

Introduction

For the pastor or group leader:

Walking with Jesus provides a foundation in Christian living for all who have chosen to follow Jesus. There is a great difference between someone who attends church on a Sunday and a genuine disciple who is hungry for God and obedient to Him.

As Jesus walked through the towns and villages of Israel, He called people to His side to be His disciples. During the three years of His earthly ministry He taught them the principles of living in the Kingdom of God.

Christ's church was meant to be a church on the move, constantly growing, reaching out to their communities and beyond local borders into the nations. You have in your hands an effective model for discipleship and instruction for the church. It will also help your people to win others to Jesus Christ and so continue to train disciples.

The *Walking with Jesus* course is designed to be led by a pastor or group leader who should be mature in their faith, have a basic understanding of the Holy Bible, and most importantly, have a heart to make true followers of Christ.

Walking with Jesus consists of 19 individual lessons. Each lesson includes Scriptures which should be looked up and read out aloud to the group. It includes discussion questions, designed to get the group talking, thinking and reflecting together. Every lesson ends with a memory verse which everyone should memorise.

It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit of God will speak God's truth powerfully into your lives through these lessons. May God give you grace and understanding as you study His Word.

The Bible version used in this course is *The New International Version-UK*, in English, 2004. The personal pronouns and names of Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit have been capitalized to show proper respect for the Godhead.

We give permission for you to make copies of this course and to distribute it as needed, provided that you also include this preface and introduction.

No permission is given to change either the text or the content.

If you wish to translate this book into another language please contact Young Ministry Group for permission and instructions.

May the Love of Jesus Christ be in your life...

Mana Rostand (DRC), Julie Young (USA) and Martin Baskerville (UK)

How to Use This Course

1. Lessons – Choose the lesson that you will teach to your group.

It is best to begin with lesson 1 and then teach each subsequent lesson.

Read out the lesson material. Read it just as it is written in the course.

DO NOT change the wording of the lesson or add other things that are not included within the lesson. Just read out the lesson to your group as it is printed in the course.

2. Prepare – Be well prepared before you attempt to teach others any of the lessons. If you are not familiar with the material, study through the lesson yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and give you understanding.

a. Read through the lesson first and look up all Bible verses.

b. Have a good understanding of the lesson and the subject being taught.

c. If you can, have pens and paper ready for them to write out the memory verse from the previous lesson.

3. Pray – Ask God to give you wisdom and insight and to enable you to teach the lesson in the best possible way to your group.

4. Bibles – Have at least 4 to 6 Bibles that can be shared, so that your group can look up and find the Scripture verses (you may need to borrow a few Bibles). Encourage your group to become familiar with the Bible, finding the Scripture verses and then reading them out aloud to the others in the group. If some people in the group cannot read, sit them next to someone else who is able to read.

5. Introduce the Subject – When you start teaching the lesson, make sure that you properly introduce each lesson's subject to the group. For example: *"Welcome to today's study. Today we are looking at the subject of 'Sin and Salvation,' which is found in lesson 1 of the 'Walking with Jesus' course."*

6. "Read out:" -- Where the lesson asks for Bible verses to be read out, ask a member of the group who has a Bible to look up the verse and read it out aloud to the group. (Make sure that it is a member of the group that reads out the verses, not the group teacher). When they have finished reading, always encourage them by saying something like, *"Thanks for reading that,"* or *"That was well read."*

Do not make them feel small or ridiculed. Be encouraging to your students.

7. "Questions:"-- Ask the group to think about and answer each question. You should not be the one who answers the questions. Ask your students to answer the questions. This will help them to start thinking about what you have been teaching them.

8. “Memory Verse” – Every lesson ends with a memory verse. Encourage your group to write out the verse (you will need pens and paper for this). Instruct the group to memorise the verses. Test them at the start of each new lesson: *“Do you remember the memory verse from our last lesson?”*

9. Variety – Make sure that you encourage each member of your group to participate in the lesson by answering a question, or by reading out a Scripture.

DO NOT allow just one or two people to dominate your group.

10. Have fun! – Do make your lessons fun. It’s OK to have laughter. A boring lesson is a lesson that is soon forgotten.....

How to Contact Us:

If you have found this course to be helpful, please let us know.
Contact us by e-mail and let us hear from you.

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and the name of the province or state where you live.

Include your e-mail address and phone number)

Or telephone

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Praise for “*First Steps*” and “*Walking with Jesus*”

1. “Our churches suffer highly with the lack of teaching resources, and this makes our churches to be full of people who do not understand what the true meaning of being a Christian is. This book will help our churches to be built on a strong foundation. I encourage my fellow church leaders to use this book because it is one of God's answers for the needs of churches that God made us to be leader of. “

Bishop Ilondelo wa Mbuguma - *President of Independent Churches in Uvira, Fizi and Walungu, DRC*

2. “***Walking With Jesus*** is a missionary tool that I compare with a traveller's staff. One day during the time I was teaching new believers in the pre-baptism class using the present book, I saw tears falling down in eyes of students, that time we were reading the text about the work that Jesus did for us on the cross.”

“A Muslim who turned to Christ who has been taught through using this book and then was baptised gives from time to time testimonies about how these teachings are helping him in his life. I personally, I am using this book as a teacher and testify that the lessons have been very well selected, and its teaching are good for all people and very well adapted for the new believers, and even for those who are in Christ for a long time.”

Dr Kundo Peniel - *from Aumonerie Universitaire Protestante in Uvira and Lecturer at The Medical College of Uvira-ISTM/Uvira, DRC*

3. “This book is a very important, looking at how valuable it is, I would recommend it to be used in all churches where they believe Jesus as Lord and Savior so that it helps extending the Kingdom of God.”

Amos Kavuye Ndondwa - *Rev. Pastor of CEPAC Uvira/Kasenga, Democratic Republic of Congo*

4. “This book is a treasure! It is a spiritual fruits which makes faith to grow. It is a book which has got a full life for a Christian who wants to walk with Jesus in this world which is corrupted with different kind of sins. This book provides answers for men who lost hope thinking that their sins can never be forgiven; this book gives answers and encourages teachers to make his students grow in Jesus Christ. This is a pre-baptism teachings tool to help teachers, and it is a help and teacher of different groups, it is a Biblical treasure. This book is manna of God to us, it is a strong foundation in the Word of God.”

Byochinda Luenga Victor - *Church Elder of 8th CEPAC Mulongwe/Uvira, DRC*

5. “***Walking With Jesus*** is a meal which is ready to be eaten; the teacher doesn't need again more time for the preparation. The writers have made the teaching job to be easy. This book is one of the books containing basic teachings, it is a great tool for teachers who aim and have a willing heart to bring people to Jesus. This book is a facilitating tool and a training to enable a good disciple to live in peace and in harmony with others in a family, church, community and even within the country. This book helps also to develop a person spiritually and materially.”

Jean Bugoy - *Lecturer at Université Libre Baptiste du Congo/Uvira*

6. “This is one of the books we need, we were struggling asking ourselves what we need to include in the teaching program of new believers; seeing this book and checking lessons within I testify that *Walking with Jesus* will help all churches teaching new believers. Through these teachings I believe that the one who puts in practice these teachings his behaviour will look as the behaviour of Jesus.”

Claude Dinga - Senior Pastor of Church of the Holy Spirit, Kamanyola, DRC

7. "All the 19 lessons within this book are interconnected; the preceding lesson helps to understand the next lesson, all these lessons speak about **Walking with Jesus**. The size of each lesson and its richness in ideas and in teaching attracted me so much and taught me to be brief in my lessons and seminars in the church in between 4 and 7 pages. This book taught us a new model of teaching in the church by involving students through interaction during the lesson. Students participate, share what they think, they are asked questions, also give answers on questions which they are asked ...

There is something else that I looked as being very important, at the end of every lesson there is a memory verse. This book is an answer to the needs of the new believers and those who spent already long believing in Jesus. For instance, those who go to church and still consult witch doctors thinking that they are saved. This book will give guidance by encouraging Christians to make a right choice to walk with Jesus according to the Scriptures."

Simbi Saleh Emmanuel - Reverend Pastor of 8^{ème} Sange Rutanga and Senior Lecturer at Université Evangélique En Afrique /UEA Bukavu, DRC

8. "These teachings helped me so much teaching new believers. It helped so much in preparing people for baptism in our Bible Classes. These teachings helped new believers to take a decision to truly follow Jesus. We as trainers we have been also blessed so much by this manual; it has been very helpful to us."

Amisi Numbi Aron - Evangelist of Patmos Temple/Mulongwe, Communauté Chrétienne pour la Réconciliation

9. "**Walking with Jesus** is a book containing 7 things which attracted my attention so much: 1) We need to preach to all people the Good News so that they may not perish forever; 2) Preach peace to all people; 3) We need to understand why it is very important to be part of God's family; 4) We are all brethren, brothers and sisters in Christ; 5) We need to have boldness in our prayers, praying in faith without being tired; 6) We should not be people who go to church and continue to consult witchdoctors and be involved in witchcraft; 7) Without love among believers there will never be peace and development in the church; and the [last] thing is that us as Christians we should not be involved in tribalism- we should be people who practice righteousness."

Taika Silas - Reverend Pastor of CEEACO Kimanga/Uvira

10. "This manual is a great tool that helps in the growth of faith of the new believers through its teachings. Our church appreciates the writers of the present book for their commitment and effort to produce the present book that we have in our hands."

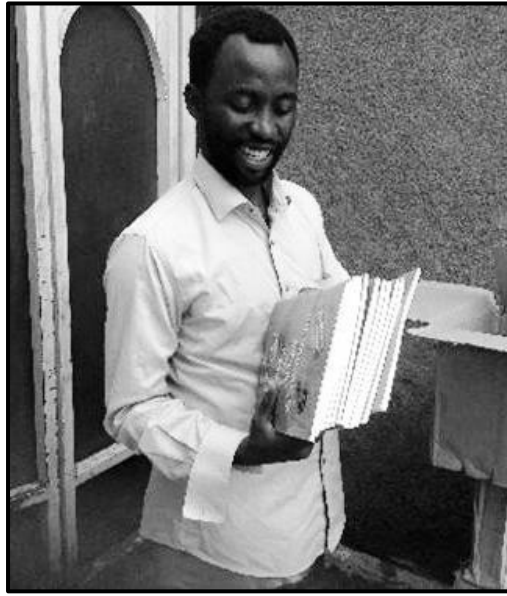
Mulangi Mukiekie Keke - Senior Pastor of International Church of The Foursquare Gospel, Uvira DR Congo.

11. "The book for the teachings for the new believers have disappeared, they are no longer seen. We who are living in country sides we have very serious problems having books that we can use to teach the new believers with. **Walking with Jesus** will facilitate us so much in our churches to help new believers even those who are Christians for many years but fail to understand what Christianity is. Even we church leaders, this book will help us to understand better our calling and what God called us to do."

Balolage Muganda - Reverend Pastor of 5^{ème} CELPA Mishamba Luhwinja, DRC



Julie Young



Mana Rostand



Julie Young Preaching

Walking with Jesus

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Lesson 1

Sin and Salvation

Welcome to the *Walking with Jesus* Course! As you participate in each of the 19 lessons, you will have a better understanding of what it means to be a Christian. You will also grow spiritually as follower of Jesus Christ.

In this first lesson we will look at the important issues of:

1. What is sin?
2. How sin originally came into the world
3. The effects of sin on our lives today
4. God's solution to resolve the problem of sin

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 in it. We read that in the beginning God made the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. He made them in His own image and placed them in a garden paradise, called Eden.

God loved Adam and Eve and gave them every kind of food that they could desire and complete freedom to live without fear. The man and woman God had created lived in complete peace, joy and harmony, having a relationship with God Himself.

God placed on them only one small restriction, that they must not eat fruit 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, Genesis 2:8-9 and Genesis 2:15-17

From these verses we see that:

1. People (men and women) were created in the image of God.
2. Adam and Eve had a perfect place to live perfect lives. There was no danger, harm, disease, or fear. They had complete freedom, with only one small restriction, not to eat the fruit from one certain tree.
3. God wants all people to have the best life possible and to live in harmony with Him.

