lesson?
- Why do you think it is important to read and meditate on God's words?
- How can we become strong to meet life's challenges? (Taking in God's words like we take in food for our stomachs.)
- How can we grow in faith? (By reading, hearing, meditating and obeying the Word of God.)
- What should you do if you wish to prosper and have success? (Joshua 1:8-9)



Lesson 8

What is God Like?

(Understanding Who God Is)

Introduction

Because we cannot see God physically with our eyes, it can sometimes make it difficult for us to understand what He is really like.

What is God like?

God is spirit in nature; He is not made of flesh and blood as we are. God is uniquely different from us as people in both His form, His nature and also in His character qualities. **Read out: John 4:24**

So how can we know what God is like?

Even though you have not seen God with your eyes, you can know what God is like by reading about Him in the verses of the Holy Bible, and praying to Him and listening for Him.

The Nature of God

The term the “nature of God” refers to the qualities and character traits that belong only to God. These qualities show us who and what He is.

1. God is Eternal

God has no beginning and has no end; He was, is, and will be in existence forever. The people of the earth all have a beginning to their lives and an end. Kings, queens, political leaders and famous people who are known in the world today and who are admired for one reason or other are alive only for a short period of time.

Read out: Psalm 102:24-27

The writer here speaks about God and about people.

Read out: 1 Peter 1:24

People live and then they die, like the short life of flowers, when we are compared to God. The words God speaks never fade and they are unchanged; they last forever.

God is eternal; He is not affected by the passing of time. He does not age or grow old as we do; the passing of the time does not add or detract from God's knowledge or wisdom. There has never been a time when God did not exist. God is timeless and eternal.

Read out these Scriptures: Psalm 90:1-4; Psalm.145:13; Isaiah 40:28; and Revelation 1:4-8.

2. God Is the Creator of Everything

Read out: Genesis 1:1 and Acts 17:24 God has made everything, both the things which are seen (such as plants and animals) and also things that are unseen (such as atoms, molecules, our souls, and even the air that we breathe). He has made things both known and unknown to us.

Everything that exists or ever will exist has been created by God. Nothing has been created by humankind kind on its own.

Even Inventions and scientific discoveries are made by using what God has originally created.

They are made using the minds which God has created within us. This is why we should revere and worship only God. No man deserves such an honour or place in our lives.

Read out these Scriptures: John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17.

3. God is Almighty

God has all power and authority over every created thing. Even evil spirits must bow to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing which is impossible for God to do. He is supernatural in His nature and in His ability.

Read out: Matthew 19:26

We must rely on God to find the solutions to our life problems; He is the only one who is able to do things which are impossible.

Instead of relying to your own knowledge, strength, or even looking to other people to find solutions, we should look to God. Do not consult witch doctors, magicians—God condemns these things. And do not allow worry to rule in your mind. Jesus told us not to worry, but to pray. (Matt 6:3-34).

Read out: Deuteronomy 18:9-11

Who are our enemies today? Sin, sickness, poverty, evil, and ignorance.

God has power over sickness: Mark 5: 24-34

Jesus showed His power over evil spirits: Matthew 8:28-33 and Luke 10: 17-20.

God's power over death: Luke 7:11-15 and Romans 1:4.

If you face issues that worry you in your life, marriage, family, community, or your country, you can take these to the Lord; trust God to work in these situations, continuing to thank Him and praise Him.

Read out: Exodus 9:13-16; Exodus.14:21-31; Exodus.17:1-6; Joshua 10:8-14 and Revelation 12:14-17.

4. God is All Knowing

God knows everything. His knowledge is not limited. He does not need a school or a teacher like we do.

He sees into every person's soul. God knows the sorrows of your heart and challenges you are going through, and He is concerned about you.

God knows you personally; He knew you before you were born.

Read out: Psalms 39:1-4, Psalm.147:4-5; Jeremiah 1:5 & 29:11; Colossians 2:1-3; and Hebrews 4:13.

5. God is Present Everywhere

Read out: Psalms 139:7-13 God is everywhere. It is impossible for us to hide from Him. God sees and knows our thoughts and the things people do in secret. There is no place that can escape from His presence.

Read out these verses: Jeremiah 23:23-24.

6. God is Spirit

Read out: John 4:23-24 and 1 Timothy 1:17

God is spirit in nature, not flesh & blood like you and I. You can't see him with your eyes, yet He sees you at all times and in all places.

Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh and nature when he was born to Mary. This was a supernatural action by God. Jesus did this so that He would know and understand what it is like to live on this earth. But Jesus lived His life without sin, relying on the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

Read out: Matthew 1:18-25

7. Jesus is God

Jesus is God's unique, only Son sent from Heaven. God has given Jesus a Name above all Names and the right to rule the world and all that is in it.

Read out: John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:13-20; Hebrews 1-3; Philippians 2:4-11.

8. God is Personal

God has made everyone. God desires to know people and for them to live in relationship with him. He sent His own Son, Jesus as a man, so that you and I can know Him. God sends His Holy Spirit to live within us, when we receive Jesus.

Read out: 1 Kings 19:9-13; Isaiah 43:1-2; 49:14-16; John 20:11-18 & Acts 17:28-29.

The Character of God

Character refers to the inner qualities of a person.

We might say, "That person is kind.", or, "She was a spiteful woman." When we speak this way we are talking about a person's character, the qualities that define an individual.

God's character qualities are holiness, love, faithfulness, truthfulness, righteousness, and mercy. That is to say that God shows these qualities in everything He is and does.

God is holy, there is no evil in Him. God is just, He deals with people fairly and justly; He never makes mistakes in judgement. God never lies but speaks truth. God is merciful to those who call on Him for help and forgiveness.

These character qualities are those that God wants to produce in our lives as believers.

God is Holy

God is Holy in His nature; as such He cannot sin and will not show Himself in the presence of anything sinful or any person who is a sinner. God expects us to be holy to Him (separating ourselves from evil and the world.)

Read out: Psalms 24:3-4; Matthew 5:43-48; Hebrews 12:14 & 1 Peter 1:15-16.

God is Faithful

Faithfulness is being committed to do what you have promised to do without changing your mind or going back on your word. God is faithful in everything

He says and does. He does not say something today and then change his mind tomorrow. Faithfulness is important in our families, marriages, community, and business dealings as well. If people act faithfully, then marriages, businesses and whole communities can live in both peace and harmony.

Read out: Psalms 89:13-15; 2 Timothy 2:13; and 1Corinthians 10:13.

God is Truth

God is truthful in everything that he does. He does not lie or mislead people. He is truth itself—truth comes from Him.

Think of the problems that are caused when people do not tell the truth to each other. Deceit, or untruthfulness, causes mistrust, fear, uncertainty. It leads to anger, arguments, conflicts, and war.

Being truthful is God's way. Being untruthful (lying) is the way of Satan. Being truthful in your words and actions is important to God and is the way in which He wants you to live and act towards others.

Read out: Psalms 51:1-10; John 14:6; and John 14:16-17.

God is Righteous

God is righteous, which means He is just, fair, and perfect. He can never do something wrong. He will never act deceitfully or unfairly. God also expects us to live and work in a just and fair way in everything we do. God does not lie; He does not say that what is evil is good; He does not treat a good person as being guilty. Because of this we should not show favouritism towards others, or accept bribes from others. God treats each person in the world equally and does not show favouritism towards some. As Christians we should be fair with others and fair in our practices.

Read out: Hebrews 1:8-9; Psalms 89:14; Psalm.96:13; & Romans 2:5-11.

God is Good

God is good, and only acts for the good. He cannot do evil, nor can He act contrary to His nature of goodness.

Read out: Matthew 12:34-35; Luke 6:27,28; Romans 8:28; Romans.12:21; Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 5:22-24; and Ephesians. 6:8.

There is no evil in God; evil came into the world through Satan, when Satan rebelled against God. Human beings brought even more evil into the world as a consequence of their sins. That is why there are wars, thieving, hatred, lying, cheating, and all the many other ills in our world. God did not create evil. God sent us a Redeemer so that we as individuals, families, and communities could turn from evil and begin to receive good things from God.

God is just; He must punish sin. But God is also good; He offers us forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus. And God offers to help us in life if we turn to Him and ask Him for His help.

Read out: Hebrews 4:16. (Come boldly to God's throne to ask for His help, and you will receive it.)

A father on earth will discipline his children so that they will become good children. God does the same with us. He disciplines those who belong to Him so that their lives will be good (Read out: 1Timothy 4:8 and Hebrews 12:5). God wants us to have the fruit of goodness in our lives, so that people will come to know the good God we serve.

God is Merciful

Mercy comes from love. Mercy is given by the one with greater advantage to the one with much less advantage. Mercy is the quality of looking at someone and wanting to help them overcome their problems, even though they may not really deserve to be helped. When God looks at us, he feels mercy towards us, especially when we are having challenges in life. The great love that he has toward us causes Him to be merciful. In the same way God wants you and I to be merciful towards other people.

Read out: Ephesians 2:4-6; Romans 2:4; Psalms 86:5; and Matthew 18:21-22.

God is Love

The Bible tells us that God is love. Not just that God loves but, rather that the very essence of his being is love. God loves us and expects us as well to love one another. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He said: "To love God and to love each other" (Luke 10:27).

If people loved each other, many positive things would happen in our communities. God is love and His actions toward us reflect that love. God's greatest act of love was sending Jesus to take our sins on the cross and to rise again to be our Lord.

Read out: John 13:34-35; and John 14:23-24. Jesus commanded us to show love to others. In this way other people will know that we follow Jesus. The love we show comes from God, so if you are having a difficult time showing love, ask the Lord Jesus to help you.

Read out: Jeremiah 33:3; Luke 10:30-37; John 3:16; John 15:12 -13; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Ephesians 5:1-2.

Conclusion

We now understand that God is eternal, all-powerful, and that He knows everything. God is loving, faithful, just, and good. Because of our good God, you can be assured that He will be working in your life for good. He wants to bring many good fruits into your life to bless you and to bless others. You can trust Him to take care of you and all your concerns.

Read out: Philippians 2:13 and Romans 8:28.

Group Questions:

1. What part of this lesson helped you understand God better?
2. If everyone in your community (or family) began to show kindness, goodness, mercy, and faithfulness, what effect do you think it would have?
3. Which one of God's character traits means the most to you? And why?
4. How can you change your life for the better? (Reading the Word of God to know God better; by praying, and by obeying God and letting him change you.)

Lesson 9

The One True God

Introduction

The one true God who created all things and rules the universe is the God of the Bible. He has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ.

Jesus said:

"He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me only, but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me." (John 12:44-45.)

The God of the Bible is the one true God.

All other so-called gods are no gods at all. They have been created by people (the Hindu gods, Buddha, Allah, and other things that are worshipped).

As we learned in Lesson 3, idols can also be people, ideas, or things that take the place of God in our lives).

The Bible clearly tells us that the Lord, the God of the Bible, created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. He is the only one who deserves to be worshiped by the people He created. No man, creature, spirit, or created image should be given worship.

God will not share His glory with anyone. It is a very serious offence against God to worship something or someone else.

Read out: Exodus 20:1-4 and Psalm 78:58.

What is God's Name?

Read out: Exodus 3:1-15 In this passage we read that God revealed His name to Moses as "I Am who I Am", meaning, God who has always existed, and who will always exist. This Name of God is translated in our Bible as "the Lord," or "Lord God." So when Christians pray we often call on the Lord, or we speak about "the Lord". This is God's Name for Himself. He is the Creator and Redeemer.