The First Sin

Read out: Genesis 3:1-6

In these verses we read here that Satan (an evil angel) arrived in Eden in the form of a serpent. Satan tricked Adam and Eve into being disobedient to what God had commanded. Satan told them that if they ate fruit from the one tree that God forbade them to eat from, they would not die, but they would become like God.

Adam and Eve made a big mistake by trusting Satan and disobeying God. They did not restrain themselves from the one thing God had told them not to do. Instead, they listened to Satan and acted with selfish motives.

Adam and Eve brought the first sin into the world when they disobeyed God. Their sin separated Adam and Eve from God. God is holy, perfect in every way, and without sin. He refuses to be in the presence of sin or tolerate anything which is sinful. God punished Adam and Eve for their sin by making them leave their garden paradise. They were now subject to disease, death, worry, and the evil that they brought into the world.

How Sin Affects our Lives Today

The original sin of Adam and Eve has expanded and multiplied over the many generations since the time of Adam and Eve. People today continue to live selfish lives in disobedience to God, ignoring His commands. Sadly, the world today is a very different place from the paradise that God originally made. Sin can be defined as any disobedience to God.

Here are some examples of sin and its consequences that we often see in society. These exist because of humanity's continued disobedience to God and our selfish, sinful motives:

Lying, cheating, stealing, adultery, bullying, violence, divorce, abortion, selfishness, rape, homosexuality, child abuse, murder, idol-worship, witchcraft, drug abuse, drunkenness, prostitution, greed, corruption and war...

All these bad things (and many others) make the world a dangerous and unhealthy place to live.

Sin Must Be Punished

The Bible tells us that every person who has ever lived will be judged by God for the sins they have done.

Acts 17:31 says *"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."*

Read out: Romans 3:23

Every person found guilty of sin will face judgement and eternal punishment in a fiery place called Hell, permanently away from God's love and presence. Hell is full of torments and pain. This punishment waits for us all, and is the place that awaits each of us because the Bible says each and every person is guilty of sin.

So what can we do?

Jesus Christ - God's Solution for Sin

Read out: Genesis 3:14-15

Because God loves the people that He created, God said He would send a Saviour to rescue the world's people. He promised that the rescuer would come from the family line of Adam and Eve. This Saviour would crush the evil tempter, Satan, under His foot. The Promised One would save people from sin and its consequences. This promise came true when Jesus Christ, God's Son, came to earth, as is written in Bible's New Testament.

God's Plan of Salvation

God has a wonderful plan to save us. He saw that all humanity was in a hopeless situation, trapped by sin, separated from Him and facing the eternal fires of Hell.

Read out: John 3:16

God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die for you so that you should not suffer the penalty for your sins. God made a way for our sins to be paid for fully and completely – when Jesus died on the cross He died as a perfect sacrifice for our sin. Jesus died for the sins of every person who has ever lived.

Jesus, the Son of God, lived a perfect, sinless life and so His sacrifice was fully acceptable to God, His blood was shed at the cross to pay the price of our sin, and to take away the punishment we deserved. The blood sacrifice of Jesus is God's way to bring us back into a right relationship with Him.

Pastor/leader: you may need to read this long passage to the group:

Read out: Matthew 27:31-54

This passage tells how Jesus suffered and died for our sins.

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 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.

Why is this Good News?

This is good news because now Jesus has made a way so that our sins can be forgiven! Now we can have a wonderful new life, living in a right relationship with God!

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, He has already paid the price for all our sins. When we turn from our sins and receive Christ, we do not have to live in fear of God's anger and judgement any longer.

So there are two things you must do to be saved by Jesus Christ:

- 1.** You must repent. To repent means to turn from your sinful ways. This means you agree with God that you have sinned.
- 2.** You must put your trust in Jesus. You must agree with God that Jesus died on the cross for your sins. This is called faith. When you do these things you receive God's forgiveness. You also receive God's new, eternal life.

Read out: 1 John 5:11-12

When you ask Jesus to forgive you and come into your heart, you receive His forgiveness, and 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 that God offers. It is a free gift from Him 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 look in faith to Jesus Christ to rescue us.

Read out: John 1:12

When we receive Jesus into our hearts and lives we become part of God's family- we become His sons and daughters!

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, or being saved.

Have you been saved by Jesus?

How Does 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 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 who have not met Jesus?

Now is the time to ask them if they have received Jesus. You can say: *"If you have never asked Jesus to forgive your sins and receive eternal life, you can do that right now. Raise your hand if you want to have your sins forgiven and to receive Jesus as your Saviour."*

Then, pray this prayer with them, and have them repeat it after you: ***"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 our sins away when He died on the cross.
2. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour we get a new, abundant life. Jesus Himself comes to live inside 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:

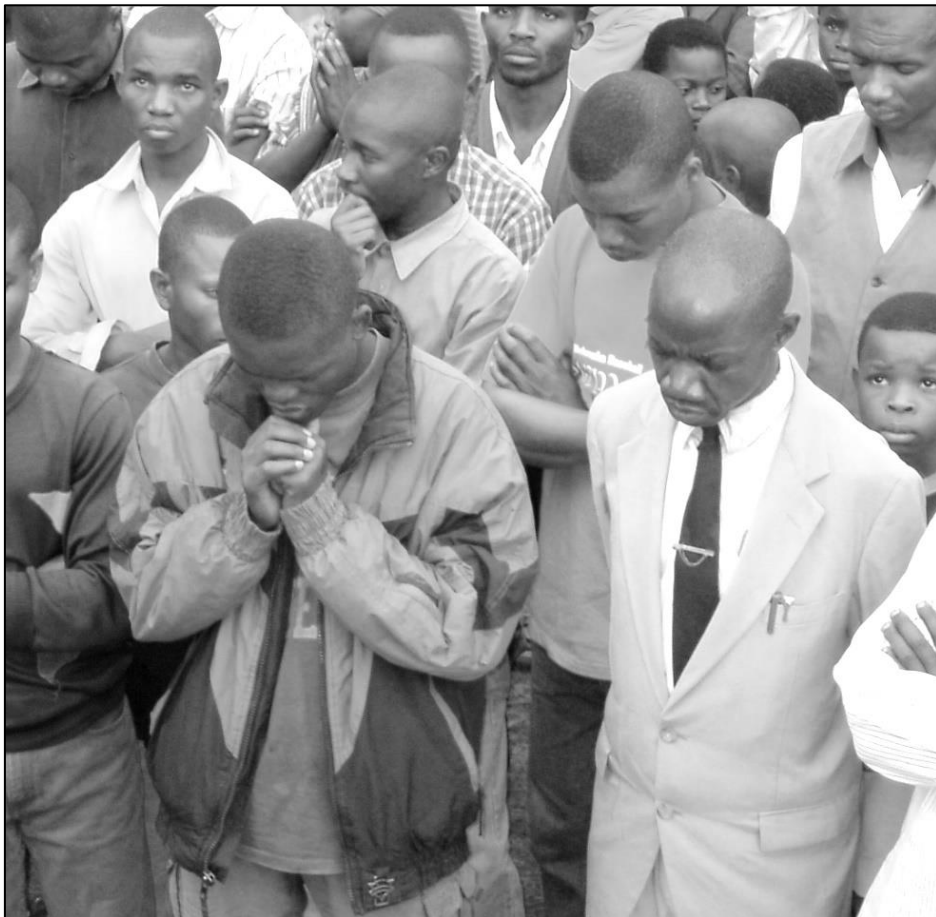
1. What have you learned about sin today?
2. What does it mean to repent?
3. What have you learned about salvation?
4. Who can you tell about this good news?

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse (remember to have them memorise the reference):

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”



Lesson 2

New Things in Christ

When we ask Jesus into our lives, the sins of our old life are completely forgiven. We become what the Bible calls “born again” and we start a new life with Christ living in us by His Holy Spirit. We live as Christians, followers of Jesus.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 5:17

A new life starts for us when we give ourselves to God through faith in Jesus Christ. God says we now have a clean record and a new start in our lives. 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.

But what is this new life He gives us?

We Are Now Part of God’s Family

Read out: Romans 8:15

We have been adopted into God’s family. He is our heavenly 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 and take care of each other because we are now a part of 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

The Bible tells us that we are justified. This means we are 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 soul, 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 any 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?

Our Family Can Be Saved

We have come to know Jesus personally but we are still concerned for our family, friends and neighbors who do not know Him. We want them to know Jesus, too.

Read: Matthew 7: 7-8 and Acts 16:31

God gives us this promise: as we obey and trust Him, our family and others 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 now belong to Jesus. God loves you deeply and He loves your family, also. When we pray Jesus will be working in your family to bring them to 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 or those who work in the occult.

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 in the New Testament 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 (including you) power over evil spirits. You can command evil spirits to flee from you, in Jesus name. 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, people who use the occult, witch doctors, spirit healers, and evil spirits. You no longer need to live in fear of these.

You Have a Special Purpose

Did you know that God has a special purpose for your life? When you become a Christian, you will begin to understand the purpose God has for you.

What is your purpose? As you grow in knowing Jesus, as you understand more of the Bible, God's 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 uniquely yours.

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.

Summary:

We have learned:

1. We have been adopted into God's family as sons and daughters. We have peace with God. Our past, present, and future sins are completely forgiven.
2. We can talk with God, telling him our problems and asking him for solutions.
3. We can pray for God to save our family, friends and neighbours.
4. We need not live in fear of evil spirits or those who practice witchcraft any longer.
5. God has a special purpose for each one of us.

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.

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Bible verse and reference:

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”



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 particular ways and beliefs and make promises about our eternal future.

These religions are focused on achieving certain goals or obeying certain rules. They believe that a person's spiritual condition and final salvation or reward is determined by their obedience to the rules of the religion or on their efforts to please a god.

In this lesson we will learn that there is nothing that we can do to earn salvation and thereby enter heaven. Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ, by God's grace. God's grace is His undeserved favour which He extends to us. Only Jesus Christ can truly save, forgive, and set us free.

Why is this? We cannot be good enough to take away our sins. We cannot receive the life of God by following a religion or custom. We cannot receive the life of God through human effort and achievement.

Only what Jesus did on the cross is sufficient for us to be saved. On the cross Jesus was the perfect, sinless sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' perfect sacrifice was fully accepted by God.

Jesus is the Only Way to God

Read out: John 14:6-7

Jesus tells us that He alone can reveal God to people. There is no other religion or belief that can lead us to God. Believing on Jesus is the only way to have the life of God Himself.

Jesus, who is God's own Son, died on the cross to pay the price for sin. Jesus paid the penalty of your sin and mine; every sin; all sin. We do not need to earn forgiveness through good works or by keeping strict religious rules or practices. All we need to do is to turn from our sins and accept God's free gift of forgiveness through faith in Jesus.

Jesus Is God

We should know that:

1. No other religious leader has ever claimed to be God.
2. No other religious leader ever died and rose from the dead, being witnessed by so many people.
3. No other religious leader ever demonstrated their power over evil spirits and the demonic.

Jesus did all of these things. Jesus told people to follow Him because He is God.

Read out John 10:7-11

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. We are the sheep. 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. This is wonderful news!

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 good, reasonable, or nice people. But Jesus tells us that only He is the **only** 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. Jesus Himself stated this truth clearly.

Good Deeds and Religion 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 and invited him into our lives. We did not receive the gift of salvation from our good works such as helping the poor or by following religious practices such ritual prayer, sacrifices, fasting or pilgrimage. 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 God's mercy in sending Jesus 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 them. 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. Attending a church cannot save us, but God does want us to go to church.

Read out: John 3:15-18

Those who believe in Jesus are saved. Those who refuse to believe in Jesus are condemned by their own sins. In eternity, after this life, they will be condemned before God forever.

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, and help the church in practical ways. We also give our tithes and offerings at church so that others can know Jesus and grow in Him.

The Worship of Spirits and Witchcraft are Sins against God

Read out: Deuteronomy 18:10-13

God hates these practices. This includes consulting one's ancestors. These practices are all under the curse of God. They have nothing to do with serving the one true God, Jesus Christ. Working with spirits shows that we do not fully 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 lead us astray from a true relationship with God.

Read out: Leviticus 20:6-8

If we continue to consult witchdoctors or healers about our problems, God says he will turn His face away from us and cut us off from family and kin. These verses show how much God hates witchcraft and the worship of spirits. 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 or to consult witchdoctors or the spirits of ancestor is to commit a terrible sin against God.