Read out Exodus 6:2-3

One God

Our God decrees that we should look to Him and worship Him only.

Deuteronomy 6:4 says: ***"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."***

It is important that we worship the Lord God, and Him alone. Giving our lives in worship to God is a key to change in our own personal life. Worshipping the Lord brings transformation in our community and hope for our nation.

Read out: Isaiah 42:8 and 43:11-13 God declares Himself to be a jealous God; that is, He will not tolerate the worship of other deities, other gods. He will bring punishment to those who sin against Him this way, but to those who keep His commandments God freely gives His love, protection, and many good promises.

The Bible teaches us to worship only the one true God; there is no other God beside Him.

Look up and read out some of these Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 4:35-39; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalms 83:18 ; Isaiah 44:6-8; Jeremiah 10:10-15; Mark 12:28-32; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5.

The Trinity

Let us now move on to take a brief look the doctrine of the Trinity of the Godhead.

The Bible clearly teaches us that God is one God and yet it shows us that He co-exists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Father is the One True God, whose name He has given to every earthly father. The Father committed the world to the rule of the Son. The Son, Jesus, came to die to redeem fallen human beings.

We believed on Jesus, and through His life, suffering, death, and resurrection, we were saved.

The Holy Spirit acts as God's agent in the world and in our hearts. The Holy Spirit was present in the creation of the world; the Son spoke the creation into being. When time comes to an end Jesus will set up His kingdom on earth and give everything back into His Father's hands.

How Can One God Exist in Three Separate Persons?

Some people mistakenly think that Christians worship three Gods but, this is not true. The Bible clearly teaches that God is one deity, who interacts with the world in three distinct ways:

The Father – Is God who is unseen by people and yet who by His power created the universe and everything in it. He is the ruler of all things He has created.

The Son, Jesus Christ – He is God the Son, sent to the world, seen and known by people, and Who is the Father's chosen means to bring salvation to the world.

The Holy Spirit – is God the Spirit, the unseen agent, acting in the earth, and who lives in the hearts of all people who are "born again". Notice that each person of the Godhead has a particular expression, or function, within the Trinity.

Read out: Matthew 28: 19-20 (Jesus' command to the believers as to what we should do in the world.) This passage clearly shows that there are three co-existent and distinct persons which make up the Trinity of the Godhead.

Read out: Deuteronomy 6:4 Here the Bible clearly states that God is One deity. If God is one deity, then how can he be spoken of as three? We will get an understanding by examining the verses of the Bible.

Let us consider an example: We read in Genesis 2:24: ***"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."*** This verse tells us that the man and his wife are one. It shows us that there is a definite unity of two separate people. The two individuals spoken about, Adam & Eve, become one flesh. Here we see a very good example of how two people are regarded as one. The same principle applies showing how the three persons of the Godhead are in fact one God.

The book of Genesis tells the story of creation. Verse 1:26 reads: ***“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”*** Here we read that the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all present at the creation of the world. They conferred together and decided to make human beings. God says ***“Let Us make man”*** and then says, ***“let them rule over...the earth.”*** The word ***man*** means both men and women. This is an example of more than one person being considered as one entity.

Consider a familiar example that may help you understand the teaching of God, the Three in One. Think of an avocado. It consists of 3 distinct parts (skin, flesh, and seed) and yet it is one fruit. Each part is distinct yet wholly part of the avocado. Each part has a function and a form but is still part of the fruit.

Jesus Christ is referred to as the “Son of God.” He is co-existent within the Trinity of the Godhead and is therefore fully and completely God.

Jesus is prophesied about in the words of the Old Testament at least 300 times and is the Godhead’s chosen means to bring salvation and restoration to a lost and condemned world. Jesus’ coming and His work are revealed fully in the books of the New Testament.

When we pray to God, we may address God the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. They are One and the same God. As you read your Bible you will see many times God is spoken of as Father, Son (Jesus) or Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity of the Godhead is very complex and this lesson can only give a brief explanation. Ask the Lord Jesus to help you understand this truth and He give you more understanding.

Only One God in Your Life

As believers in Christ we very much need to be on our guard against things which the enemy may use to undermine our faith. We should consider things which may inadvertently become idols in our lives and distract us from a right relationship with God.

Read out: Exodus 20:3-5.

The word ***idol*** is not a word that is in common use in modern life. It is a word that describes any influence on our lives which may cause us to worship, have faith in, or give priority to someone or something other than the true God. A person may place this above their relationship with and worship of God Himself.

The Old Testament tells the story of the Israelites, who were set free from slavery to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Once released from Egypt, the Israelites foolishly made a calf of gold and began to worship it rather than God Himself. They looked on the calf as though it had power and could bring blessing into their lives.

Read out: Leviticus 26:1

Even today people make and worship images of manmade gods derived from witchcraft and occult practices or false religions. They mistakenly believe that the objects and practices belonging to the idol or fetish will help them, heal them, or bless them. These objects may appear to be harmless things such as lucky charms, carvings, totems, or other objects related to spirits or tribal customs. These items may be present in our homes from our lives before we knew Jesus. As we learned in lesson 3, these things need to be renounced and destroyed. Talk with your pastor if you have these things in your house or your life.

Read out: Isaiah 46:8-9

Idolatry can take many forms within our lives. Idol worship may include manmade objects or giving our time and affection to worldly influences such as money, influential people, alcohol, sex, TV, property, internet, or work. Worshiping the true God allows us to live under God's blessings and protects us, our families, and our communities. It would be good to review Lesson 3 again if you have any questions or problems in this area. Talk with your pastor or teacher about your concerns. If you have an idol or are involved with a fetish or spirit, you will need deliverance from them. Return to Lesson 3 and read it with your pastor or leader, and have him pray with you.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

As Christians, we need to put God first in our lives. Your relationship with God should come first in your life, rather than anything from the world. In this way you will live with and enjoy His blessings on your life. Read out: 1 John 5:20-21.

Questions:

1. What is an idol? (Any thing, image, or person that you give your time, affection, or loyalty to—instead of giving yourself to the true God.)
2. What are the idols that are found in your community?
3. How have idols affected your personal life, your family life and your community?
4. What part of this lesson has given you a new understanding about God? (Read Colossians 3:5 & Matthew 6:24)

Lesson 10

What is the Church?

Introduction

“Who do you say that I am?” Jesus asked Peter.

Peter, one of Jesus’ closest followers, said, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”*

Jesus then answered Peter: *“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”* (Matthew 16:16-18.)

Jesus said He would build His church on the rock. That rock is the confession of faith Peter spoke to Jesus. Peter knew that Jesus was the One sent from God to take away the sins of the world.

Peter’s confession of faith is the rock of the church. It is the foundation of the church.

When you asked Jesus to forgive your sins and come into your life, you also made a confession of faith in Him. You agreed that Jesus died on the cross and rose again to save you. Jesus became your Saviour. You made the same confession of faith as Peter did.

Jesus said He would build His church on that confession of faith in Him. Jesus also said that His church would be built so strongly that any attack from Satan and evil would not harm it.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 12:13 (We accepted Jesus, and the Holy Spirit made us part of the church of Jesus.)

The Church Belongs to Jesus

People from every nation, family, race, and time period since Jesus’ time have become part of the church, which belongs to Jesus.

Read out: Colossians 1:12-13

The New Testament tells us that the church is a group of people who are called out of darkness into relationship with Jesus.

We belong to Him now.

We should love Jesus, and honor Him in everything we do, think, and say.

We are the demonstration to everyone in the world that Jesus lives.

Every Christian is Part of Jesus’ Church.

Now that you know Jesus, you are part of His church. You might think of the church as a building where people go to sing and hear the pastor preach. This is true, but the Bible tells us that the people who know Christ as Saviour **are the church**. The people who are saved are the church.

In the Old Testament God’s people built a temple for God. After Jesus rose from the dead, He gave His Spirit to live inside the people who believed on Him. Because of what Jesus has done, we have become God’s temple.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 3:16 Believers have the Holy Spirit of God living inside them. Now instead of a building being the focus of worship to God, the people of God become God's building, the church.

Read out: 1 Timothy 3:15 Christians, who are part of God's family, are the house and household of God.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 15:9 Paul persecuted the people belonging to Jesus; they were called the church.

The Bible shows us that saved people are the church of Jesus, not the building they meet in.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 16:19 Many churches in the time of the apostles met in houses as small groups. So whenever we meet together we are the church. The building is not the important feature, but we are as worshippers and those who live for Christ.

The Church is Jesus' Own Possession

Read out: 1 Corinthians 6:17-20 and 1 Peter 1:18-19. Jesus bought us by shedding His blood on the cross. Jesus bought the church (His people) so that it would belong to Him forever. People from every nation, family, race, and time since Jesus have become part of the larger church.

The word redeemed means we have been bought back for God by Jesus.

Read out: 1 Peter 2:9-10. We are God's holy possession and God calls us to proclaim His praise to the world. In this Scripture we are told that we were chosen by God and that we received mercy from the Lord.

Our job is to tell about Jesus to the world, as priests of God. We are also told that we were called out of darkness and that we should be holy (we should live lives of purity and uprightness). Knowing that Jesus bought us with His own blood should make us very thankful and give us joy in the new life He has given us. We are special to God, and we should tell others about what Jesus has done for us.

The Church is the Flock of God

Read out: Psalms 23 and John 10:11. Jesus is our Shepherd. He leads us in safety and provides for our needs. He guides us in the right ways. We can depend on Him to care for us.

Read out Ephesians 4:10-13

Jesus has given you a man or woman who is a shepherd. He or she is called a pastor. A pastor is a shepherd, and is to care for the spiritual life of the members of Jesus' flock. The pastor is to feed us the word of God, help guide us, teach us, pray for us, and lead us in the way of following the Great Shepherd, Jesus.

Be obedient to your pastor and pray for him or her. Give him/her respect and help him/her do the work of the church. Tell other people about Jesus and bring them to church. We belong to the flock of Jesus and we should try to get along with everyone in our church. God's desire is for us to live in peace and unity.

The Church is the Body of Christ

Read out: Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:22

Sometimes the church is described as the body of Christ; Jesus is the head, and we are the members of His body.

We are connected to Jesus just as the parts of a body are connected to the head. Like a human body, the head gives directions to the rest of the body.

As members of the church, we are Christ's body, and we should obey the direction Christ, who is the Head. Sometimes a local church is referred to as a local body, meaning a fellowship of believers in a particular place.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

There is one body of Christ, but there are many members. Each of us is a member of the body of Christ. Each of us has a function and we all have different functions in the body. Each of us has a job, something we were created to do for God. We should ask God what we are meant to be doing in the body of Christ, the church.

Read out: Colossians 3:8-15

Loving each other is the way to bring unity in the church. We are able to love anyone because Christ is in our hearts. As members of the body we can work in unity with the other members of the body to accomplish what God has for us to do.

Although we have different gifts, and our functions differ, we are still one with the other members of the body. The hand cannot reject the eye, or the foot decide that it is more important than the ear. Each of us must strive to live and work in harmony with one another and bring glory to God in this way.

Read out: Ephesians 4:28-32

These are practical instructions to the church as to how we ought to behave toward one another.

Read out: Titus 2:14 Jesus died to redeem us from wickedness, and so we should be eager to do good to show that we belong to Him.

The Church is the Family of God

We become God's family when we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. God calls us His children and we call Him our Father in Heaven. He cares for us as a father does for his children. He disciplines us when it is needed. God talks to us and wants us to talk with Him in prayer.