God wants us to live in His blessing, not under His anger. To worship an idol or to consult the occult is a sin against God Himself, through which our protection and blessing will be taken away.

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. Jesus said 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 Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters. You cannot be a true Christian and also 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, 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.

Read out: Acts 19: 18-19

The new believers in the city of Ephesus 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.

Serving Idols

An idol is anything that claims to be God, or that claims to have the powers of God. An idol is anything or any person we give our worship and devotion to.

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 in reality demons who pretend to be gods. We cannot participate in the life of Christ and the work of demons. We should renounce these things and turn away from them.

Pray To Be Released From Idols, Spirits, and False Religion

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 your Pastor/Leader to lay his 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 them 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. **Pastor/Leader:** command the demons, in the name of Jesus, to leave the person's family and 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.

4. Pray to be filled with God's Holy Spirit: ***"Jesus, please fill me with your Holy Spirit."***

Questions:

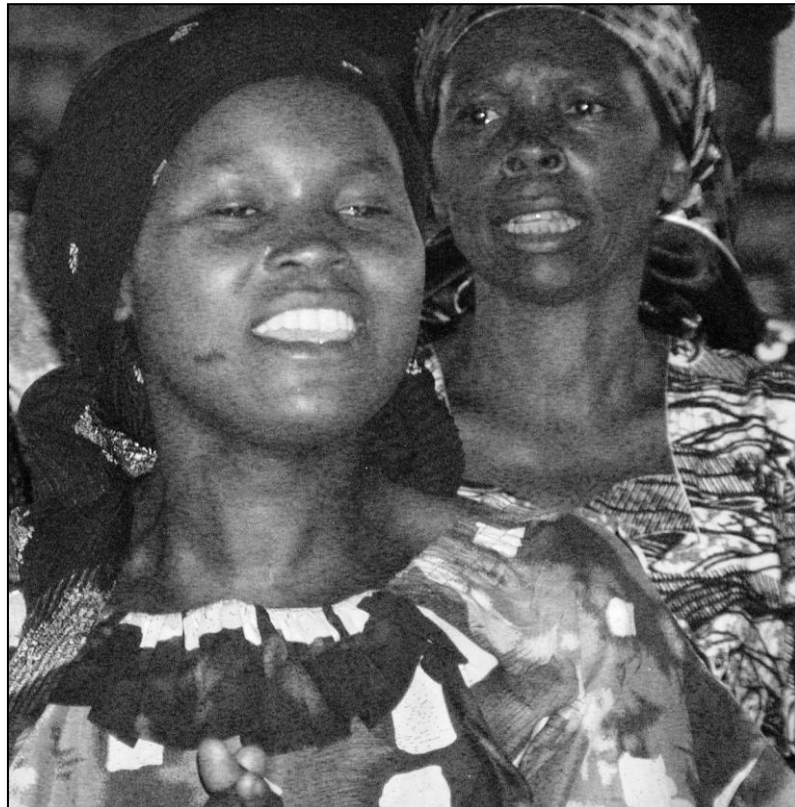
1. What is an idol? Give an example.
2. Which religions can save us?
3. Who are we to worship and follow?
4. What idols are in your community?
5. How has the worship of spirits or idols affected you, your family, or your community?
6. How does a person get free from spirits?
7. Can we serve two religions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

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and reference:

John 14:6

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”



Lesson 4

Water Baptism

Note to the Pastor/Leader:

Before you begin to teach 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. The baptism of new believers is a time of joy and celebration for the church.

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 think that joining a church makes them a Christian.)

You have 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 and Mark 16:15-16

Jesus commanded his disciples [followers] to be baptised. These Bible verses clearly show that Jesus expects those who follow Him to be baptised in water as a sign of their faith in Him. 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 expects of every person who follows Him.

What is Water Baptism?

To be baptised means to be dipped, or immersed fully in water. Biblical baptism is not merely a sprinkling of water over someone. The Bible teaches that baptism is given only to those who have repented of their sins and 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 what he heard and asked to be baptised- to be put under the water and brought out. This was a sign or statement that the official had sincerely believed the gospel message and genuinely wanted to follow Christ. Since Jesus' time, people around the world who believe in Jesus have been baptised as a sign of their committed faith.

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 and then quickly brings them out. The symbolic action of water baptism shows that you are sincere in wanting to be closely identified with

Jesus. It means that you are declaring in public that you have turned from sin to follow Jesus. Baptism is an important step of obedience to Jesus.

Baptism itself does not save us. We are saved when we accept Christ into our lives. But baptism is a public declaration telling everyone that we intend to follow Jesus and live for Him. You are immersed into water during baptism, but it is not the water that brings change in your life. It is the power of God through His Holy Spirit in your life—this brings the change.

Water Baptism is a Picture

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 to life).

Our baptism is an outward sign that we are aligning our lives with Christ's sacrifice, showing that we have died to sin and our old way of living. We arise in God's power to live a new life. We show we are willing to dedicate ourselves to the new life that pleases God, living in obedience to the commands of the Holy Bible.

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

Dead to Sin and Alive to God

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 our sin at Calvary. As new believers we are dead to sin and its power over us. This means that we no longer want to live in our old ways but instead we are committed to living our lives completely for God. We can only do this because of Jesus' power 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 for God.

Read out: 1 Peter 2:24-25

Jesus died so that we could live a holy life and not be trapped by sin anymore. This is God's will for us.

Read out: Ephesians 2:1-8

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 He lives in us. His power is in us to change us to be like Him.
3. God's gift of grace saved us, not our own good deeds.

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 we are tempted to wrong.

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 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. Here we see that when people receive Christ, they should be baptised as soon as possible.

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 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 short speech is usually given right before the pastor baptises you, and it 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 imitate others. You should seek baptism 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!

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 you should take this step of faith as soon as possible.

Everyone who has believed in Jesus from the first century right up to today has been baptised in water. In this very same way you can now join the millions throughout history who have expressed 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 entire church family. It is a day that you will remember throughout your life as the date on which you publicly followed the Lord Jesus, obeying His words, Praise the Lord!

Pastor/Leader –after reading this lesson and making your own comments, ask if there are those present who wish to give their lives to Jesus. If so, pray with them to receive Christ. Then ask if anyone wishes to be baptised. Then tell them a date and place where they may be baptised.



Questions:

1. Who should be baptised in water?
2. Water baptism is a picture of what event?
3. What does it mean to repent? (Repentance is more than feeling sorry for the sins we have committed. It is more than feeling ashamed because our sins have been found out. Repentance means that we have turned away from our ways of sin and we are turning instead to God, to His forgiveness in Christ, and to God's life in us.)
4. If you have been baptised, tell the group what it meant to you.
5. Explain why we can overcome sin and temptation as Christians.

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and reference:

Romans 10:9-10

“if you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

Lesson 5

Talking to God - Prayer, Praise and Worship

In this lesson we will learn about the importance of talking to God through prayer and worship. These are ways that as Christians we can speak to God, our Heavenly Father. Prayer is the way that we talk with God, and listen for Him to speak to us. When we praise and worship God, we are expressing our love, reverence, and devotion to God, something that all people are created to do.

Jesus Prayed

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

We read in the Holy Bible that Jesus prayed often. Many times He went to a quiet place where he could be alone with His Father. In a similar way, when you pray, find a quiet place where you can take time to talk with God. Go where there are no distractions such as other people talking or noisy activities happening that will distract your attention. As in any conversation between two people there is always one person who is speaking and another who is listening to what is being said.

Because of Jesus' death on the cross, the barrier of sin between God and humankind has been torn down. There are now no obstacles between us and we can have a two-way conversation with God, our heavenly Father. This is called prayer.

When we pray we should speak out our requests to God. Then we should take time to listen to what God speaks. Learning to hear God's voice takes practice and discipline. We train our minds to be still, keeping our minds focused on God, not wandering to other things.

Are there things you would like to talk to God about today?

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 means that we come to God and seek Him and His direction for our lives. It is a time when we can pour out our heart, tell Him our problems, 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.

Read out: Philippians 4:6-7

God wants us to talk with Him, telling Him all of 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 and the difficulties of life that we each face. We should not rely only on our own thoughts and abilities but instead take everything to God first in prayer.

Read out: 1 Peter 5:6-7

God loves you and wants you to share with Him your problems and burdens. You can throw your heavy worries on God, because He cares about you and will help you find the solution and answer that is best for you.

How Should We Pray?

1. Pray Specific Prayers.

Read out: Luke 11:1-13

The Bible teaches us to ask our Father in heaven for the provision of our daily needs in our lives. It teaches us to ask God's forgiveness for sins that we commit and to ask God's strength to protect us from sinful temptations. 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 do not need to make long rambling prayers but, rather bring to God the specific needs we have. We can then expect God, our Father in heaven, to answer our need in the best possible way. Why is this? Because God loves us and He has taught us to ask for what we need. When we ask God for something in prayer, we are using our faith.

2. Don't Give Up

Read out: Luke 18:1-8

The Bible teaches us to be persistent in our prayers. Continue praying until your prayers receive an answer. Do not give up but rather keep on praying and believing. Wait on God. This means you ask, and then thank the Lord for the answer He is sending. You tell Him how you love and trust Him for taking care of your need.

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

3. Do Not Worry

Read out: Matthew 6:25-34

The Bible teaches us not to worry about things but, rather to rely on God. Worrying will not provide an answer but may make you become agitated and unwell. Only God can truly provide the answers that you need.

4. 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. Real faith is like sitting in a chair. You can say that you trust the chair to hold you and not collapse; but your faith in the chair is proven when you put your whole body on the chair. In the same way, having faith in God is like putting all your weight on Him.

You can say, "God in Heaven, I want to have a child. You gave Hannah a child, so I know that nothing is impossible for you."

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

Praying this way 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. After you pray you begin to look for the answer to your request.

5. Prayer Strengthens Us

When we pray and spend time with God, we become wiser and stronger. When we pray we learn to trust God more. When we pray we see our prayers being answered. When we see our prayer answered, our faith grows. We can then encourage others by our prayers.

6. 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 brought us back to God. 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 child, in Jesus' Name.*" God listens to these prayers and answers them.

Sin Blocks our Prayers

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 in our life and repent of 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. If we wish God to consider our prayers, our lives must be clean.

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 well.

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 through faith in Jesus.

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

Summary:

We have learned that:

1. Prayer is a way we can speak to God about the needs in our life but, we need to set aside regular time to do this.
2. We should pray in faith and ask God in Jesus' name for the things that we need.
3. We need to be persistent in our prayer requests if we are seriously seeking God for a solution.
4. Sin blocks our prayers. Confess sin to God and repent of it.

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 the people you pray with?
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 and family members; your village; your region or country.
4. Can you find a prayer partner? This should be someone of the same gender 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 and Worship

Praising God and worshipping God come out of a heart that is grateful to Him for His love and the good things He 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 together; we can also worship with our family and in our own private times of prayer.

To praise means to declare 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.

We can enter into God's presence through times of praise and worship, using words from our mouths, music, songs, or recordings and even through dance.

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

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 an inner longing to worship. Each of us feels within our heart a desire to worship the Creator, who is the Almighty God.

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. Read out: Psalm 100.** What do these verses tell us about how we should worship God?
- 3.** What things have you worshipped in the past?
- 4.** Who created you to worship Him? If you are still worshipping anything or any 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.

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and reference:

Philippians 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”



Lesson 6

Hearing God's Voice

You have become a new Christian believer and a child of God. Every child knows his father's or mother's voice. This lesson will help you to understand how we listen to the voice of God. As you learn to hear the Lord, you will not have to rely on your own thinking and abilities to live your life. Instead 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 your life be full and complete. He wants your life to be the best that it can possibly be. Listening to God and then obeying His direction will bring blessing to you, your family, your job, and your community.

Read out: Proverbs 3:5-6 and answer these questions:

1. What does God want you to do?
2. 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

As you call to God 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.

God Speaks to His People in Different Ways

The Bible shows us that God speaks to His people in many different ways. He often speaks through the words of the Holy Bible. Sometimes He speaks through dreams and visions, sometimes through words given by the Holy Spirit directly to you or another believer. The Bible tells us that God may choose to speak through angels, but often He 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 Words of Bible

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

Read out: Psalm 119:105

God's Word guides our steps in life.