Read out: John 1:12 and Galatians 4:6

Every person who accepts Christ is a child of God. As you gather together as a church, you gather also as God's family. Treat others with love and respect, seeing them through God's eyes.

Read out: Galatians 6:10

A family supports each other. They value each other and take care for one another. We all should help each other as members of Jesus' church. There is a special love between members of Christ's church.

Living Stones

We think of a church as a wooden or brick building where people come to worship God. But God thinks of us believers as His building. He has placed the Holy Spirit in us. Together as a group, we who are redeemed are called the house of God.

Read out: Ephesians 2:18-22 God sees you as part of His building, founded on Jesus.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 3:9-11. Allow God to work in your life to make you well built, showing the work God has done in you.

We read in 1Peter 2:5 *“you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house^[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

Each of us makes a part of the building of God, where He wants to shine in His Glory.

What is our spiritual sacrifice?

Firstly, we obey Jesus in what He commands us to do.

We can give Him a sacrifice of praise and worship (Romans 12:1-2).

We can give a sacrifice of love by doing good to others, by praying, by encouraging one another.

We can take time to learn about God’s ways and then teach others. You can teach someone else what you have learned.

We can give a sacrifice of thanksgiving, thanking God for all he has done for us.

God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices that come from a heart of loving service to Jesus.

Read out: Hebrews 3:1-8 This tells us that Jesus is the Master of the house. We are the house of God and are under His direction and care. We should remember that people watch our lives to see if we act like true Christians.

The Church is the Bride of Christ

Read out: Ephesians 5:25-30 Jesus calls the church His bride. Jesus loves His church (those who believe) like a bridegroom loves his bride.

This is a picture that shows the great and sacrificial love that Jesus has for us. Jesus, the bridegroom, loved His bride and suffered and died on the cross for us (we are His bride). This should make us thankful and faithful to our Heavenly Bridegroom.

You may have difficult relationships here on earth; but the relationship you have with Jesus, your Savior, can be as deep and loving as that of a new bride with her loving husband.

These verses in Ephesians also tell us that Jesus is washing the bride (His church) and preparing her for the wedding, or union, that will take place in the future.

Read out: Revelation 19:5-9. At the right time Jesus will come to take His bride, His church, to heaven to live with Him forever.

Joining a Local Church

Just as you have become members of Jesus' world-wide church, you should become a member of a local church.

You should be connected to a local body of believers where you live.

You are already a member of Jesus' church when you are saved, but joining a local assembly or church is another step.

The work of the church is to share the gospel of Jesus to the people around you. Every member is to do this, not just the pastor or the evangelist.

The work of the church is to help each other "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

The work of the church is to help the poor and needy in the Name of Jesus.

Read out: Acts 11:20-26 Churches in the Bible were named after their cities where the Christians lived. Every group that gathered in a house was part of the church in that city. Two churches are named in this passage: the church at Jerusalem and the church at Antioch.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 16:19 This is a greeting written from the churches in Asia to a church meeting in a house.

Read out: Hebrews 10:24-25 It is important to be faithful to your local body, or church. You are needed there as you also need what others can bring. Membership in a local body differs from place to place, but every Christian is a member of Jesus' eternal church. Your pastor or leader will advise you about how to join the local church where you live.

Questions:

1. How did you become part of Jesus' church?
2. Why is it important to know that the church is a family?
3. Jesus bought us (redeemed us) with what?
4. If we are the house of God, and the family of God, how should we behave in our families? In our community? In our church?
5. How can you share the gospel (the good news) about Jesus?
(Pastor, help your people learn ways to this.)

Lesson 11

In God's Sight

Introduction

In this lesson we will discover how God values people and what that means for us as sons and daughters of God.

Everyone is Created in God's Image

Read out: Genesis 1: 26-28

We read in the Holy Bible that people have been created in the image and the likeness of God. We were created to correspond to God, to His likeness. However, sin has broken God's image in our lives. Because of sin we have lost our likeness to God. When we become believers, however, and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, a process begins whereby we may begin to be again in the image of God.

Each Person on Earth is Wonderfully Made

Read out: Genesis 1:31 and Psalms 139:13-15 (When God made us, He said, *"It is very good."*)

Every person has been uniquely made by God and has been given the gift of life. God knew you before you were in your mother's womb. He loved you and formed a plan for your life. He wants to see you blessed, whole, and living in your destiny. This is what He has made you to do for Him on this earth.

The verses of Genesis chapter 1 tell us that all people, including you and me, are highly valued by God. The Lord sees us equal in value to all the other people in the world. (That includes the person sitting right next to you today.) It does not matter if you are a man, woman or a child. If you are black, white, or other skin colour, rich or poor, tall and short. It does not matter to God if you are well educated or not, or what language you speak. God loves you as an individual and values you equally to all other people.

People have made divisions between themselves and others, but God intends for us to live in peace and in good relationship with each other.

Read out: Romans 12:10 and 13:8.

Questions: Ask the group to discuss these questions

- How can we show love to someone in our community who needs Christ?
- How can we show Christ's love to someone in our church?"

Because Jesus lives in us we have the power to overcome sin in our lives. We also have the power to love people that we find unlovable. This can be only done through the power of God's Spirit inside you.

God has wonderfully created humankind (men and women) and gifted each one of us. We have abilities of the mind, of will and of emotion. We have

creative abilities, thinking processes, and powerful emotions. It is through the use of these abilities that God intends for us to change our world for the better.

Looking Through God's Eyes!

As we learn to view and value one another God's way, we can see a true change both in our individual lives and also in the lives of our families, community, and in our whole country.

When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus replied:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind", This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it; 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" **Matthew 22:37-40**

Jesus was saying that expressing love (in what we say, think, and do) to God and to those around us is the most important thing we are to do.

All people living on earth and living within our communities have been created by God. Whether they are Hutu, Tutsi; whether from Burundi, DRC, or Tanzania or further away; whether black or white, rural people working on farms, or those living in towns and villages; whether medical doctors, government workers, those in the army and the police, or working in business or in the home; people living a house or homeless, street kids, children in schools, those in good health or the injured, sick and dying; all these people have been created by God, and are loved and valued by God. None of these people are more highly valued than any other in God's sight, for they were all created in His image and likeness.

We should see them as God sees them, we must treat them as we have been commanded in the Bible: with love, respect, and compassion.

Think about how we as Christians should view and treat others.

Read out: Matthew 5:38-48

Jesus came to seek and save the people of this world who are trapped in sin and separated from God. Jesus did not come to obtain adulation or seek His own personal benefit.

Read out: Mark 10:42-45

Jesus served us by Walking on this earth and bringing healing and truth, help and love. Then He served us by dying for us on the cross, paying for our sins. At Calvary He paid the ultimate price and expressed the ultimate love for you and I.

In the same way, you and I should aim to live in a way that reflects God's love and values to everyone around us, both the good and the unloveable.

We cannot be holy people only on a Sunday morning or when out with other Christians. We must reflect God's love and values every day.

Read out: Philippians 2:3-4

To value one another means putting the needs of others before our own needs, just as Christ did. If we love and value others as God loves and values us, violence and conflict between people will be greatly reduced. Peace will flourish and human welfare will be enhanced.

God Values All People Equally

Men, women and children of all races and languages are equally valued by God.

Read what the Bible says about how God views different types of people (look up and read these Scriptures):

Men and Women. Read: John 4:7-29. The Jewish people hated Samaritans and did not give high regard to women. Jesus went against the culture and beliefs of the Jews to teach love for the Samaritan. Jesus included women as His disciples: Mark 15:41. Jesus gives equal value to women as to men.

Children. Read: Matthew 19:13-15. Jesus valued children as equally as adults.

Different Races, Tribes, and Peoples. Read: Acts 10:1-48 Acts 15:7-11. God showed Peter that the Jews and the Gentiles have equal value in his eyes.

Read out: Romans 1:16-17 Jesus loves all people and He died for everyone.

Read out: Galatians 3:28 No one should consider himself higher or lower than any other person, or look down on his neighbour.

Without Favourites. These Scriptures show that God values all people:
Read: Romans 3:29-30, 1 Corinthians 12:13; John 10:16.

The Bible tells us to treat people equally, regardless of status, wealth, race, family background, health, or education, without showing favoritism.

Read: Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Psalms 146:5-9; Isaiah 1:17; Matthew 5:44,45.

Conclusion

God created human beings, both men and women, in his image and likeness; everyone is of equal value regardless of their status or background.

As God's people we should therefore look at others in the same way that God views them.

Jesus came to restore people back into relationship with God. He paid the ultimate price, laying down His own life because of God's love for all people.

Therefore we are commanded in the Bible to love others as Jesus loved us. We must lay aside differences and live with love, patience, and understanding for one another.

Questions:

Spend a few minutes discussing these questions.

1. Why do you think God values people so highly? (We are made in His image and likeness. God loves us with an everlasting love and cherishes us.
Read out: Jeremiah 31:3.)
2. Read out: Matthew 6:14 – What attitude should you have towards those who offend you?
3. Read out: Galatians 5:14 – Think and share how you can apply this Scripture in your community.
4. Read out: Matthew 20:28 – God Himself (Jesus Christ) showed this amount of love for you and I. How should we as Christians reflect this to others?
5. Have everyone close their eyes and reflect on this Scripture as you read it out: 1Timothy 2: 1- 6.

Tell your people: “Think of someone you have thought badly of, or treated badly in your community; pray for them right now.”



Lesson 12

Forgiveness

Introduction

In this lesson we shall focus on what the Bible teaches about the meaning and application of forgiveness.

Forgiveness means to set a person free or release them. It means to release them from a debt, commitment, or obligation that is owed to us. It also means to remove any condemnation that may exist toward that person.

As we think of the action of releasing something we might, for example, think of a bird which is caught in a snare; you remove the bird and let the bird go free. Or we might think of taking a prisoner from the city jail and letting him go, in full freedom, without any charge remaining or record of his crime being retained.

Our hearts can be like jails which hold on to resentment, anger or bitterness towards others for the wrongs they have done against us. We are hurt and angry because of what people have done to us. We hold on to a grudge week after week, year after year, not wanting to forgive or release them from the anger that we feel towards them.

We continue to remember the wrongs they have done against us. This creates bitterness and resentment toward the person. When we live like this we make our hearts into jails which are full and bursting with rage and unforgiveness.

By holding on to resentment and anger we may create a desire to harm the other person because of their wrongdoing against us. Our thoughts can explode into hatred and then actions that bring damage and more harm. That is why we must take care of unforgiveness in our hearts.

Bitterness, anger and resentment in our hearts can accumulate over time, becoming more intense and causing greater resentment within us.

These resentments can develop into health problems within our own bodies.

Some might have headaches, heart problems, high blood pressure, difficulty in sleeping, fatigue, panic attacks or other health problems.

Instead of sleeping peacefully at night so that we have enough energy for the next day we end up losing many hours of sleep because we are consumed with thinking about the offences others have committed against us.

Bitterness, resentment and anger also leads to the breakdown in relations between people in families and communities.

What Does Jesus Teach Us?

As Christians, It is important that we understand true forgiveness, as Jesus teaches us in the Bible.

Read out: Luke 23: 32-39 Jesus had been whipped and beaten and a crown of thorns was jammed on His head; the soldier nailed Him to the cross. While He was suffering on the cross, He forgave those who crucified Him and those who jeered at Him. While on the cross He asked His Father to forgive the people who had harmed Him.