Read out: Psalm 119:9,11, and 18

The man who wrote these words tells how important God's Word is to him. As we hear and obey God's Word, it keeps us from sinning and helps us to lead a pure and God-focused life.

The Bible is God's message of love to all people of the world, to 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! You can also go to a place where people are reading or reciting the Word of God.

It is also important to memorise the words of the Bible. At the end of each lesson you will find some memory verses that you can write out and learn. It will help make you spiritually strong in the Lord. Often Christians are given insight, promises, or encouragement as they read or recite Bible verses.

Read out: 2 Timothy 3:15-17

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

2. 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. God may speak to you and give you a message for another person in your church or group (this is called a word of prophecy or a prophetic word).

3. God Speaks to Us through Dreams and Visions

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

Read out: Matthew 1:18-21

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

Examples:

Dreams – Genesis 37:5-9 (Another man named Joseph had a dream.)

Visions – Acts 10:1-11. (Peter had a vision.) Also see **Isaiah 6:1-4.**

4. 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 the 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 and gives him direction.

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 of God 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 to hear God. People often make the mistake of rushing and making decisions based on their own thinking and desires. They seek God's guidance only as an afterthought, hoping 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 then that 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.

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

Read out: Mark 1:35

Jesus got up early to go somewhere quiet to meet with His Father 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. God wants you to know His will for your life.

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. 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 God 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.

Summary:

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

1. Set aside a daily prayer time. (More than just a few minutes.)
2. Read the Bible. (Or go to where the Bible is being read or recited.)

3. Give thanks and praise to God for the way He has blessed and encouraged you.
4. 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. God 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 like. He will speak to you. Over time you will learn to know the voice of God when He is speaking to you.

Questions:

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

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 must 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:

1. 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.
2. You might seek confirmation from other godly people about what you think God has said to you.
3. God sometimes brings confirmation of what He says through prophetic words. But a prophetic message always agrees with the teachings of the Bible.
4. What you hear should bring joy in you, and should not bring division amongst God's people.
5. When God speaks to us it produces respect and honour for the Lord. God's Word does not cause pride in us.
6. 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.

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and the reference:

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Lesson 7

God's Word- the Holy Bible

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 3:16-17 The words of the Bible are 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 Words can raise the dead, and heal the sick.

God's Words can make those who suffer dance for joy.

God's Words 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:

(**Pastor/Leader:** 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 to us from 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).

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 to 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 meditates 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 our life with 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:

a. What do these verses say about God?

b. 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:

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

1. What is the most important thing you have learned about the Bible in this lesson?

2. Why do you think it is important to read and meditate on God's words?

3. How can we become strong to meet life's challenges? (Taking in God's words like we take in food for our stomachs.)

4. How can we grow in faith? (By reading, hearing, meditating and obeying the Word of God.)

5. What should you do to prosper and have success? (Joshua 1:8-9)

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and the reference:

1 Peter 1:23

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."

Lesson 8

What is God Like?

(Understanding Who God Is)

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? The Bible tells us that God is spirit in nature; He does not have a physical body as we do and He is not made of flesh and blood as we are. God is uniquely different from us as people in His form and His nature and also in His character qualities. 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 through the words of the Holy Bible. You will also understand more about the God who loves you as you pray to Him and listen as He speaks personally to you.

The Nature of God

When we speak of “God’s nature” we are talking about the qualities and character traits that belong to God alone. These qualities reveal to us what God is like.

1. God is Eternal

Read out: Psalm 102:24-27

God has no beginning and has no end; He was and is, and will be in existence forever. Every human being has a beginning to their lives and also an end but God is eternal and lives forever.

Read out: 1 Peter 1:24

People live and then they die. Their lives are like the short life of flowers, when compared to the eternal existence of God. The words God speaks never fade and they never change; 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 His knowledge, wisdom or power. There has never been a time when God did not exist. God is timeless. He is eternal.

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, gravity, the air that we breathe and our souls). He has made things both known and unknown to us.

Everything that exists or ever will exist has been created by God. People can only create something using what God has already made. For example, inventions and scientific discoveries are made by using the things that God Himself originally created. So we should revere and worship only God, not things that God has created.

Read out: John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17

3. God is All-Powerful

God has all power and authority over everything He created, over the entire universe.

Read out: Jeremiah 32:17

There is nothing which is impossible for God to do. Nothing can oppose God when He acts with His power. He has power to do whatever He chooses. However, God acts only within His character, with both justice and goodness.

Evil spirits and powers must obey God. Jesus showed us that the winds and the sea obeyed His commands (Matthew 8:23-27). Because Jesus is God, He has power to work miracles, even raising the dead.

Read out: Mark 10:27

Only God can provide lasting solutions to the problems and difficulties of our lives. He is the only one who is able to do things which are impossible for us as people to achieve. Instead of relying to our own knowledge and strength, or even looking to other people to find solutions, we should look to God. Do not consult or put your hope in the false promises of witch doctors, magicians and spiritists—God condemns these things.

Read out: Deuteronomy 18:9-11

The Lord defeats the enemies of His people. What are the enemies that challenge us today? Sin, sickness, poverty, evil, ignorance, and death. God, who is all-powerful, has authority over them all.

Read out: Matthew 8:14-17

Jesus has power over sickness.

Read out: Matthew 8:28-33 and Luke 10:17-20

Jesus showed His power over evil spirits.

Read out: Luke 7:11-15

Jesus showed His power over death.

If you are facing issues that worry you in your life, your marriage, family, community, or your country, you can take these to the Lord Jesus. Trust God to work in these situations. Continue to thank Him and praise Him for the answers that He is bringing.

4. God is All Knowing

God knows everything. His knowledge is not limited in any way. 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 the challenges you are going through and He is concerned about you.

Read out: Psalms 39:1-4

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

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.

6. God is Spirit

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

God is spirit, not flesh and 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, a young virgin girl. Her pregnancy was a supernatural act of God. Jesus became human with flesh and blood 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.

7. Jesus is God

Who is Jesus? Who is God? These questions can sometimes cause confusion to those who are new to the Christian faith. The simple answer is that Jesus **IS** God. Jesus and God are one and the same and we will learn more about this in the next lesson.

Jesus is God's unique, only Son sent from heaven. Jesus came from heaven to earth, being born as a fully human baby. Jesus was sent by God to pay for our sins and bring people back to God. God the Father has given Jesus a name that is above all names and the right to rule the world and all that is in it.

Read out: Hebrews 1: 1-3 and Philippians 2:4-11

8. God is Personal

God has made every person and desires to have a personal relationship with everyone. He sent His own Son, Jesus as a man, so that you and I can know Him. God has also sent His Holy Spirit to live within us, when we receive Jesus into our lives as Saviour. How different this is than just going to church, or obeying religious rules because we are afraid of God!

Read out: John 20:11-18 and Acts 17:28-29

The Character of God

Character refers to the inner qualities of a person, and how they behave. 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 that person as an individual.

God's character qualities are holiness, love, faithfulness, truthfulness, righteousness, and mercy. This means 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 your life also as believer.

God is Holy

Read out: Isaiah 59:1-2

God is Holy; He cannot sin or commit evil. God is absolutely good, right, and pure. Because He is holy He will not tolerate sin, and separates Himself from evil, sin, and the sinful. Because God is holy, He must also punish evil and sin.

People can only come into God's presence through the righteous sacrifice of Jesus' blood. This is how we as Christians can know God as our Father, because we have come near to God through the giving of Jesus' blood on the cross. Aren't you glad that Jesus brought us back to live in God's presence?

Because God is holy, He expects us to be holy to Him (this means that we separate ourselves from sin, evil, and the corrupt ways of our world as we identify ourselves with God).

Read out: Hebrews 12:14 and 1Peter 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 be successful and live in both peace and harmony.

Read out: 2 Timothy 2:11-13

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, God's enemy. So being truthful in the things that you say and the way you live your life is important to God and is the way in which He wants you to live and act towards other people.

Read out: John 14:16-17

God is Righteous

God is righteous. This word means that He is honest, just, fair, and perfect in everything. He can 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 something evil is something good; He does not treat an innocent person as being guilty of wrongdoing.

Because God's character is like this we should not show favouritism towards anyone, or accept bribes from others. God treats each person in the world equally and does not show favouritism towards anyone. As Christians we also should be fair with others and fair in our practices.

Read out: Psalms 89:14

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: Romans 8:28

There is no evil in God; evil came into the world through Satan's rebellion against God. Human beings brought even more evil into the world as the consequence of their sins. This is why there are wars, thieving, hatred, lying, cheating, and all the many other evils in our world. God did not create evil, rather He 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. Yet 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, without fear to God in prayer to ask for His help today, and you will receive it. Coming to His throne of grace means that He is the highest king, and He has all power authority to work on your behalf.

Read out: 1Timothy 4:8 and Hebrews 12:5

A father on earth disciplines 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. 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 showing kindness to those in misery and darkness. Mercy means showing kindness or consideration to someone when that person deserves condemnation or punishment. Mercy is given by the one with greater power and authority to those who don't deserve help but are in need of receiving it. Mercy is the character 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 as individuals, he feels such mercy towards us, especially when we are faced with many challenges in our lives.

The great love that God 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 and Matthew 18:21,22.

God is Love

The Bible tells us that God is love. Not just that God loves but that the very essence of His being is love. God loves us and expects us to love one another as well. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He said: "To love God and to love each other" (Matthew 22:36-39).

When people show love to each other, many positive things begin to 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 belong to 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.

Summary:

We now understand that God is eternal, all-powerful, and that He knows everything. God is loving, faithful, honest, just, and good. Because of the good inherent character of God, you can be assured that He will be working in your own 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

Questions:

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

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? (By reading the Word of God to know God better; by praying, and by obeying God and letting him change you.)

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Bible verse and reference:

Romans 8:28

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

Lesson 9

The One True God

The one true God who created all things and rules the universe is the God of the Bible. He has revealed Himself to humanity 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 (such as Hindu gods, Buddha, Allah, spirits, spirit totems 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 and it a very serious offence against God for people to worship something or someone else.

Read out: Exodus 20:1-6 and Psalm 78:58
(**Pastor:** see also Jeremiah 10: 3-15)

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, The God who has always existed, and who will always exist. This Name of God is translated into our present-day 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 eternal, always existing Creator and Redeemer.

Read out Exodus 6:2-3

One God

Our God commands 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 to serve 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 tells us that He is a jealous God. This means He will not tolerate the worship of idols or 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.

Pastor: see also: 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Isaiah 44:6-8.

The Trinity

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 has 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 eternal 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. This is not true. The Bible clearly teaches that the Lord 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

In these verses Jesus commanded believers as to what we should be doing in the world. These verses clearly show 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 and 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 co-exists 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 be on guard against things which may 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.

The Old Testament tells the story of the Israelites, who were set free by God from slavery to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Once released from slavery in 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, 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, items relating to ancestor worship, or other objects related to spirits or tribal customs. Items like this are often regarded as having special powers. These things may be present in our homes from our lives before we have come to know 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 46:9 and Colossians 3:5-6

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, drugs, property, internet, or work. Worshiping and serving the true God allows us to live under God's blessings and protects us, our families, and our communities.

Read out: Matthew 6:24

Jesus knew that it is impossible to serve ambition for money and Himself. God desires that we serve and worship Him alone. When we use our time and energies to do God's will, He supplies us with everything we need (Matthew 6:31-33).

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

As a believer, you are united with Jesus Christ, the one true God. There is no other god you should believe in or serve. We are to be on guard against idols and keep from serving them or giving them access to our lives and our families.

Questions:

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

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 has serving 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 and Matthew 6:24)

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and the reference:

1 John 5:20-21

“and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”



Lesson 10

Telling Others about Jesus

Telling others about Jesus is often called witnessing. This lesson will help you understand how to be an effective witness and will give you confidence as you share your faith in Jesus with others.

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: Mark 16:15-16

These are some of the last words Jesus spoke. 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 tells others about what they have seen, heard and experienced. Jesus wants you to tell others about your new life in Jesus.

The Bible says that Jesus is the faithful and true witness (Revelation 1:5 and 3:14). This is because Jesus came and spoke the truth about His Father in heaven to the people. He spoke about everything He had seen, heard, and experienced in heaven with His Father. We are also witnesses to what Jesus has done in our lives, and we should tell this to others.