Question: What does Jesus teach us in these verses?

Read out: Matthew 6:12-15, Matthew 18:21-22 & Mark 11:25-26.

God gives His grace and unconditional forgiveness to each one of us. God's forgiveness is undeserved by us and yet He gives it to us when we place our trust in Christ.

If we desire to be fulfilled and happy in our own lives, then we need to have the grace to forgive those who have committed offenses against us.

The only way to have peace in our lives and in our communities is to understand and practice forgiveness.

Forgiveness has Two Distinct Parts

Forgiveness has two distinct yet interlinked parts. First, there is the receiving of forgiveness and second, the giving of forgiveness.

Part 1 of Forgiveness: The Receiving Part

Read out: Luke 7:48; Luke 24:47; and Acts 10:43

God's forgiveness for our sins is unconditional. Through His grace God's forgiveness is given to us without any charge or conditions.

The Bible tells us that in God's sight our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). When we receive forgiveness from God through faith in Christ's sacrifice, God remembers our sins no more.

There are many Christians, sadly, who still struggle with feelings of guilt and shame even after God's grace has been poured into their lives. We need to understand that God's grace is full and complete; Jesus has paid the full price for our sins at Calvary. We stand forgiven in God's sight.

Read out: Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 2:13

When Jesus forgave you, your record was wiped clean. This means that God has no record of your wrongdoing.

When Jesus forgave you, God does not bring your sins to mind.

When Jesus forgave you, He set you free from the punishment for your sins, from what you deserved.

Read out: John 8:36

Question: Have you accepted the forgiveness Jesus offers you?

Jesus came to set free a world trapped in guilt and sin. At Calvary He paid the price of our sins completely and totally. Through our faith in Christ and His sacrifice we receive the forgiveness offered to us by our heavenly Father.

Feelings of continued guilt come from the enemy. Once God has forgiven us all wrongs that we have done, then we are completely forgiven. We can be at peace and have assurance that God has really forgiven us.

If forgiveness has been given to us by another person for something we have done, we should not continue to live with a sense of blame or guilt hanging over us. We need rather to receive the forgiveness that is offered by the other person, and thank God for it.

Read out these verses. Have the people repeat them. Encourage them to accept these truths into their own lives:

1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Romans 8:1 *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus".*

Part 2 of Forgiveness: The Giving Part

Read out: Luke 15:11-24 (The story of the Prodigal Son).

Imagine yourself as being the father in this story. Could you forgive the irresponsible actions of your child?

Think about the great amount of time and energy that you had used to earn your wealth, and then this irresponsible child carelessly squanders it all in a short period of time.

Most of us would struggle to find a sense of true forgiveness.

In this story told by Jesus we realise that the Father is not a human father at all, rather it is God Himself. The father who is spoken of is different from an earthly father and the story shows us that God is full of forgiveness.

He forgives people without counting how large or heavy their sins were. He forgives people unconditionally.

Jesus' story shows us that we ought to show such mercy to other people, no matter how large or heavy their transgression or sin against us.

Why Should I Forgive?

Read out: Ephesians 4:32.

We are commanded to forgive each other. Wherever there are people gathered together, there will be offences and problems. Even in the fellowship of the church, this is so. But we can live in peace and harmony if we obey God's commands. We can and must forgive each other.

Read out: Matthew 18:21-35.

Jesus told this story to help us understand that we must forgive others as Jesus has forgiven us.

It cost Jesus every drop of His blood to forgive our wrongs. He expects us to forgive those who have wronged us.

The forgiveness that Jesus gives is so much greater than what He asks us to give. This does not mean that our injuries are not important; it means Jesus forgave much more than what we are asked to forgive. Like the servant in this story, we are expected to forgive and release those who have wronged us.

If we choose not to forgive, we will experience judgment from God, who is the eternal and just judge of all people.

Help in Solving Difficulties

Read out: Matthew 18:15-20.

These verses show us that it is very important to actively try to solve problems which arise between Christians who are living or working together. We need to be quick to restore harmony where there are misunderstandings.

Sometimes it is very difficult to forgive if we feel abused or aggrieved by what has been said or done to us. As Christians we need to do our best to follow God's commands and to forgive one another no matter what harm has been done to us.

Without forgiveness toward those who offend us we will never have peace in our personal lives, within the church, or in our communities. As God's children, we must seek to live out forgiveness in our daily lives.

Colossians 3:12-14 says *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."*

If there are problems which are beyond our ability as individuals to solve, then we need to look to other Christian people who have enough wisdom to come and help us find a solution. Go to the church leaders and they will try to help you find a solution to the problems that you are facing. The Bible also tells us to

solve disputes amongst members of the church within the church, rather than taking them to a court of law (1Corinthians6:1-10).

How to Forgive Others

- Begin by thinking of the people you have offended in some way.
- Prayerfully seek God to give you the grace to forgive them.
- Speak out loud your forgiveness towards these people. Say, "I forgive (name) for what they have done."
- If needed, imagine that you are literally setting them free. Say, "I set you free, In Jesus' Name."
- Ask God for His peace to be in your heart.

The Bible says that as Christians we should forgive those who have caused us harm. The Bible does not say or pretend however, that such actions will be easy to do because we are people of flesh & blood.

Philippians 4:13 says: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* Only with God's power can we truly forgive.

What Forgiveness is Not

True biblical forgiveness is not merely forgetting what has happened to us, or pretending we have not been harmed or offended by others. It is not about suppressing our feelings or hiding them away. If we do this, then sooner or later the old feelings will just rise back to the surface again.

Forgiveness is not a feeling. True forgiveness is a decision we make; it is an act of our will. It is saying, "Although I have been badly affected by what has been done to me, I choose to forgive. Before the Lord God and in Jesus' name I choose to let go of my anger, frustration and hurt. I choose to forgive those who have hurt me."

If you find the thoughts about the wrong done to you coming into your mind, simply dismiss it in Jesus' name and say "I forgive. I set them free." This is what Jesus did on the cross for you. Instead, fill your mind with verses from the Bible, or sing a song to Jesus. This will help you fill your mind with the good things of God.

Forgiveness is NOT for WEAK people.

Weak people are often so consumed with bitterness and resentment that they are unable to forgive others. It takes an act of real strength to forgive; it takes courage and the grace that God gives you to forgive. Remember that forgiveness is not a feeling, it is a decision in obedience to the Lord Jesus.

If feelings of anger or resentment return, you should repeat again, "I forgive, and set free." Each time as you do this the feelings will begin to come under

God's authority. In time the feelings will fade. This can only be done with the power of Jesus in you. You cannot do it on your own.

However, if you begin to think about what was said or done to you, and you begin to relive the situation, you will find yourself in unforgiveness.

Repent and forgive! This is the way to live in true freedom.

Group Questions:

Read again: Matthew 18:23-35.

Read out these questions and give the people time to consider them before you read the next question:

1. "What does Jesus teach in this story? How much debt has God forgiven you?"
2. Are there people in your life that you need to forgive?
3. Can you think of people who have wronged you in some way, or someone you hold resentment against? What actions do you need to take?
4. Is there someone you need to seek forgiveness from, someone whom you have wronged in some way? What actions do you need to take?
5. **Read out:** Philippians 4:13 and Matthew 11: 28-30.
Where can we find the strength to forgive others?

Pastor/Leader: Lead the people in a time of prayer to ask God's forgiveness for sins which are not yet confessed. Encourage the people to forgive those who have offended them and encourage them to go and ask forgiveness from those that they have offended.



Lesson 13

Tell Others about Jesus

Introduction

This lesson will help you understand how to be a witness for Jesus Christ. To witness means to tell others about Jesus.

In the New Testament Book of Acts we read the story of the first believers in Jesus and the first church at Jerusalem. Peter and the other apostles were the leaders of the church.

Read out: Acts 13:46-49

One of the most important things the people of the church did was to tell the good news about Jesus to everyone they met.

Jesus' Command

Read out: Matthew 28: 18-20; Mark 16:15-19; John 20:21; Luke 24: 44-5

These are the last words of Jesus. He commanded His followers to tell everyone about Him.

Jesus said, "You shall be My witnesses." (Acts 1:8)

A witness is a person who reports what they have seen, heard and experienced.

Jesus calls you to tell what you have experienced with Him.

The Bible says that Jesus is the faithful and true witness (Revelation 1:5 and 3:14). This is because Jesus came and spoke to people about His Father in heaven. He spoke about everything He had seen, heard, and experienced in heaven with His Father.

We are witnesses to what Jesus has done in our lives, and we should tell others.

Question: Have you told anyone your story, how you came to believe on Jesus? Why or why not? If you have not, you should begin.

Jesus did not say that only the pastor or evangelist would tell about Jesus. He said that all who believe should share their faith. God's plan to reach lost people means that God wants to use you, no matter your education, background, or family.

It does not matter if you are a man or woman, wealthy or poor. All of us who know Christ must share our faith.

Read out: Acts:11:19 The people of the church scattered from Jerusalem. Everywhere they went they were speaking about Jesus. They shared Jesus everywhere and with everyone, because their love for Him was so great.

What is the Gospel, or Good News?

The message about Jesus is called the gospel, or good news. It is good news to know that your sins can be forgiven, that you can be set free from what binds you, and that you can become a friend of God! That is why it is so important to Jesus that we share the gospel. Everyone must hear about Jesus!

Read out: 1 Timothy 2:3-5

God loves everyone and wants everyone to experience His love and forgiveness. People can only believe on Jesus when we tell them about Him.

God did not give this task to angels or use His miracles to cause people to believe—He gave this task especially to the redeemed people who are called Christians. This includes the young, the old, the men, the women, the pastors and the people of the church.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 These verses tell the gospel in a few words:

Jesus suffered and died for our sins; Jesus was buried and rose again from the dead; Jesus is alive today. Every Christian should know these verses; this is the gospel and this is what we share with others.

Read out: Acts 10:35-48

This is Peter's sermon to the household of Cornelius.

We read here the basic parts of the gospel. When Peter wanted to tell people about Jesus, he shared the gospel. When we want others to be saved, we should share the gospel.

Two Parts of Your Witness

The two parts in giving a witness, or speaking to others about Jesus, are these:

1. Share the gospel.

Memorise or repeat the verses from 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

These facts about Jesus are the good news we can tell others.

2. You have a story to tell others about how you met Jesus and what He has done for you. Your story is unlike anyone else's story. You may not think it is important, but your story is very important. Someone may need to hear how you came to know Christ. Tell your story!

These are the two parts to an effective witness.

Do not be discouraged if it seems like you are speaking to a person who does not want to listen. Speak the words of the gospel, for it is powerful and it will begin to work in their life.

Speak your story. God will take care of the rest.

Read out: Colossians 1:5-6 (The gospel works to bring results in the lives of those who hear it.)

Read out also: 1 Peter 1:24-25 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5. God's word will not fail to work in the lives of those to whom we speak it. So speak and share, and then pray for the person you have witnessed to.

What Prevents You From Sharing?

Fear is the biggest problem people have in sharing about Jesus. We might be afraid others will ridicule us, reject us, or even try to punish us for speaking about Jesus. This does not take away our responsibility to obey Jesus. If you are afraid, do two things:

First, pray: take your fear to Jesus and ask Him to change you and give you boldness. Jesus can heal the part of you that makes you fearful.

Second, you should pray about the right time to share with someone. Ask Jesus for wisdom to know the right time to speak about Him. Ask the Lord to show you who to speak to and when to speak. Jesus will help you.

You have already learned that as you continue in the Word of God and prayer, you will grow stronger in your faith. And as you continue to share Jesus, you will learn and grow in knowing how to share Jesus with others. You have the Holy Spirit in you to help you.

Remember that anyone who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11-12 and John 3:18).

People who do not receive Jesus are in danger of being sent to hell if they reject or ignore Jesus. It is important to share the gospel with them. If a person died suddenly without receiving Christ, they would go to hell. Jesus does not want this to happen. He calls on you to share the good news about Him.

Jesus loves you deeply and died for you. He is in heaven even now, praying for you. The love that Jesus has for everyone is beyond imagining. The Bible says that the love of Jesus is so deep and wide that it is beyond our understanding (Read out: Ephesians 3:16-20).

Ask God to fill your heart with love for lost people, and God will do this. God's love in your heart will enable you to share the gospel with any person.

Your Church Will Grow

When the people of your church tell about Jesus in your community, people will be saved and your church will grow.

Teach the new believers with this **First Steps** course and teach them to begin to share the gospel right away.

Don't wait until they come to this lesson to begin to share about Jesus. If you obey the simple command of Jesus, your church will grow, it will become strong, and your families and community will change for the better.

Sometimes the hardest people to tell about Jesus are our own families. They are the ones who know us best. Be patient with your family. They used to reason and feel as you did before you came to Jesus.

Jesus said: *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16)

Your life speaks louder than your words. Let your family see the good changes in you and then your words will mean more to them as you tell about Jesus.

The believers in the first church had such great faith that they faced beating, prison and death because they were the followers of Christ.

Read out: Acts 4:1-4 & Acts 9:1.

Question: Where did they get such courage?

God's Power in Us

Jesus knew we needed God's help in telling the gospel. So God has provided a gift to give us power to witness. This gift is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Questions:

1. Who does God want you to speak to about Jesus?
2. Have you witnessed to anyone who later gave their life to follow Jesus?
Can you tell about this?
3. Before He ascended to heaven, what did Jesus tell us to do?
4. Can you repeat the good news, the gospel?



Lesson 14

Victory and Assurance in Christ

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to help you have an awareness of the strategies and schemes Satan uses to undermine your faith. This lesson will also help you live with assurance that you are able to overcome any attack in Christ.

In the Bible, Satan is called “the deceiver”, “the enemy”, “Beelzebub”, “the serpent”, “the dragon”, and “the devil”.

The Origin of Satan

Read out: Isaiah 14:11-15 & Ezekiel 28:12-19.

Both passages describe a king that has fallen from a position of privilege because of his pride. These passages speak about a king of Babylon and a king of Tyre, but the language which is used goes far beyond and describes the history and future of Satan.

Satan’s Identity

Satan was created by God with the other angels who are God’s servants. (An angel is a spirit being.)

We can deduce that Satan was once a leader in worshipping God with music and praise. As an angel Satan desired to take God’s place (“I will make myself like the Most High”, Isaiah 14:14 and “I am a god” Ezekiel 28:2).

The angel Satan then started a rebellion in heaven. In this war Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven and they settled on the earth.

Remember that Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightening.” (Luke 10:18). Jesus overcame the devil long ago in heaven.

Satan chose to rebel against the only true and holy God and to work continually at producing evil. Now he works tirelessly to corrupt human life and to attack the people and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan, or the devil, works with many other demons (evil spirits), who are the devil’s partners.

Satan’s Strategies

Satan’s work against God is centred on corrupting God’s created people. As our enemy he desires to destroy us, leading as many people as possible into sin and eternal condemnation in Hell through deception and fear, just as he did to Adam and Eve.

Read out: 1 Peter 5:8

We should keep in mind that Satan is not all powerful as God is; he is not present in all places at all times, and he does not know everything, as does God. He is limited both in his power, knowledge and presence. We should therefore never fear that Satan is everywhere at the same time looking and

knowing our thoughts and actions. Satan cannot know our minds, but God can at all times.

Satan is on God's chain, he can only do what he is permitted to do by God. When he does anything against us, God knows that we are able to overcome him with God's help.

How Satan Attacks Us

The devil uses these means to attack us:

Temptation – the devil tempts us to sin, just as he tried to tempt Jesus.

Read out: Matthew 4: 1-11

Deception and Lies – the devil lies and tries to deceive us, just as he deceived Adam and Eve. **Read out: Genesis 3:1-7**

Accusation – Satan accuses us before God. **Read out: Zechariah 3:1-4.**

The devil will accuse you too! He will tell you all the things that you have done wrong, in order to keep you from doing God's will. He wants you to feel guilt and shame so that you will consider yourself useless to God, even though this is a lie. Your response should be to tell him that your sins are forgiven and Jesus has cleansed you with His blood. **Read out: Colossians 1:12-14.**

Jesus has given you a new life. **Read out: 2 Corinthians 5:17.**

Affliction – The devil seeks to afflict us with physical & mental illness.

Read out: Matthew 12:22 and Matthew 17:18.

Opposition – Satan & his evil spirits fight against God and His saints (Read: Revelation 12:17). This is why we wrestle in prayer:

Read out: Ephesians 6:10-18

When we fight the devil in the power of Jesus, we win!

Death – This was Satan's greatest power; but Jesus took this away from the devil when He rose from the dead for us. **Read out: Hebrews 2:14-15.**

The Traps of the Devil

The Bible shows us that there are three consistent approaches that the devil uses to deceive people into sin. If we are aware of the traps he sets, then as God's people we can be better prepared to avoid them.

Trap 1 - The desire of the eyes: We need to be careful in the things that we look at and desire in life. In the Ten Commandments God specifically warns us against lusting after the things of the world (Lusting means a very strong desire to have something). **Read out: 1 Timothy 6:9-12 and 1 John 2:14-17**

It is good to aspire to improve our earthly lives and our standard of living through hard work, investment and honest gain. However, we should be careful not to give into the temptation of the devil who will tempt us to make these things become the main focus of our lives.

Our main focus should be the worship of God and living a holy life in fellowship with Him.

Trap 2 - The desire of the flesh: We need to be very careful with things that our bodies desire, because unless we are careful we can fall into the devil's temptation. We should avoid the temptation of alcohol, drugs, and casual sexual relationships or any activity that would lead us to sin and slavery to that thing.

Sexual relationships belong only in marriage. That is God's purpose and intention. Lusting outside of this relationship is condemned by God.

Read out: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; 1 Peter 2:9-12; Galatians 5:16-24.

Trap 3 -The desire for power: The hunger for power affects many people all around the world today; people are ready to do any kind of evil in order to obtain power, control and high esteem. The desire for power often leads to bloodshed and conflict within countries, communities, and families. Desire for control can lead to disputes, arguments and conflict even within the church of God. **Read out: James 4:1-4.**

Read out: James 1:12-17. In these verses we learn that God does not tempt us; but we are pulled into temptation when we think about the temptation and begin to desire it, love it, and think constantly about it. The lusts in us (the very strong desires) cause us to respond when the devil tempts us. If our desires are under Jesus' control, we will not act on the temptation. We can fight the temptation in Jesus' power.

James tells us that our strong desires will lead us to temptation and temptation will lead us into sin. Sin brings death, or separation from God.

Sin builds a wall between us and God and causes hardship and problems for those around us.

Don't allow the devil to lie to you and tell you that the sin won't affect anyone, or that no one will know about your sin---God always knows what you are doing. And the Bible says that your sin will be found out (Numbers 32:23 & Luke 12:2).

Fighting Temptation

The devil will tempt you through the desires we have just read about.

Desires are not always evil or sinful in themselves (for example, the desire to marry, to have children, to do better financially), but when those desires cause us to sin then those desires must be mastered. This can be done by reading and obeying the word of God, by prayer and praying in the spirit, and by using wisdom in our lives.

There are 3 things you can do when you are tempted to sin or do something displeasing to God:

1. **Get away from the temptation.** Go away from the thing tempting you. If you go to a certain place where you know you will be tempted, do not go there! If being with certain people will tempt you to sin, then do not spend time with them! Save yourself from the sorrow you will create for yourself and your family.

Read out: Genesis 39:7-12. Joseph ran out of the house when tempted into sexual sin by a woman.

2. **Bring your mind under the control of the Word of God.** The Word of God will make you strong on the inside. Read out: Psalm 119: 7 and 9. Memorizing Bible verses will help you in your fight against temptation.

3. **Pray.** Pray in your Holy Spirit prayer language.

Read out: Matthew 26:41. Jesus told His disciples to pray so that they would not fall into temptation (and then into sin).

Read out: Luke 11:4. Jesus taught the disciples to pray for God's help concerning temptation. Pray, and ask others to pray for you and with you. Praying with others helps us to be faithful to God.

Questions:

Pastor/Leader: spend some time discussing these questions.

1. Who is your enemy? (The devil is our enemy; not other people, groups, or the government, etc.)
2. What traps has the devil used in your community? What are the results?
3. What traps has the devil used in your personal life? How has it affected both you and your family?
4. Read: Proverbs 16:18-19. As we understand that Satan desires to bring conflict into the church – What can we learn from these verses?

Victory over the Enemy

To have victory over Satan we need to understand that Satan is a spiritual force, operating in the spiritual realm, as opposed to the physical world in which we live.

As people we cannot see the spiritual world directly or the schemes that Satan is bringing against us.

The spiritual world has power and influence in the physical world in which we live.

We can have victory over the evil plans of Satan in the strength of Christ.

As an example of the influence of the spiritual over the physical, read Genesis 1:1-2.

We see how God, who is spirit, created the heavens and the earth, a material creation. (However, Satan cannot create anything. He may try to use something God has created for his evil purposes.)

Read out: Ephesians 6:12 There is a spiritual battle between the people of God and the forces of Satan who are controlling the lives of people who choose to do evil.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Revelation 12:10-11. The Bible teaches us about 3 weapons born again believers and followers of Christ can have. We use these spiritual weapons in order to defend ourselves and also to fight against Satan's plans. Because the battle is in the spiritual realm, need to fight using spiritual weapons.

1. The Name of Jesus

Christ's victory at Calvary was total and complete, defeating sin, Satan & death once and for all. When Jesus' name is prayed and proclaimed, the devil flees, problems get solutions, people can become reconciled, broken relationships can get restored, sick people get healings, the demon possessed get released, and wickedness is overcome by righteousness.

When we use the Name of Jesus we are exercising the power that Jesus gave us.

Read out: Mark 16:17-18 and Acts 4:10-12. When faced with the name of Jesus the devil and the spiritual forces of evil have no power. No evil spirit can overcome God's children, when we use the name of Jesus through prayer and proclamation.

Read out: James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8-9. Resist the devil. When the devil speaks to you, do not have a conversation with him. Simply say, "I resist you, devil, in the Name of Jesus! Flee from me! I am drawing near to God." The devil must obey these commands because you are saying them with Jesus' Name and with His power.

2. The Word of God

Reading the words of the Holy Bible gives us our spiritual food. Reading God's Word every day brings God's wisdom and guidance into our lives.

The Bible is a light which gives us understanding of God's ways and spiritual matters. When we know the truth about God, we gain protection from the devil and his opportunity to deceive us is greatly reduced. When we know the truth of the Bible the lies of the devil are powerless to affect us.

Read out: Luke 10: 17-22. Jesus gave His disciples power to overcome the devil, to crush his plans (to step on him to stop him). The disciples had power

to cast demons out of people. You also have power to cast demons out of people and places.