Pastor/Leader, ask: *"Have you ever told anyone your story of how you came to believe on Jesus? Why or why not? If you have not, you should begin to tell others."*

Jesus did not say that only the pastor or evangelist would tell others about Himself. He said that all who believe should share their faith. God's plan to reach lost people in your community means that God wants to use you, no matter the level of your education, your background, or your family history. It does not matter if you are a man or woman, wealthy or poor. All of us who know Christ should share our faith.

Read out: Acts: 11:19-20

The people of the church were scattered away from their homes in Jerusalem. Everywhere they went they spoke about Jesus. They shared Jesus everywhere and with everyone, because their love for Him was so great.

Read out: Matthew 28:19,20

Our job as Christians is to reach the entire world with the message about Jesus and then teach and train them in our Christian faith.

What is the Gospel, or Good News?

It is important that as a believer you have a good understanding of the gospel message so that you can confidently share this wonderful news with others. The message about Jesus is called the gospel, or good news. It is good news to know that your sins can be forgiven and that you will not be headed for judgment in Hell. It is good news 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 message. Everyone needs to 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 miraculous power to cause people to believe in Him—He gave this task especially to the redeemed people who are called Christians. All of us are given this task-- the young, the old, the men, the women, the pastors and the people of the church. This includes you, too! Sharing your faith is something that all believers are called to do.

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 on the third day;
Jesus is alive today.

Every Christian should know the message in these verses; this is the gospel and this is what we share with others.

Pastor/Leader: Read out these verses yourself if it is too long for your people:

Acts 10:34-48

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 also 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. Read again 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Pastor/Leader: have the people repeat:

Jesus suffered and died for our sins;
Jesus was buried and rose again from the dead on the third day;
Jesus is alive today.

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

2. Share your story. You have a story to tell others about how you met Jesus and what He has done for you. Your story is unique and unlike anyone else's story. You may not think it is important, but your story is very important God will use it to draw others to Himself. Someone may need to hear how you came to know Christ. So don't hold back from telling your story!

These are the two parts of an effective witness. You can share both parts with someone who needs to be saved.

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 God will use your words to begin to work in their life. Speak your story in faith and 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: 1 Peter 1:23

God's word will not fail to work in the lives of those to whom we speak it. So speak out 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. But this does not take away our responsibility to obey Jesus and to share our faith. If you are afraid, then do two things:

- 1. 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.
- 2. Ask the Lord** to show you who to speak to. Then ask God for the wisdom to know the right time to speak about Him. 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 get much better in sharing Jesus with others. You have the Holy Spirit in you to help you.

The Danger of Not Believing in Jesus

Read out: John 3:16-18

In these verses Jesus tells us that anyone who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

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

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 3:14-19**).

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 begin to tell about Jesus in your community, people will be saved and your church will grow.

Teach the new believers with this *Walking with Jesus* course and teach them to begin to share the gospel right away. Do not wait. 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 think and feel as you did before you came to know 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 a great faith that they faced beating, prison and death because they were the followers of Christ.

Read out: Acts 4:1-4 and Acts 8:4-8.

Where did these early believers get such courage to share their faith? Jesus knew we needed God's help in telling the gospel message. This is why Jesus has given us the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which we will study in Lesson 11. The baptism in the Holy Spirit gives us power, boldness, and confidence to witness.

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. What are the two parts of our witness? (Share the gospel message; share your story of how you received Jesus.)
5. Can you repeat the good news, the gospel?

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Bible verse and reference:

Mark 16: 15-16

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.’”



Lesson 11

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

You Have Received the Holy Spirit of Jesus

When you believed on Jesus, He gave you His Holy Spirit to live inside you. After you are saved God wants you to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the release of God's power in your life. You need the baptism in the Holy Spirit to give you power and confidence to witness for Jesus.

A Promise from God

In the Old Testament time God promised to send His Holy Spirit in great measure on His people.

Read out: Joel 2:28-30

God promised to pour out His Holy Spirit abundantly (not just give a little) on His people. This includes men and women, rich and poor, children and adults, those with education and those without.

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 from our inner beings like rivers of living water. 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 had 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 baptise us (immerse us) in the Holy Spirit and fire. This promise was repeated by Jesus right before He went up to heaven.

Read out: Luke 24:45-49

After He rose from the dead, Jesus told the disciples that they would be witnesses for Him in every nation. They would tell about His suffering, death, and resurrection and bring people to repentance and faith in Him. The disciples were told to wait in the city until Jesus sent the "**promise of the Father,**" which is the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Read out: Acts 1:4-8

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.

It is important to understand that everyone who has truly repented and believed in Jesus already has the Holy Spirit living inside them. The promise that Jesus spoke about in the book of Acts is a second experience after salvation; this is the release of power of the Holy Spirit—the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

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 baptism in 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 by Jesus 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 usually 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.

When the disciples were filled, or baptised in the Holy Spirit, miraculous power poured out of them like the "rivers of living water" Jesus spoke about. They became bold witnesses for Jesus. The Holy Spirit was flowing out of their innermost being in supernatural, God-given power.

(Pastor/Leader: Read out this long account yourself if it is difficult for your people: Read out Acts 2:5-39)

Peter and the believers were so excited and filled with God's Spirit that they spoke in the new languages very loudly. The people at the Temple who were from other countries heard them speaking in their native 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 for You

You need the Holy Spirit baptism to give you power and confidence to witness for Jesus. 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 and vital 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 in water. Philip called the apostles from Jerusalem to lay their hands on the new believers so they could receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

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.

When believers are baptised in the Holy Spirit, many miraculous signs follow, as we have read about in the Bible passages. Believers speak in new languages, the sick are healed, and demons are cast out of people. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is God's miraculous power flowing out of His people, to do His gospel work.

A Gift from Jesus

The Holy Spirit is a gift from God, promised hundreds of years ago to us who would believe on Jesus. Only those who are born-again believers may receive this gift. Jesus is the baptiser in the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we refer to this baptism as "being filled with the Spirit."

When the Holy Spirit fills you, it is like a bottle being filled with water 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, boldness, and fullness.

The Holy Spirit baptism is a gift that God promises you and wants you to receive.

Receive by Faith

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 a person will receive the baptism in the Spirit as they are alone praying to God. Do not think you cannot receive this gift from 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 (pray in tongues).

(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, ask: *“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: read out this prayer, phrase by phrase:

“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!”

(Pastor/Leader: Now 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 they will receive the Holy Spirit just as Jesus has promised.

Don't pressure the people. If the people seem to be unable to speak out in tongues at this time, smile and encourage them, saying, “You have asked for God's gift and He has already given it to you; now you ought to take time to be alone with Jesus.” Tell them that as they praise the Lord and open their hearts to Jesus, they will be filled and they will speak in a new prayer language.)

Using Your Prayer Language

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. You should pray in tongues every day so that the power of the Holy Spirit is flowing through you.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 14:18

The apostle Paul prayed often in the spirit. So should we.

Power to Tell About Jesus

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is given to us so that we can have power to witness for Jesus. Jesus 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” (Acts 1:8).* 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. Don't you want to be able to tell about Jesus to others? Do you want to see people come to know Jesus as you have done? The Holy Spirit baptism is the gift God has provided for you so that you can be confident and bold in sharing your faith.

Summary:

You received the Spirit of Jesus Christ when you repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus to save you. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an additional step to take after you have been saved. When you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit you are obeying Jesus' command to be filled with the Spirit (Matthew 3:11 and Acts 1:5).

The baptism in the Spirit has been given to you so that you would have power and confidence to witness about Jesus. Remember that Jesus said: *"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses."*

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 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 14, and we will study these in Lesson 16.

A final word: you may find that your understanding of spiritual things, and your understanding of Jesus Christ will increase when 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).

Questions:

1. What did Jesus promise to send after He had ascended into heaven? (The Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father.)
2. Who can receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit? (Anyone who has repented and believed on Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.)
3. Why is the baptism in the Holy Spirit given to you? (So that you can have power and boldness to tell others about Jesus.)
4. Have you asked Jesus to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Bible verse (and help them memorise the reference):

Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Lesson 12

What is the Church?

“Who do you say that I am?” Jesus asked Peter. Peter, who was 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 Hell will not overpower it.”* (Matthew 16:16-18).

Jesus said He would build His church on a rock. The rock Jesus speaks of is not a person, but the confession of faith, spoken by Peter. Peter knew that Jesus was the One sent from God to take away the sins of the world, and Peter said this openly.

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 to take away your sins and that He rose from the dead to save you. Jesus became your Saviour. You made the same confession of faith as Peter did. Our confession of faith is the rock the church is built upon.

Jesus also promised that He would build His church (us) so strongly that any attack from Satan or evil would not overpower us.

The Church Belongs to Jesus

The church is made up of every believer living in the world, and every believer who has ever lived. Christians from every nation, family, race, tribe and language are all part of Christ’s worldwide church.

Read out: Colossians 1:12-14

The New Testament tells us that the church is a group of people who are called out of darkness into relationship with Jesus. Only Christians have this special relationship with Jesus because they have believed that He is the Son of God sent to redeem us.

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 they would belong to Him forever. 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, because we all are 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.

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**. So if you have repented of your sins and invited Christ into your life, then you are now a part of His eternal church (even though you may belong to different churches in your community).

In the Old Testament time God's people built a physical temple as a place of worship to God. After Jesus rose from the dead, He sent His Spirit to live inside the people who believed on Him. Because of what Jesus has done, we ourselves have now become God's temple, where God lives.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 3:16

Believers have the Holy Spirit of God living inside them. Instead of a building being the focus of worship to God, born-again Christians become God's building, the church.

The Church is the Body of Christ

Read out: Colossians 1:18

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 of Christ, who is the Head. Sometimes a local church is also referred to as a local body, meaning a **group** 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 purpose. For example, the eye's purpose is to see, the ear's purpose is to hear. We all have different functions in the body. Each of us is a member of the body of Christ, and 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 with in the body of Christ, the church.

Read out: Colossians 3:8-15

When we love and care for each other we bring unity in the church. We are able to love anyone because Christ is in our hearts. As members of the body we must 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 (purposes) differ from one another, 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 verses give 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 cares for his children. He teaches us and 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 together 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 care for one another. We should all help each other as members of Jesus' church. There is a special love between members of Christ's church.

The Church is Jesus' Flock**Read out: Psalm 23 and John 10:11**

Jesus is our Shepherd. We are His sheep. Like shepherds who tend sheep or goats, Jesus 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, called a pastor. A pastor is the leader of the church, and cares for the spiritual life of the members of Jesus' flock. The pastor feeds us the Word of God, helps guide us, and teaches us. The pastor prays for us, and leads us in following the Great Shepherd, Jesus. Listen to your pastor and pray for him/her. Show 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 God's Building

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

Read out: Ephesians 2:19-22 God sees you as part of His building, founded on Jesus.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 3:9-1

Each of us is a part of God's building. Allow God to work in your life to make you well built, showing God's work. We read in 1 Peter 2:5, "*you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*"

What is our spiritual sacrifice?

First, 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.

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

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 sacrificial love that Jesus has for us. Jesus, the bridegroom, loved His bride (the church) and suffered and died on the cross for her. 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 and 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

You are already a member of Jesus' worldwide church when you are saved. It is important that you take the next step to join a local assembly in your community.

Read out: Acts 11:20-26

Churches in the Bible were named after the cities where the Christians lived. Every group that gathered in a house was part of the greater 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 that met in a house.

Read out: Hebrews 10:24-25

It is very important to be faithful to participate in your local church. You are needed there as you also need what others can bring to you. Membership in a local church 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.

The Work of the Church

1. The work of the church is to share the good news about Jesus to the people around them. Every member is to do this, not just the pastor or the evangelist.
2. The work of the church is also to help each other "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). This means learning together and encouraging one another.
3. The work of the church is to help the poor and needy in the name of Jesus.
4. The work of the church is to praise and glorify Jesus Christ.

Read out: Philippians 1:9-11. We should also bring praise to God by how we live, so others see this and honor God.

Summary:

1. The church is made up of people who have been redeemed by Christ's blood sacrifice.
2. The church of Jesus Christ is not a building. The people who belong to Jesus are God's building.
3. Every Christian is a part of the body of Christ and the family of Jesus because we have been purchased with His precious blood.
4. As holy people of God, we are the living stones of the church. We offer spiritual sacrifices to God by showing love for others, by sharing our faith, and by praise and worship to God.