We read in Matthew 4:1-11 that Jesus gained the victory over the devil because he used the Word of God.

The devil will try to twist the words of the Bible in an attempt to mislead us. But if we read the Word of God, meditate on it, speak it out, and memorise it, we can win over the devil.

We can apply the Bible verses to our situation. When we are faced with challenges in our lives and the attacks of the devil we should use the Word of God to defeat the devil's attacks.

When you are standing against the devil just using the word of God, the devil is unable to stay where the truth of the Bible is being spoken and applied.

When the devil attacks you, say: *"I step on your head, devil, and I destroy you, in the Name of Jesus! You have no power over me but I have power over you in Jesus' Name! Go! Leave me-- or my family, my church, or this person-- now in Jesus' Name! "*

Then praise God and thank Jesus for the blood He shed for you.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 4:13-15; Hebrews 5:12-14.

Pastor/Leader: Discuss in the group what these Scriptures say to you in relation to using God's Word to defeat the devil.

3. The Blood of Jesus

Revelation 12:11 says, *" They overcame him [the devil] by of the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."*

As born again disciples, we must understand the significance of Christ's resurrection from death.

The death of Jesus on the cross completely broke the power of Satan and the condemnation brought by sin. By rising from the dead, Jesus showed that He was a complete master over Satan and his works.

If we have accepted Jesus into our lives as our Saviour, we are completely saved by the blood of Jesus. He will give us victory in fighting the enemy's plans. Have confidence that God is with you and will give you power.

The devil will try to taunt you, saying that you are a sinner; or he will remind you of your past sin. When he does this, you remind him that you are already cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and command him to leave you in the Name of Jesus.

The devil fears the Name of Jesus and shakes in fear when you mention the blood of Jesus.

If you feel disturbed in your mind over something, then pray the blood of Jesus over your life and over the issue that is disturbing you. This means that you say, *“Jesus, I place your blood covering of protection over my life.”*

Jesus paid the price of your sins at Calvary (all of them, without exception). Jesus overcame the devil's schemes and redeemed your life from condemnation. No matter if you accuse yourself, the devil accuses you, or other people accuse you.

Read out: 1 John 2:1-2. Jesus is our advocate before the Father when we sin.

Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God, shed His blood, and died for your sins in your place. Then He rose back to life, overcoming the power of death and now intercedes before God continually day and night on our behalf.

Oh what a wonderful Saviour!

Prayer is Powerful

Prayer is one of the best weapons God has given you.

When Jesus was facing His death on a cross, He knew He needed to pray, Jesus asked His disciples also to pray with Him. You too need to pray over the many issues in your life.

You need to pray as a family and as a church. Prayer should be something you do every day.

You can pray in your native language or you can pray in the spirit. You will learn many things as you pray. Ask God for an interpretation of what you are praying in the Spirit. Pray with thanks for all the things God has done. Speak the Scriptures as you pray and you will have authority over the devil.

Prayer makes you strong and gives you wisdom in knowing how to fight the enemy of your life.

Assurance

(Pastor/Leader: there may be people in your church or group that struggle with issues concerning repentance, salvation, guilt, and sin. These people need confidence in God and His promises. You may need to repeat lessons from the **First Steps** course with them to help them overcome their problems.

Finally: Do you have trouble believing God that you are truly saved?

Do you struggle with knowing your sins are forgiven?

Do you struggle with a sin you cannot seem to break in your life?

Be honest with your pastor and let him know you are having these difficulties.

(Pastor/Leader: go back over the Scriptures in Lessons 1, 2, & 3 which apply to the difficulties the people have. When the verses are read, help the person accept it as their own, applying it to their life. Have them repeat the words of the Bible over themselves. The Scriptures have the power to overcome any of these difficulties.)

Lesson 15

Christian Unity

Introduction

A strong family, a strong church and a strong community are always built where there is unity amongst people. Great achievements, peace and prosperity are only found amongst those who desire to live without conflict and who embrace a desire for peace and unity. Those communities and families that strive for unity share a common sense of purpose and have learned to handle conflict in the right way.

The suffering that we see in the world today often arises when unity is neglected or is taken for granted. Unity is essential for peace and development in the family, the church, and even in the nation.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no-one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”* When we are united in purpose and service to the Lord Jesus much can be accomplished and all receive the benefits of our cooperation.

What Causes Disunity?

Jesus said in Matthew 12:25 that *“every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand”*.

Consider the conflicts that exist in the world at this time. Many regions and nations are in a state of war and conflict. Divided kingdoms and divided nations always fail. In families where there is division, turmoil is present. If we wish to see growth, peace, and prosperity in our nation and in our own lives, then we need to learn what Gods Word tells us about the need for love, peace and unity.

Read out: James 3:14-18

Disunity occurs where personal plans or needs become more important to individuals than the health of the whole group. Disunity can occur where one person feels unvalued or disregarded. Jesus said to **love God and love each other** (John 15:17). If we value each other as God values us, then we are able to love and help one another in peace. We will then desire the best for our friends, family, church and neighbours.

To experience unity, every individual needs to think and act humbly, not thinking that he/she is more valuable than another person. We are warned to live in humility in many passages of the New Testament.

Jesus Prays for Unity

Before Jesus was arrested and taken to be crucified, He prayed for His disciples and also for all the people in the future who would believe on Him (including you who are followers of Jesus today). Jesus wanted His disciples to be in unity. Jesus knew that oneness in a team of believers was absolutely necessary to lead the world to believe in Him as the promised Saviour.

In John 17:21-23 Jesus prayed to His Father, saying, *‘that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.’*

Quarrels and division in the body of Christ (the church) give the church a bad name in the minds of unbelievers. This may cause people to turn away from accepting Jesus as their Saviour because they see the church as a place of division and conflict. **Read out: John 13:34-35**

If we as the Body of Christ want to reach the lost in our communities we need to work hard for unity amongst ourselves as believers. We must not give Satan any room to cause divisions to arise through us. **Read out: Ephesians 4:3**

The Bible tells us that God values everyone equally and desires for all people to be saved; therefore none of us should think that he or she is more important than anyone else in the body. When we live and work in unity, people feel a combined strength. The church becomes fruitful and appealing within the community.

Sadly, many conflicts within the church start within the leadership and then spread throughout the congregation. Pastors, elders, deacons, and leaders must set a positive example of humility and oneness, cooperating together for the vision God has given to the local church. All members, especially the leadership, must lay down their own personal desires and agendas. Pastors and leaders should be an example of unity and seek to make peace and build unity within the body of Christ.

Commands to Christians in the Church

Read out: Galatians 5:14-26

In order to have and keep unity in the church, Jesus has given us specific commands to follow. Normally, no one can keep the commands of God; but when we receive Christ, we receive the Spirit of God inside us, Who helps us to obey God. We have the power of Jesus in us to change our thinking and actions. We are able to obey God if we choose to do so.

What are the commands of Jesus that help us to have unity?

Read out: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Question: What do these Bible verses tell us about being in unity?

Read out: 1 John 3:14-18

Question: How can we show our unity with other people who are Christians?

Read out: Ephesians 4:1-2

Question: What do these verses tell you?

What does it mean to have tolerance for another person?

Read out: Philippians 2:2-5

Question: How would you try to obey what the Bible says in these verses?

Read out: 1 Peter 3:8-9

Question: How can you help bring unity in your church or family?

Read out: Genesis 13:5-17

Question: What did Abraham do to solve a conflict between the men who worked for him and his nephew, Lot?

1. Abraham did not ignore the problem. He did not speak to others about the problem. He went to Lot and spoke to him.
2. Abraham did not use angry words, but words of peace.
3. Abraham tried to find a place of agreement, that would benefit both parties.
4. Abraham did not insist on his own rights or the fact that he was the elder and should be shown more respect.
5. Abraham was humble, and trusted God. He allowed the younger man to choose, because his faith was in God, not in the man's work and opinion. Because Abraham did this, God blessed him.

Question: How do these verses apply to your own life?

If there are so many exhortations in the New Testament for us to live in peace with each other, we ought to listen and obey them!

Unity in Diversity

We have already studied a lesson on the church, which is the Body of Christ. Let us review: **Read out: Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22** The church is the body of Christ with Jesus Himself being at its head.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

The Bible describes the church using the analogy of a human body. The body of Christ, is made up of many individual and unique parts which work together in unison. The body needs all of its God given parts in order to function completely and effectively. There are no parts which have lesser value than any other part.

1 Corinthians 12:27 says *“Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it”*. God’s Word is telling us that each individual in the church is of equal value and is needed in the body, the church.

Gifts for the Church

Christ has called some people into certain specific roles within the leadership of the church.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 12:28-31

These are people who have certain abilities and responsibilities for the church. Jesus, the Head of the church, has also given spiritual gifts to individual members of the church--- so that the body as a whole may be encouraged and built up spiritually.

Consider these gifts that God has given within the church: 1 Corinthians 12:7-12 & Romans 12: 4-8.

As believers we each have a role and a function to play within the life the church. God has uniquely gifted each one of us with special gifts. Our gifts are to be used to edify the church and build it into a strong body within the community.

Each one of us as individuals is called to be a reflection of Jesus Christ to the world around us, as we are individually members of His body (Read 1 Corinthians 12:27). Therefore, it is really important that we are in unity with each other, so that we avoid weakening the body of Christ as a whole.

The Results of Unity

1. Unity brings church growth.

Read out: Ephesians 4:14-16; Acts 2:43-47; Matthew 12:25.

2. Unity brings oneness and love in the body of Christ.

Read out: John 17:21-23 and John 13:34-35)

3. Unity brings blessings. **Read out:** Psalm 133:1-3.

4. Unity among Christians gives no place for the devil to get in and work.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 2:10-11.

Questions:

1. How has division affected you? Or your family, your church, your community?

2. What are you going to do to solve these problems?

3. Consider the gifts that you feel God has blessed you with. How do you see these being used within the Body of Christ?

After considering these questions the Pastor/Leader should lead the people into a process of reconciliation, followed by prayers.

Lesson 16

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

A Promise from God

In the Old Testament, God promised to send His Holy Spirit to His people.

Read out: Joel 2:28-30

God promised to pour out, not just give a little, of His Spirit to all people. This includes men and women, rich and poor.

Read out Isaiah 44:33 and Ezekiel 39:29

These are the promises given by God. They tell of a time when God would pour out His Spirit on His people.

In the Bible, God often compares His Spirit to water. In Ezekiel 47:1-12, God gives the prophet a vision of water flowing out of God's Temple. This is a picture of God's Spirit going out into all the earth to touch, heal, and change people's lives.

A Promise from Jesus

The special coming of the Holy Spirit was also promised by Jesus.

Read out John 7: 37-39

Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit flowing out of our inner beings. The Bible says here that the Holy Spirit would be given after Jesus was glorified. This means that the Holy Spirit would not be poured out until Jesus ascended to go back to heaven.

Read out Matthew 3:1-11

John the Baptist called on the people to repent of their sins. John preached about Jesus, and said that Jesus would baptise people with the Holy Spirit and fire. This is a different baptism than being baptised in water after you believe on Jesus. The pastor baptises new believers in water; but John said that Jesus would do the baptising. Jesus will baptize us (immerse us) in the Holy Spirit and fire. This promise was repeated by Jesus right before He went up to heaven.

Read out: Acts 1:5-8

Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptised in the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that after the Holy Spirit came they would be witnesses to Him everywhere on the earth. Forty days later, the promise of the Father, the promise of the Holy Spirit, was given to believers. This special day is called the Day of Pentecost.

Read now what happened to the first believers in Jesus:

Read out Acts 2:1-4

The disciples were believers in Jesus; they had the Holy Spirit inside them.

They were praying and waiting for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came in the room and small fires rested on their heads, and there was a sound of a mighty wind. The believers were being baptised in the Holy Spirit.

God sent the sound and the fire to tell them that the Holy Spirit was there. The believers began to speak in languages that were not their own. They spoke in languages they had never learned. This is the gift of tongues which is received by every believer who asks to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. Today we don't see the flames on our heads or hear the wind, but we know the Holy Spirit has come because we begin speaking in a new language.

Read out Acts 2:5-39

Peter and the believers were so excited and filled with God that they spoke in the new languages very loudly. The people at the Temple who were from other countries heard them speaking in their languages! No one knew how this could be, since the disciples did not know any of those languages! Peter then stood up and preached to the people gathered there. Three thousand people repented of their sins and received Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

An Important Step

We need the Holy Spirit to live lives for Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit to give us power to witness. The Holy Spirit Baptism gave Peter the power to preach to thousands of people. The first church knew that receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit was an important step in the lives of those who had already received Jesus.

Read out: Acts 8:4-8 and 12-17

Philip preached about Jesus to the people of Samaria. When these people believed on Christ, he baptised them. Philip called the apostles from Jerusalem to lay their hands on the new believers so they could receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Read out Acts: 10:33-48

Peter preached a message about Jesus to the people gathered in Cornelius' house. The people began to receive Jesus as Peter spoke. The people were also filled with the Holy Spirit at the same time, and they spoke in new tongues.

Read out Acts 19:1-7

Paul found some devout men and taught them about Jesus. When they believed on Jesus, Paul baptised them in water. Then Paul laid his hands on the men and they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and they also spoke in tongues. Paul knew that it was important that new believers also receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

A Gift from Jesus

The Holy Spirit baptism is a gift from God, promised hundreds of years ago to us who would be believers on Jesus. Jesus is the baptiser in the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we also refer to this baptism as “being filled with the Spirit.” When the Holy Spirit fills you, it is like a bottle being filled until no more water can be held--- the bottle must overflow and run over, spilling out the water everywhere. We are like this bottle. We have been cleaned, and the Holy Spirit lives in us.

When Jesus baptises us (or, immerses us) with the Holy Spirit, we fill up and overflow with God’s Spirit—with God’s grace, power, and fullness.

The Holy Spirit baptism is a gift God promises you.

Have you asked Jesus to fill you, to baptise you with the Holy Spirit?

You can ask Jesus and receive His gift today.

(Pastor/Leader, if you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, pray this prayer yourself, before you teach this lesson. You too may receive the gift Jesus has promised you.)

Pastor/Leader: read out this prayer, phrase by phrase.

Prayer: ***“Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for washing away my sins and saving me. I believe on you, I accept You as my Savior and Lord. I ask You, Jesus, to baptise me with the Holy Spirit. Give me Your precious gift. Fill me now with the Holy Spirit. Thank You for Your gift!”***

Then lay your hands on the person asking to be filled with the Spirit. Pray in tongues as you pray and encourage the person to speak out. The Holy Spirit will give them new words if they use their tongue and voice. Tell the person not to speak in their native language but to speak the new words the Holy Spirit is giving them.

If others are with you who have been filled with the Spirit, have them pray for your people with you. Be confident that God will give them the Holy Spirit as He has promised.

Living in the Spirit

We receive the Holy Spirit Baptism by faith, not by working hard. We can do nothing to deserve this gift. We ask Jesus in faith to receive, just as we asked Him to forgive our sins and come into our hearts. Sometimes people will lay their hands on others to receive this gift from Jesus. But sometimes you may receive the baptism in the Spirit as you are praying to God.

Do not think you cannot receive this gift of Jesus. Simply pray and believe, and you will receive.

You will know for certain that you have received the baptism when you begin to speak in a language that is not your own language, or any other language that you have learned to speak.

The tongues or language the Holy Spirit gives you is a new language.

This is a miracle from God to show His love and power to you. Your new language is a prayer language. You should pray in this language every day, and very often. Do not let the devil tell you that this language and experience you have from God is not real. Your faith will grow as you continue to pray in the spirit.

Read out: Jude 20

When you pray in the spirit, you are building faith in your life with God. Praying in tongues makes you stronger in your spirit, and stronger in your faith.

Conclusion

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit comes to give us power to witness for Jesus.

Acts 1: 8 tells us: *“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

You will have greater boldness to speak about Jesus when you have received the Holy Spirit baptism, and you will find it is easier to speak about Jesus.

A person filled with the Holy Spirit will show great passion and love for Jesus. That is why John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit and **fire**. People of great devotion, love, and action for Jesus are sometimes referred to as ***“being on fire for Jesus.”***

The Holy Spirit brings gifts to the members of the church, the body of Christ. You can read about these gifts in the next lesson.

A final word: you may find that your understanding of spiritual things, and your understanding of Jesus Christ will increase as you are baptised in the Spirit.

When you experience any of these things, thank God and praise Him.

Remember that the Holy Spirit is given to us so we can know more about Jesus and to help us remember the things that Jesus has spoken to us (John 16:13-14).

Lesson 17

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Introduction

We have learned about the importance of unity and were introduced to the gifts given by God to the Church. This lesson will help us learn more about spiritual gifts and how the Holy Spirit uses these gifts in our lives.

The best gift that God has given us is the Saviour, Jesus. John 3:16 says, *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”*

Read out: 2 Corinthians 9:15 Jesus is the unspeakable gift of God, there is no greater gift.

God the Father has also given us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a thing, or an influence. We should not talk about Him as “it.” The Holy Spirit is a person, one of the three persons of the Godhead. It is important that we treat the Holy Spirit with the same respect that we give to Jesus or the Father.

We receive the Holy Spirit when we believe on Christ to be saved (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Holy Spirit comes to live inside us forever.

God Gives Us Gifts

We have received the Father’s gift, Jesus, and we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift when we are saved. The Bible tells us that there are other gifts that God has also given to us.

Read out: Ephesians 4:11-12

These five gifts, given by God, are gifts of people: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher. These are not offices, as some think. They are gifts of people; these gifts are servant-leaders who, like Jesus, give their lives to lead and help the church, Christ’s body on earth.

Read Romans 12:6-8

God has given these gifts to people to allow them to serve Him and the church. A gift called administration helps to organize and care for the many needs and the work of the church. A prophetic person speaks often of God’s thoughts and plans. A person that shows mercy, or love, is encouraged to excel in this work. Every gift listed here is a gift that God has put into people to better serve Him. These are given to help each of us serve the church, and the people in our world. This passage tells us to use our different gifts with the grace that God has given us. (Romans 12:6).

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Read out: 1 Corinthians chapters 12:1-14; 12:27-31 & 14:1-33.

In these chapters we read about nine gifts given by the Holy Spirit to people in the body of Christ. Here is a list of the nine different gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians:

Gifts of Knowing, or Revelation:

The Word of Knowledge, The Word of Wisdom, Discerning of Spirits
These three gifts show God's thoughts and understanding.

Gifts of Speaking:

The Gift of Prophecy, The Gift of Tongues, The Gift of Interpretation
These three gifts speak out God's words and His direction.

Gifts of Power:

Faith, Miracles, Gifts of healing

These three gifts show the power of God for a person or situation.

We understand these gifts as manifestations, displays, or workings of the Holy Spirit through people who are believers in Christ. All of these gifts are supernatural. This means they can come only from God.

They demonstrate the fact that God is present and He is working in His power. Supernatural means showing an ability far beyond a person's knowledge, experience, or learning. The experience, the speaking, the action is given by God, not by human effort or ability.

Explanation of the Gifts

The Word of Knowledge is a gift that gives understanding to someone about a person or a situation that cannot be known in a natural way. It is knowledge that God wants to give about someone or about a situation. It is not something learned or already known. It is knowledge that comes directly from God.

The Word of Wisdom is a gift that gives the speaker the power to speak a message of wisdom. This gift gives revelation (knowledge) of God's direction and guidance for a specific situation. It tells us what to do about the situation.

Discerning of Spirits is the ability to see and know spirits. A believer is given the ability to see or know when a demonic spirit is present. This gift may give a believer the ability to see or know the presence of an angelic spirit (angel). This gift also helps a believer to recognize whether the spirit is a demon, the Holy Spirit, or a human spirit. The Holy Spirit gives believers knowledge about the spirit.

Prophecy is a supernatural ability to speak the words of God and the thoughts of God to a person or to a situation. A believer brings a message from the Lord to people. Sometimes it is a prediction about the future events. Prophecy never contradicts the words of the Bible. A prophetic word will always agree with the Bible. The Bible tells us that prophecy is for building up people, for exhorting people, and for comforting people.

The Gift of Tongues is the prayer language you receive when you are filled with the Holy Spirit (baptized in the Holy Spirit.) You speak in a language you do not know, a language that you have never learned before. This is your special communication with God. It is the Holy Spirit speaking through your mouth and your voice ***in prayer to God.***

Secondly, the gift of tongues will often be used when Christians are meeting together. A person will receive a message ***from*** God and will speak in another language to the people assembled together. This is not usually a prayer, but is ***a message from God to the believers assembled together.***

When the gift of tongues is used in a meeting, the Bible says there should be an interpretation of that message by another believer. So one believer brings a message in tongues from God and a second believer will be given the interpretation of that message by the Holy Spirit of God. The interpreter will speak in the language of the people who are present.

The Interpretation of Tongues takes place when the Holy Spirit gives a believer the interpretation of something that has already been said in the speaking of tongues. No one present will understand the message in tongues given by the Holy Spirit, but everyone will understand the interpretation brought by the Holy Spirit. This is why it is important for an interpretation to be given every time a message in tongues has been given.

Gifts of Healing are special anointings of the Holy Spirit which allow believers to pray for healing or speak healing over another person. Sometimes the believer lays their hands on the sick person; sometimes a prayer is just spoken. God is the one who brings the healing by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Working of Miracles is a special gift of authority which helps a believer do miracles in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Gift of Faith comes to a believer and gives special assurance and faith to pray and believe for impossible things. It is usually given in a moment of great need by the Holy Spirit working through the life and prayer of a believer.

Any Gift for Any Christian

All of these gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. Any gift may be given to any believer at any time.

The Bible says that these gifts are given as the Holy Spirit wishes. You cannot earn any of these gifts. You cannot use human ability to work supernatural acts. But you can pray and ask the Holy Spirit to use you in the gifts.

Once a believer has been used in one of these nine gifts of the Spirit, they may think or say: "I have the gift of....(interpretation). This is not correct. A gift is given by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit chooses (1 Cor. 12:11). These gifts do not belong to you, they belong to the church! They belong to God, who uses them when He desires.

It is improper for a believer to say, "I have the gift of miracles." It is better to say, "God used me in that gift, praise God!" If God uses you in a gift, be humble and give Him glory. The power and the gift do not belong to you but to God! As you continue to seek the Lord He will continue to use you.

Desire to Be Used by God

The Bible says, "*Desire the greater gifts*" (1 Corinthians 12:31). It is not wrong to desire with all your heart that God use you in the gifts of the Spirit. God blesses this attitude. Your heart and life must be pure and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1-2). You must have your mind set on the things of God, the things of the Spirit of God.