Questions:

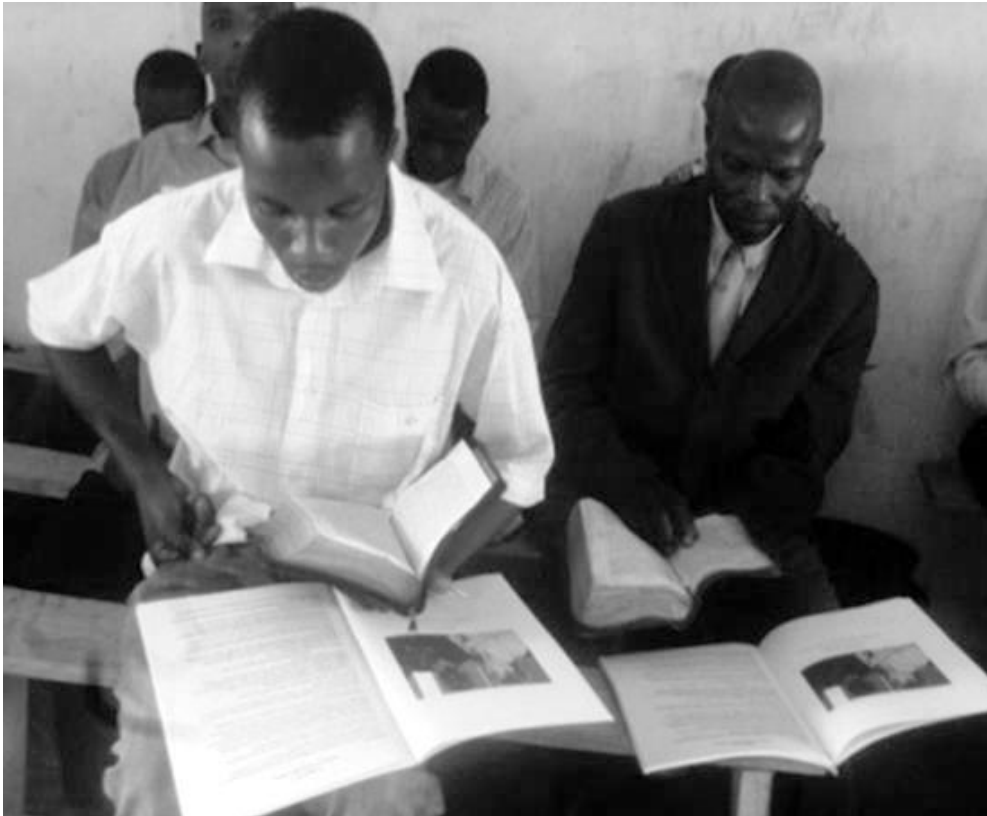
1. How did you become part of Jesus' church?
2. Why is it important to know that the church is a family?
3. Jesus bought us (redeemed us) with what?
4. If we are the house of God, and the family of God, how should we behave in our families? In our community? In our church?
5. How can you share the gospel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

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Bible verse and reference:

Hebrews 10:24-25

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another”



Lesson 13

In God's Sight

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

Everyone is Created in God's Image

Read out: Genesis 1: 26-28

We read in the Bible that people were created by God in His image and likeness. We were created to be in relationship with God. We learned that sin has broken our relationship with God and broken the image of God in our lives. When we become believers, however, and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, a process begins whereby we may begin to be restored again into the image and likeness of God just as God intended.

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 born, even 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 and Psalms 139 tell us that all people, including you and me, are highly valued by God. The Lord sees us all as equal in value to all the other people in the world. (This includes the person sitting right next to you today.)

God loves you whether you are a man, a woman, or a child. It does not matter to God if you are black, white, or other skin colour, rich or poor, tall or short. It does not matter 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 Romans 13:8

Ask the group to discuss these questions:

1. How can you show Christ's love to someone in our community who needs Christ?
2. How can you show Christ's love to someone in your 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 quite 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 in the law?' 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 22:37-39).

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 in life.

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 children, school children; those in good health or the injured, those sick and dying; all these people have been created by God, and are loved and valued equally 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 therefore see other people in the same way that God sees them, we must treat them as we have been commanded in the Bible: with love, respect, and compassion.

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

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 me.

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 unlovable. We cannot be holy people only on a Sunday morning or when with other Christians. We must reflect God's love and values each and every day, to everyone, in every situation.

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

Let's read what the Bible says about how God views different kinds of people:

Men and Women:

Read out: 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.

Read out: Mark 15:4

Jesus included women as His disciples. Jesus gives equal value to women as to men.

Children:

Read out: Matthew 19:13-15

Jesus valued children equally as adults.

Different Races, Tribes, and Peoples:

Read out: Romans 1:16-17

God shows that all people, both Jews and non-Jews, have equal value in his eyes. Jesus loves all people and He died for everyone. What God values is the faith a person has in Christ.

Equal Status:

Read out: Galatians 3:28

No one should consider himself higher or lower than any other person, or look down on his neighbour. Women and men are both accepted as workers for God.

Summary:

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 our differences likes and dislikes and live with love, patience, and understanding toward one another.

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 kind of love for you and me. How should we as Christians show this to others?

5. Have everyone close their eyes and reflect on this Scripture as you read it out: **1Timothy 2:1- 6.**

Pastor/Leader say: “Think of someone you have thought badly of, or treated badly in your community; ask God to forgive you; pray for this person right now.”

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture and reference:

Galatians 3:28

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



Lesson 14

Forgiveness

This lesson will focus on what the Bible teaches about forgiveness. Forgiveness means to release someone from a debt, commitment, or obligation that is owed to us. It also involves removing any resentment or condemnation that we have toward that person.

As we think of the action of releasing someone we might, for example, think of a bird which is caught in a snare; you remove the bird and let the bird go free. It flies away unhindered, free, and with gratitude for having being set free. Or we might think of a prisoner from the city jail whom we set free, letting him go without any charge remaining or record of his crime being retained.

Sadly, our hearts can sometimes be like jails which hold on to resentment, anger, or bitterness towards other people for the wrongs they have said or done towards us. We feel hurt and angry and can end up holding on to a grudge week after week, year after year, not wanting to forgive or release the other person from the anger that we feel towards them. When we continue to hold on to the wrongs that they have done against us we build up bitterness and resentment toward the other person. When we live in this way we make our hearts like jails which are full and bursting with rage and unforgiveness.

Holding on to resentment and anger in this way may create a desire in us to harm those who we feel have wronged us. Our thoughts can explode into hatred and move us to actions of hatred or revenge that will harm others. That is why we must deal with unforgiveness in our hearts.

Feelings of bitterness, anger, and resentment towards those who have wronged us can accumulate over time and can result in the development of health problems within our bodies. Some people might develop headaches, heart problems, high blood pressure, difficulty in sleeping, fatigue, panic attacks, or other 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 as we continue to think about the offences others have committed against us.

Bitter feelings also lead to the breakdown in relations between people in families and communities.

What Does Jesus Teach Us About Forgiveness?

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

Read out: Luke 23: 32-39

At the time of His arrest, Jesus had been insulted, abused, whipped and beaten and a crown of thorns was jammed on His head. The soldiers then nailed Him to the cross. Jesus chose to forgive those who had crucified Him and those who jeered at Him. Even while suffering on the cross He asked His Father to forgive the people who had harmed Him. He asked

forgiveness for those who did not believe in Him and who had chosen to wrong Him in such an extreme way.

Read out: Matthew 18:21-22; and Mark 11:25-26

Pastor/Leader, ask: “*What does Jesus teach us in these verses?*”

God gives His complete forgiveness to each one of us when we repent and Him for forgiveness. 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 live happy and fulfilled lives, then we must forgive those who have committed offences against us. If we wish to have peace in our own lives and in our communities then we need to choose to forgive. Only with God’s help are we able to learn to do this.

Biblical Forgiveness

It is important that we understand what the Bible means by forgiveness. Forgiveness has two distinct parts which are connected together. First is the *receiving* of forgiveness and second, the *giving* of forgiveness.

Part 1 of Forgiveness: The Receiving Part

Read out: Luke 7:48 and Acts 10:43

God’s forgiveness is given to us when we come to Him and repent, turning away from our sins. God’s forgiveness is without charge to us but it is with the understanding that Jesus paid the heavy cost for our sins. 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 forgiveness has been poured into their lives. We need to understand that God’s grace is fully given to us; Jesus has paid the full price for our sins at Calvary. We therefore stand completely 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; it is as though your past wrongs have been placed as far as the east is from the west. 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

Pastor/Leader, ask: Have you accepted the forgiveness Jesus offers you?

Jesus came to set free a world trapped in guilt and sin. On the cross 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; in God’s eyes we are free from blame. We can be at peace and have assurance that God has really forgiven us.

In the same way, if we are forgiven 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

(Pastor/Leader: Read out this section if it is too long for your people)

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 this child? Think about the great amount of time and energy that you had used to earn your wealth, and then your 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, but rather the father is God Himself. The father in the story is different from an earthly father and the story shows us that God is full of forgiveness. God is waiting for us to return to Him; He is waiting to give forgiveness to us. His forgiveness is full and complete regardless of the extent of our sins. He forgives people without counting how large or heavy their sins were.

Jesus' story shows us that we as Christians ought also to show the same mercy and forgiveness to other people, no matter how large or heavy their wrongs are against us.

Why Should I Forgive?

Read out: Ephesians 4:32

God commands us to forgive each other. Wherever there are people gathered together, there will be times when one person causes offence to another. Even in the community of the church, this is so. But we can live in peace and harmony together 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. Jesus paid for our forgiveness with every drop of His blood. We owed an impossibly large debt to God, but Jesus paid the price for our forgiveness. In the same way He expects us to forgive those who have wronged us.

The forgiveness that Jesus gave us is so much greater than what He asks us to give to others. This does not mean that our injuries are not

important; it means that we are obligated to forgive the offenders as Jesus has forgiven us.

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. 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 law court (1Corinthians6:1-10).

How to Forgive Others

- Begin by thinking of the people who have offended you 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 and 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 choice and a decision that we make; it is an act of our will. It is saying, *“Although I have been wronged and injured 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 continue to fill your mind and heart with words like these, eventually you will experience the peace of God in your heart.

If you find the thoughts about the wrong done to you coming into your mind, you can dismiss it in Jesus’ name and say *“I forgive. I set them free.”* This is what Jesus did on the cross for you. You can 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 of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If feelings of anger or resentment return, you should repeat again, *“I forgive, and I set you free.”* Each time as you do this your feelings will begin to come under God’s authority. In time the feelings will fade. Remember that 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.

Questions:

Read out again: Matthew 18:23-35

Discuss each of these questions:

1. What does Jesus teach in this story?
2. How much debt (sin and wrong doing) has God forgiven you?
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. Where can we find the strength to forgive others?

Read out: Philippians 4:13 and Matthew 11: 28-30

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.

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise either or both of the Scripture verses and references:

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Ephesians 4:32

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."



Lesson 15

Victory and Assurance in Christ

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

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

The Origin of Satan

Satan was created by God along with the other angels who are God’s servants, yet Satan started a rebellion in heaven and was cast down to earth by God. Jesus said, “*I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning.*” (Luke 10:18).

Satan was thrown down from heaven because he said, “I will make myself like the Most High” (like God). Satan wants to rule the world we live in with his evil plans.

Satan’s Strategies

Satan wants to rule the world we live in with his evil plans. His plan is to continually work against the purposes of God. Satan works tirelessly to corrupt and destroy human life and to attack the people and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. As our enemy he desires to destroy us and to lead 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

Satan is in no way as powerful as God is. He is not present in all places at all times, because he is not God. He is limited in his power and knowledge. He cannot know the thoughts in our minds and He cannot be in more than one place at a time as God is able to be. 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.

Because Satan is limited in his power, he can only do what he is permitted to do by God. When he does anything against us, God has given us His power to overcome him.

How Satan Attacks Us

The devil uses these means to attack us:

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

Read out: Matthew 4: 1-11

2. Deception and Lies – the devil lies and tries to deceive us, just as he deceived Adam and Eve.

Read out: Genesis 3:1-7

3. 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. Your old life has been wiped away.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 5:17.

4. Affliction – The devil seeks to afflict us with physical and mental illness, adding to the illnesses and physical problems already present in this world.

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

5. Opposition – Satan and his evil spirits fight against God and His saints

Read: Revelation 12:17

The devil, the dragon, fights against God's people.

Read out: Ephesians 6:10-18

Because of our enemy and his attacks, we wrestle in prayer against him. When we fight the devil in the power of Jesus, we win!

6. 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: Our bodies require certain things like food, water, clothing, and basic shelter. But we must be watchful about some of the things our bodies and soul desire, because longing for some things can make us 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 in 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 and 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.

Victory over the Enemy

To have victory over Satan we need to understand that Satan is a spiritual being and a force, operating in the spiritual realm, and often in the physical world. As people we cannot see the spiritual world directly or the schemes that Satan is bringing against us, but the spiritual world can and does influence the physical world in which we live.

We don't have to live in fear of Satan and evil spirits, because God has given us everything we need to know the plans of the devil and how to fight him off. We can have victory over the evil plans of Satan only in the strength and authority of Christ.

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.

Spiritual Weapons

Read out: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 4:13-15; 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, we need to fight with spiritual weapons. Jesus has given us these spiritual weapons so that we can fight and win in our lives:

1. The Name of Jesus

Christ's victory at the cross was total and complete. He defeated sin, Satan, and 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 be 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 confronted 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, guidance, and strength into our lives. The Bible is a light which gives us understanding of God’s ways and of 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 and 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 Bible verses to our situation. When we are faced with the attacks of the devil we should use the Word of God to defeat him. When you are standing against the devil and using the Word of God, the devil is unable to stay because the truth of the Bible is being spoken and applied.

When the devil attacks you, say: *“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 with the group: What do these Scriptures say about 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 [Jesus], and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”*

We are the overcomers spoken about in these verses. 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 the 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, telling you the lie that you don't have enough power to resist him. He will tell you that you are a sinner or will remind you of your past sin. When he does this, you should 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. Christ forgave you and made you clean from your sin.

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!

4. The Weapon of Prayer

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 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. Help these people find confidence in God and His promises. You may need to repeat lessons from the *Walking with Jesus* course with them to help them overcome their problems.)

Pastor/Leader, ask your group:

"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, and 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.

Questions:

Pastor/Leader: spend some time discussing these questions.

1. Who is your enemy? (The devil is our enemy; not other people, tribes, groups, or the government, etc.)
2. Who has all power over every evil spirit and their attacks? (Jesus)
3. What traps has the devil used in your community? What are the results?
4. What traps has the devil used in your personal life? How has it affected both you and your family?
5. Name some things you can do to fight and win against the devil?
6. **Read: Proverbs 16:18-19.** We understand that Satan desires to bring conflict into the church – so what can we learn from these verses?

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and the reference:

James 4:7

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”



Lesson 16

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In Lesson 11 of this course we learned about the baptism of the believer in the Holy Spirit and how this baptism empowers us to be witnesses for Jesus.

In this new lesson we will learn more about God's spiritual gifts and how the Holy Spirit uses these spiritual gifts within the church and in your life. The best gift that God has already given each of us as believers is the gift of eternal salvation through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, yet God has also given many other gifts to believers.

In this lesson we look at what the Bible says about these gifts.

God Gives Us Gifts of People

Read out: Ephesians 4:11-12

These five gifts, given by God to the church, are gifts of people: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher. These are not offices or positions, as some may think. These gifts are servant-leaders who, like Jesus, give their lives to lead and train the church to do the work of God on earth.

God Gives Us Gifts of Abilities

Read Romans 12:4-9

This is a list of gifts given to people so that they can serve God and others. A believer may have one or more of these gifts or abilities. A person with the gift of 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 who shows mercy, or love, is encouraged to excel in this work. Every gift listed here is a gift that God has put into people so they can better serve Him.

These gifts are not given so that one person can boast or make themselves higher than another. 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 (God's ability) that God has given us. (Romans 12:6).

The Supernatural Gifts of the Holy Spirit

(Pastor/Leader: If your people have difficulty reading long passages, read this for them:)

Read out: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

In this chapter we read about nine gifts given by the Holy Spirit to people in the church (the body of Christ).

Here is a list of nine different gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12: 4-10:

Gifts of Revelation:

The Word of Knowledge

The Word of Wisdom

The Discerning of Spirits

These three gifts manifest 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:

The Gift of Faith

The Gift of Miracles

Gifts of Healing

These three gifts demonstrate God's great power displayed in lives and situations.

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. Supernatural, means an ability that is far beyond a person's natural human ability and is the action of God, not by human effort or ability. They demonstrate the fact that God is present and He is working in His power.

Explanation of the Gifts

The Word of Knowledge is a gift that gives knowledge or 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. God knows the secrets of a person's heart.

The Word of Wisdom is a gift that gives the speaker the ability 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.

The 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, and what it is trying to do. 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 that is operating is a demon, the Holy Spirit, or a human spirit. The Holy Spirit gives believers knowledge about the spirit.

The Gift of Prophecy is a supernatural ability to speak the words of God and the thoughts of God to a person or into a situation. A believer brings a message from the Lord to people. Sometimes it is a prediction about something in the future, but the Bible tells us that a word of prophecy will

encourage, comfort, and build people up, and not tear them down (1 Corinthians 14:3). A strictly condemning message is not Prophecy from God.

Prophecy never contradicts the words of the Bible and always agrees with the Bible.

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 prayer communication with God. It is the Holy Spirit speaking through your mouth and your voice *in prayer to God*.

Secondly, the gift of tongues may be used when Christians are meeting together. A person will receive a message *from* God and will speak in tongues *to the people assembled together*. This second use of the gift of tongues is not a prayer to God, 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, and the interpreter will speak to the people in the local language.

The Interpretation of Tongues takes place when the Holy Spirit gives a believer the interpretation of something that has already been said in the message 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 spoken.

Gifts of Healing are special anointing's 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.

The Working of Miracles is a special gift of authority which gives a believer power to do miracles in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Gift of Faith comes to a believer and gives God's 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.

Gifts are for Every Believer

Each of these supernatural gifts is given by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit may give one of these gifts to you or to another 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. It is a wonderful truth that God wants to use you in these gifts to help others!

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 prophecy!"* But, this is not correct. The Holy Spirit chooses the gift and the person using the gift (1 Corinthians 12:11). The gifts belong to God and the Holy Spirit uses them when He chooses for the good of the church! Don't limit God's work by thinking that you are not good enough to be used in the gifts of the Spirit. Any believer can be used by the Spirit. Don't think that you know which gift you need or prefer. Let God choose how He wants to use you.

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 Cor. 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. But your heart and life should be pure and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1-2). You must have your mind set on the things of God, and not be motivated by selfish desires for attention or position.

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 greatest or better gifts? The greatest 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 gift of interpretation. 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 Works in Believers

Read out: John 16:7; 12-15

In this passage Jesus tells His disciples about the coming and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives inside you. He came in when you gave your life to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, teaching you, encouraging you, and giving you power to live the right way, God's way. The Holy Spirit always promotes and lifts up Jesus. 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. Sometimes you must wait on God's timing for His answer.

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.

Proper Use of the Spiritual Gifts

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:

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 and stable 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.

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.

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 also 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.

And most importantly, everything that is done through the spiritual gifts should be done to build up and encourage 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 Holy Spirit to use people in the gifts 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. Remember, the apostle Paul tells us: *“What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up”* (1 Corinthians 14:26).

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 so you will be an example for your 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 of being used by God? 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; but it is much better to be used in the gifts *and* 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. How does the Holy Spirit work in the lives of believers? (The Holy Spirit teaches us, always lifts up Jesus; He guides us, gives us wisdom, and uses us in the spiritual gifts for the good of the church)
2. Why are spiritual gifts given? (1 Corinthians 14:12: to encourage, and build up the people in the church)
3. When a group of Christians are gathered and a believer speaks out a message in tongues, what should happen next? (Other believers should pray for the interpretation. If no one interprets, only two or three messages in tongues should be given. The person who gave the message in tongues should also pray to interpret the message in tongues 1 Corinthians 14:27-28)
4. Can you tell of a time when the Holy Spirit used you or someone else 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 most excellent way*" we should show in using the spiritual gifts? (We should always show love)

Pastor/Leader: additional questions if there is time:

Read out and then ask: *“What gift of the Spirit is being written about in these verses?”*

- 1. Read out: Acts 3:1-7** (What Holy Spirit gift is demonstrated? Gifts of Healing.)
- 2. Read out: Acts 16:16-18** (What Holy Spirit gift is demonstrated? Discerning of Spirits)
- 3. Read out: 1 Corinthians 14:27-28** (What Holy Spirit gifts are mentioned? The gift of Tongues, the gift of Interpretation)
- 4. Read out: Acts 19:11** (What Holy Spirit gift is demonstrated? (Gift of Miracles)
- 5. Read out: Acts 21:10-11** (What Holy Spirit gift is demonstrated? The gift of Prophecy)
- 6. Read out: Acts 10:19-20** (What Holy Spirit gift is demonstrated? The Word of Knowledge and Word of Wisdom)
- 7. Read out: Acts 14:8-10** (What Holy Spirit gift is demonstrated? The Gift of Faith, Gifts of Healing)

Summary:

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 when He uses 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.

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Bible verse and the reference:

1 Corinthians 14:12

“Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.”

Lesson 17

Stewardship, Tithing, and Offerings

Psalm 24:1 tells us: *“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”*

Read out: Psalm 50:10-12

We belong to God, and the material goods and money that we own actually belong to God. This lesson will help us learn God’s ways of managing our earthly possessions.

Stewardship

The Bible teaches us how we are to handle, use, and invest the wealth we possess, whether it is much or little. The Bible teaches that we are only managers, or stewards, of the things God allows us to have in our lives.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 6:20

We do not belong to ourselves anymore, we belong wholly to God. Jesus bought us with His blood. Our bodies, our families, our property, our wealth and our future all belong to God.

God Makes Us His Stewards

God has given us the job of being the steward or manager of the things He provides for us.

Read out: Genesis 1:27-30

When God created Adam and Eve He did not make them owners of the garden but made them stewards of the garden. They were accountable to God about how they looked after *His* garden. Adam and Eve should have been obedient to what God asked them to do in the garden, but they disobeyed. Because of this they lost responsibility for the garden and were sent out of the garden (Gen 2:15).

A steward or manager is someone who looks after what is not his own property. Whatever we have (our wealth, house, farm, belongings, our body, mind, etc.) does not belong to us, but all these belong to God. We must be good stewards, or managers, of everything God has given us.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 5:10

We are accountable to our boss, who is God Himself. We will have to report to Him how we lived our lives and how we have handled the possessions He has given us.

Jesus Teaches About Stewardship

Read out: Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus told this story, called a “parable”, to help us understand what God expects of us. The steward looks after the properties and material goods of his boss for his boss’s profit, not his own profit. In this parable, the boss was surprised to learn that one of his stewards did not act responsibly and earned

no profit. As God's managers, we need to use wisely whatever God makes us responsible for, and not be like the foolish steward.

Let's consider the parable Jesus told.

Pastor/Leader, ask:

1. Who is the man who goes on journey? (This man represents Jesus)
2. Who are the servants? (The people of God)
3. Why are the first two men rewarded? (They used their wealth and possessions wisely and brought profit to their master.)
4. Why is the last servant punished when the master returns? (The man was lazy and idle. The man's fear ruled his life, and he did not use his abilities or the money given to him to serve his master.)

From this parable Jesus teaches us that we must be faithful stewards of all that He gives into our lives. If we are a faithful manager, we will be profitable to the kingdom of God. Then our Master will assign us more responsibility.

Read out Luke 16:10-13

If we are faithful in little things, soon our Master will assign us greater things to manage. Faithfulness begins with what you have now. If God cannot trust you to deal faithfully with a little, He says He will not allow you to have more.

When we are faithful in little things, we will be given the opportunity to serve God with greater things. A good boss will not give a big responsibility to a person he knows has been unfaithful with a small job.

You may say, *"But I have so little!"*

Read out: Mark 12:41-44

Even a poor person can be faithful to God with the little she has.