Read out: Colossians 3:2; Romans 8:5-7

If you set your mind and heart on the things of God, and listen to God as you pray, God will use you in these gifts. He wants to use you in His supernatural power. There are so many needs in your community and family, and God desires to meet these needs through your obedience to Him. Do not be afraid to step out in faith. Trust God to use you.

Which of these gifts are the greater or best gifts? The greater or best gift is the one that is most needed.

If someone is sick, you may not need a message in tongues. You need the gifts of healing. If you are dealing with a difficult problem in your family, you need the word of wisdom instead of the gifts of healing. You should simply pray and ask God to help you; then the gift that the Holy Spirit wishes to use will come to person He wishes to use.

The Holy Spirit lives inside you. He came in when you gave your life to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, encouraging you, giving you power to live the right way, God's way. The Holy Spirit gives you wisdom, and teaches you. The Holy Spirit is with you every moment of the day. When you need

something from God, you can ask Jesus and His Holy Spirit will begin to act in and through you, with power and anointing.

If you desire to be used in the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, you must have a clean life.

When the Spirit clearly shows you that you must change or repent or do something, you must submit and obey. If you are obedient to the will of God, the Holy Spirit will use you in wonderful and powerful ways.

Jesus said: *"Blessed are the pure in heart. They will see God."* Matthew 5:8.

Those who are pure in heart will see the power of God in their lives.

The apostle Paul wrote about the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 14. He gave us clear instructions on how these gifts were to be used when a group of Christians are meeting together:

1. The pastor or leader of the group or church is to make sure everything taking place is done "properly and in an orderly manner." (1 Corinthians 14:40). This means there should not be any shrieking or displays such as are common in some idolatrous practices. God wishes to use His gifts in an orderly way in the church. *"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."* 1 Corinthians 14:33.

2. **Read out: 1 Corinthians 14:29-33** When people prophesy, they should speak one by one, allowing time for others to receive and give words. The leaders and the other speakers of prophetic words should judge, or weigh out, the words in order to verify them as God's words. The Pastor/Leader will know more of the Bible and will be able to compare the spoken words with what the Bible teaches.

3. **Read out: 1 Corinthians 14:26-28** When a message in tongues is given through a person, all should pray to interpret so that the message can be understood by everyone. The person who spoke in tongues should pray to interpret what they said. If there is no interpretation, then those who have given messages in tongues should be quiet; they may pray in tongues quietly to God.

4. And most importantly, everything that is done through the spiritual gifts should be done to edify the church (1 Corinthians 14:26).

[For the Pastors and Leaders: You should encourage your people to seek to be used in the gifts; make time for the gifts to come forth in your church meetings. This will not be a planned event; you are simply taking time to listen to what God wants to bring to your people through the gifts of the Spirit. Trust God to use your people. This will help them grow in faith and they will be an asset to your church. When a believer is used by the Holy Spirit, in a gift, this does not make them holier or better than anyone else.

Pastors and Leaders should encourage and demonstrate a humble spirit. They must be an example for their people.

You may need to correct a person who is trying to be used in the gifts but is speaking from their own heart. Have compassion when you correct and do not be harsh. Your people will then learn from you. They will see how you have helped the one who has been incorrect. They will then know it is safe to learn and grow in being used in the gifts under your authority. Pray and the Lord will help you to understand and guide your people so they will be used in the gifts of God's Spirit. He desires to bless your church with His gifts.

If you need more teaching and understanding about the spiritual gifts, pray and seek out another man or woman of God to give you guidance. God will provide what you need.]

A Better Way

Read out: 1 Corinthians 12:31 and chapter 13

What is the better way? It is the way of love, and unselfishness. It is Jesus' way. Everything Jesus did was for us, for the people created by God. Jesus came to serve (Mark 10:45). This chapter tells us that we should serve in the gifts of the Spirit with humility and love, not for the purpose of making ourselves look better than others.

The Bible teaches us that all should seek to be used in the gifts of the Spirit; even better is to be used in the gifts as we show love to others around us.

Gifts without love are nothing; love without the gifts means a lack of power. God wants us to have both.

Questions:

Pastor/Leader: read out the verses and questions and ask the group to discuss the answers.

1. Read out: 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

Which gift of the Spirit did Paul say was the one to desire greatly? Why?

2. When a group of Christians are gathered and a believer speaks out a message in tongues, what should happen next?

3. What gift of the Spirit is being written about in these verses?

Read out: Acts 3:1-7 (Gifts of Healing.)

Read out: Acts 16:16-18 (Discerning of Spirits)

Read out: 1 Corinthians 14:27,28 (The gift of Tongues, the gift of Interpretation)

Read out: Acts 6:8 (Gift of Miracles)

Read out: Acts 21:10,11 (The gift of Prophecy)

Read out: Mark 16:15-18 (Tongues, Gifts of healing, Discerning of Spirits)

Read out: Acts 5:14-16 (Gifts of Healing, Discerning of Spirits)

Read out: Acts 10:19,20 (The Word of Knowledge and Word of Wisdom)

Read out: Acts 8:21-23 (The Word of Knowledge)

Read out: Acts 9:36-40 (The Gift of Faith)

4. Has the Holy Spirit used you in one or more of the gifts? Share your experience. This will encourage others to trust the Holy Spirit to use them also.
5. What is the “**better way**” we need when we are used in spiritual gifts?

Conclusion:

The gifts of the Spirit are given to a believer as the Holy Spirit wishes (1 Corinthians 12:11).

The gifts of the Spirit are not given to make any believer better than another.

The gifts of the Spirit are given to edify and help the church.

1 Corinthians 14:18-19 says *“I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.”*

Paul the apostle is telling us that God desires that we gain strength and hope through the moving of the Holy Spirit. This is what God desires in using you in His gifts.

As in all areas of our lives, we should always guard against pride. We can be full of pride at how God seems to be using us. But remember, *“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling”* (Proverbs 16:18) and *“all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble”* (1 Peter 5:5).

We must always remain humble. God’s gifts are given to those who desire to be used.

Those who wish to be noticed or given honor will find they are not chosen to help others.

Words to Know: Glossary

Angel: a spirit being who serves God day and night; there are fallen or evil angels who rebelled against God, sometimes called evil spirits.

Anointing: The presence of the Holy Spirit on a person to act or say in Jesus' Name and power. We read in the Old Testament that persons were anointed with oil to show the presence of God in their life. Since Jesus came, every believer can have an anointing of the Holy Spirit from God, to do what God has told them to do.

Apostle: A leader in the first church, usually someone who was a close disciple of Jesus.

Ascended: Went to heaven from the earth; taken up into the sky/heaven.

Assurance: To be absolutely sure of something.

Baptism: to be immersed in water and brought out, showing that a person declares they have died to sin and will live for Jesus.

Born again: to be born by the Holy Spirit into the Family of God. To come alive in relationship with Jesus Christ. **Read John 3:3.** (Jesus said we must be born again)

Calvary: The name of the hill where Jesus died on the cross.

Christ: the One God promised to send to take away our sins and bring us back to God.

Confession: Something important that is spoken out.

Condemnation: Judged or considered guilty. Judged as being wrong.

Corinth: A city in the time of Jesus that had many idols and sinful people.

Crucified: to be nailed and hung on a cross until dead.

Deity: God, or a so-called god.

Demon: An evil spirit who works against God and works to bring pain and torment in the world.

Deceit, deceitful: To be untruthful, to lie; to cover up the truth, or to change part of the truth

Discerning, discern: To know, to understand; to be able to compare and make a judgment about something.

Disciple: A person who wants to follow their leader closely and learn from him. Christians are disciples of Jesus.

Doctrine: Teaching, or what we believe.

Edify, edified: To build something up; to encourage or to comfort someone.

Exhort, exhortation: To encourage; to speak in a way to move people in the right direction for God's plans.

Evangelist: a person called by God to preach the good news about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (rising from the dead).

Faith: putting our whole trust in Jesus

Gentile: Someone who is not Jewish; not part of Jesus' people group. Many Jews thought Gentiles were no better than dogs. Jesus did not hold this view, but loved and died for everyone, no matter their tribe, people group, or race.

Glorify: To tell of great things, to give a blessing, to make great.

Godhead: the Divine Nature; the Christian God; the Trinity, the Three in One.

Gospel: The good news, or the story of Jesus. The Bible has four gospels, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Hell: a place of torment for those who die without believing on Jesus.

Idol: A physical figure that represents a spirit of god; an idol can also be anything we give our love, worship, time, or attention to. To worship an idol is a sin and brings God's right anger on us.

Israelites: The descendants of the man Israel (who was called Jacob). These people became God's chosen people. They are the people of Jesus.

Jerusalem: The main city in Israel, the country of Jesus.

Justify, justified: God declares us "not guilty" of our wrongdoings.

Lost: We speak of those who have not accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour as lost because they will be sent to hell without knowing Christ and having their sins forgiven.

New Testament: the story of Jesus and God's plans for those who believe on Jesus.

Old Testament: the written history of God's relationship with His people before Jesus was born.

Peter: One of the first men who believed in Jesus. A friend and follower of Jesus. Peter became a pastor in the new church at Jerusalem.

Persecution: Angry words and violence against those who believe in Christ by those who do not believe.

Pharaoh: The name for the king of Egypt.

Pray in the spirit: To pray in the language the Holy Spirit gives you. This is not your own language or any language that you already speak.

Prophetic word, prophecy: Words from God given to someone to speak out to another person or group of persons. This is God's activity, and does not come from our own thoughts or desires.

Proclaim, proclamation: To speak out to an audience; to speak loudly and boldly.

Redeem (Redeemer): to buy back what has been given away or stolen; to rescue one in danger and restore them to a relationship with God.

Repent: to turn away from our sins and go toward God.

Renounce: To separate yourself completely from a thing, spirit, or person.

To say in public you will have nothing to do with the ways of a thing, spirit, or person.

Revelation: Something hidden that is revealed, or shown. Like something hiding behind a blanket; then the blanket is removed and the thing is seen.

Saved: To have your sins washed away and to come into right relationship with God because of Jesus dying on the cross for you. You are saved from sin and eternal punishment.

Samaritan: A person half-Jewish. Samaritans were hated by the Jews. If a Jew touched a Samaritan he was thought to be unclean and impure until he washed the right way.

Scripture: The Bible, or God's holy writings. We use this word sometimes instead of "Bible verses."

Supernatural: Coming only from God. An ability far beyond a person's knowledge, experience, or learning. Speaking or action is done by God, not by human agency. No one can claim that he or she did what happened. Everyone knows that only God could have done or said a thing.

The Good Shepherd: A name Jesus calls Himself. He takes care of those who belong to Him.

Transgression: To break the law; to cross over into a place of wrong.

Unforgiveness: To refuse to forgive another person, holding onto anger and bad feelings.

***First Steps* in following Jesus**

Jesus said: “Go make disciples of all nations” and yet we can often find that many who have professed to follow Christ, have a poor understanding of what it really means to be a disciple (follower) of Jesus

This “***First Steps***” course is a basic introduction to Christianity for new believers. It is to be followed by our next book “**The Next step**”, which is aimed to help more mature believers grow as disciples.

Both books are compiled from various materials and are intended to give answers to many of the questions that new & maturing believers can have.

The materials have been prepared and reviewed and aim to meet the specific needs particularly of new believers in Central & East Africa.

The course is designed to be read out to a group by a Pastor / group leader but, also includes many thought provoking questions and discussion points designed to get the group thinking and being active participants.

In preparing this course we have assumed that some in the group may not have access to a Bible and also even that some may not be fully literate.

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