Good Stewardship in Every Area of Our Lives

1. We should be good stewards of our bodies and minds.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 5:10 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Christ purchased us with His blood, and so we belong to Him: body, mind, and spirit. Since we belong to Christ, we must manage our bodies in a way that glorifies God. Physical excesses, sexual acts or lusts outside marriage, evil desires or actions, bullying, jealousies, fits of temper and things like these do not honour God. Our bodies and souls must be tamed for the Lord, because we will have report to Jesus Himself how we have lived.

2. We need to be wise in the use of our time and opportunities.

Every hour of our life belongs to God. We need to look at our time as being precious and not use our time in unnecessary things. If we misuse our time when we are young and strong, this may be a disadvantage to us when we are old. We should not be lost in our own works and projects and forget to give time to God and His work.

Read out Psalms 90:12

3. We should be good stewards of the land.

Read out: Proverbs 28:19-20

If you have land, you can learn how to cultivate your land for food, to provide for your family and help the poor. People and resources of the land must be used and rested properly (Exodus 23:10-12). The Bible encourages us to work on our farm land and we will prosper.

You can learn to be good stewards of the environment, using the ground wisely. Learn about crop rotation, the importance of fighting erosion, combating drought and plant disease. God can bring you people to help you learn to profit from your farm and garden. As Christians it is our responsibility to protect and properly use the environment that God has given us.

4. We should be good handlers of money.

Much good for ourselves and others can be accomplished if our money is used wisely. It is a good idea to keep records of monies that are spent and what they are spent for. It is also important for church leaders to keep an accounting of the income and expenditures.

Read out: Proverbs 17:23

The giving of bribes is condemned by God, as is stealing or misusing another's wealth. God sees everything we do, even if other people do not. We will answer to God for misusing our wealth or another's wealth.

Read out: 1Timothy 6:10

This verse tells us that seeking after riches will lead us to ruin. This verse does not say that money is evil; it says clearly that the **love of money** is the root of all evil. Money is to be used wisely, not pursued greedily, in this life. Jesus said, "*if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?*" (Luke 16:11). Jesus wants us to understand that money is not evil, but that the desire for money can corrupt us. Let us decide to use money in the wisest way. Let us decide to be honest in all our work and relationships.

The Bible teaches us as that if we honour God with our money and material things we will be content and blessed. Our focus should never be on getting rich but on using our resources in the way God wants us to: providing for our families and the poor and supporting Christ's church.

Read out: Hebrews 13:5

We are told to be free from the love of money, and to be content with what we have. This does not mean we should not desire to better ourselves; but we should obey God and wait on His provision. The warning in this verse is that our focus should be on God, not on the gaining of riches for ourselves. It is not wrong to want to have enough food, clothing, and decent shelter, or to desire a better life in which we can serve God well. These are good desires, but they must be under God's rule in our lives so that greed does not enter our hearts.

Read out: Matthew 6:30-33

Jesus tells us that our Father God has promised to take care of us. Trust Him to meet your needs.

Read out: Philippians 4:19

God loves you and will supply your needs because you belong to Jesus.

4. All our possessions must be taken care of and used wisely.

For example, if someone lends you a tool, or a radio, you must take good care of it so that it can be returned in the best condition. When God allows us to have something, we should take good care of it because we represent Him and His interests here on earth.

The Tithe

The word tithe simply means a tenth. Tithing means returning to God one tenth of your income to support God's work. The Bible teaches us through many Scriptures that the first tenth of our increase, whether goods or money, belongs to God.

Throughout the Bible there are examples of those who gave tithes to God. God's people always tithed. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob tithed, and they were blessed by God.

Jacob promised to give God tithes when he came home safely. (Genesis 28:20-22). Like Jacob, we give a tithe out of gratitude to God for all that He does for us.

Why Should We Tithe?**Read out: Malachi 3:10-11**

The first reason to tithe is that we are obeying God's command.

The second reason is that tithing brings blessings on us, our families, our projects, and our church. Tithing helps us to become prosperous, because we are living under God's blessings, and not a curse! When we obey God and tithe, God works for us by removing anything that steals away our blessings. It is important to understand that prosperity does not necessarily mean great riches, but it means that we will have plenty for ourselves and our family, and more than enough. Prosperity simply means having our needs met and receiving increase.

God commands us to give Him the small tithe portion first, not after we have used up most of our income or increase.

Read out: Proverbs 3:9-10

We are told to honour God by giving the first tenth of our increase; whether it is from our crops, our animals, our work, or our income. Again we read here about God's promise to provide for us if we give our tithe. God is so powerful that He can multiply our resources, even when we have little.

Read out: Nehemiah 13:12

Tithing is not something you do when you feel like giving. Tithing is done regularly, whenever you receive an increase in material things or in

money, such as when you are paid for a task you have completed, or when your crops are ready to harvest.

It is good to remember that the tithe does not belong to us. The tithe is what we owe to God; it is the part that belongs to Him.

Read out: Leviticus 27:30 and 32

God's people were commanded to give one-tenth, or a tithe, of their farming increase and of their animals (also Exodus 23:19 and Deuteronomy 14:2). Believers today also tithe, including their monetary income.

(Pastor/Leader: you can explain the tithe by using an example that everyone present will understand. A tithe is a tenth. Choose an example common to the group to explain tithing.)

Tithing Supports God's Work

The third reason you should tithe is that tithing supports your pastor/leader (those in full-time work) and his family. Your tithes also support the work of the church in your community and in missions.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 9:13-14

The tithes of God's people are given to support those who teach God's words and do God's work. It is God's plan that pastors and full time ministers should be supported by tithing. Tithing is compulsory; it is not something that we give when we want to.

(Pastor/Leader: If you have time, or for your personal study, here are some other verses about supporting full time pastors and ministers: 1Corinthians 9:11; 1Timothy 5:17-18; and 1Corinthians 9:7-11.)

The Danger of Not Tithing

Read out again Malachi 3:8-12

These verses are the words of God Himself! A Christian who knows he should to tithe and does not brings a curse on himself. God tells us in these verses that someone who is not tithing is a **thief**, this person is not stealing from a man but he is stealing from God!

Tithing can make all difference in a project that is not moving well. Where Christians are not giving tithes, the pastor or minister will not be able to support his family. Church needs will not be met, such as renting the building, helping the poor, administration, travel, communication. These responsibilities should be met through believers tithing. Tithing is everyone's responsibility. To neglect this command brings reproach on the name of Jesus.

In some countries, Christianity is known as "the poor religion" because believers do not tithe and so there is little blessing. In some countries the temples of idols are hung with gold and jewels—because even poor people give generously to their idols! How much more should we as believers in the true God give to His work?

Do you want God's blessing on your life and family? Do you want to see your pastor and church grow and be effective for Christ in your community? If you want these things, then you will become a faithful tither.

Where Do You Give Your Tithe?

The Bible teaches us that we should take our tithe to the "storehouse of God" (Malachi 3:10). This means our tithe goes to our church, where we receive our instruction and help. Every believer should tithe to their local church (or ministry), no matter how small the tithe, so that God can begin to bless the people and the church.

Pastor/Leader, ask this question:

"Do you know a church where the pastor has had to leave because there is no support? What is God's answer to this problem?" (The people should begin tithing. As God blesses them with increase, the support and the material wealth of both people and church will grow.)

Fear of Tithing and Giving

One reason we do not see healthy, growing churches is that the people do not tithe. Tithing is God's promise of blessing to all believers, but many do not tithe because they think that they will not have enough to eat or to provide for their family. They live in fear because that is what life has taught them.

Believers who begin to tithe will see God's blessing and intervention come to them. If you wish to walk in continuous blessing and growth, you must tithe. Your fear must be surrendered to God. He will deliver you of this fear if you pray and trust Him daily. We can be confident that when we obey God He will always take care of us in the best way possible.

Fear is the opposite of faith. The Bible says, *"without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Hebrews 11:6) and, *"we walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7). God rewards your faith; that is, you show your faith in Him by giving the tithe and waiting for His provision.

You may be tested as you begin to tithe, but soon you will see God's results of provision for you. You will be able to encourage others in tithing.

About Offerings

An offering is a gift of money or goods, or when you serve or work freely for someone or for a project. In other words, you give a portion of your time, your money, your material things, or your work as a gift to God. An offering is not a tithe—offerings are voluntary, and are given **after** you have given your tithe. An offering is not something owed to God as the tithe is, but it is a choice you freely make; you decide what to give, and how much to give. An offering is a gift to help a specific need, to help God's work, or because you wish thank the Lord.

The Bible encourages us to give offerings because it is a very good way to have needs met and by our giving we also are blessed by God.

Read out: Luke 6:38

God always returns a blessing to us when we give freely. Remember that the blessing God sends may be different than what we are expecting. Our God is good and will give back to us the good things we need as we give for the sake of others!

Giving with the Right Attitude

Read out: 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

God loves a person who gives cheerfully! Giving is your free choice, what you determine in your heart. God will reward your giving abundantly, but you must have the right attitude of wanting to bless someone else. We should never give because we are trying to get more material things from God.

As you give, a blessing will come back to you, just as surely as when you plant a seed in the ground it will produce a plant with fruit.

We Give Offerings as an Act of Worship

God's people have always given offerings to Him, and the Bible is full of examples of people who loved God and gave gifts of money or resources to God. David the king said, "*I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.*" (2 Samuel 24:24).

God's people gave offerings to Him of animals and farm produce (Genesis 4:3; Leviticus 1:2). Abraham gave offerings, as did kings, prophets, and all the people of God. We may give an offering to God from our finances or from what we own. An offering is not a tax, something required, but it is giving a gift out of our love for God.

We Give Offerings as Thanksgiving to the Lord

When Noah came safely through the flood he made a thank offering to God (Genesis 8:20). We can also give gifts to God out of thankfulness.

Read out: Luke 21:1-4

Jesus praises the widow who gave the best she had. She is an example of giving generously to the work of the Lord. God blesses this kind of giving. It is not the amount you give that brings God's blessing, but what counts is the love and thanks you give with your gift.

We Give Offerings to Help God's Work

Read out: Philippians 4:16-17

The apostle Paul writes to a church to thank them for their offering sent to support him in his ministry work.

Offerings can be given to build a church building or to maintain the building. Pastors sometimes must pay rent for a meeting place for the church, and there are other costs for the church's maintenance, such as transportation, communication, books, etc.

Read out: Ezekiel 44:30

God's people gave their tithes and offerings to help build and maintain the place of worship. These offerings also met the needs of the ministers of

God. When we give an offering for the maintenance or the work of the church, we are giving to God.

We Give Offerings to Help Others

All around us, in our community, our church, and our world there are needs. Sometimes people in a given area are suffering because of sickness, famine, or war. Believers can give and send a gift to help these people. Sometimes an offering can be collected to help other brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes an offering will be collected to help with missions or other ministry works.

Read out 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

In this passage the church leader (Paul) was collecting offerings from the churches to help the church in Judea, which was suffering from a famine. Paul encourages the believers to give generously so that both they and the people in Judea would be blessed by God.

Another Promise to Those Who Give

We know that God promises blessing and increase to people who give. The Bible also promises that when you give, you will have treasures stored up for you in heaven (Matthew 6:20 and 1Tim 6:18-19).

Things to Consider When Giving an Offering

Before giving an offering, here are some things to think about:

1. What does your heart want to give?
2. Ask God if He wants you to give. Then ask Him what you should give. Give according to your means.
3. Give cheerfully. Do not give if your heart holds resentment or fear. Pray to Jesus to change your heart so that you can give with gladness.
4. No one should be pressured into giving. Ministers should not manipulate people to give, for they will face God's judgement if they do so. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to the hearts of the people.

Summary:

Tithing is giving a tenth from our substance to our church where we receive teaching and care. Tithing is a God's command, not an option. A pastor who receives income from the tithe must also give a tithe from what he has received.

Tithing is God's way of building His kingdom on earth. It is God's way to take care of our pastors, church buildings, and other church needs.

Tithing is an expression of our gratitude to God. God blesses those who tithe and those who give offerings. We should always give with the right attitude.

Offerings help meet the needs of the church and those who are suffering. Giving offerings for missions extends the kingdom of God beyond our own church.

Tithing and giving offerings are one way God provides for our needs as His people. When we give generously we receive generously from God.

Questions:

1. Why do we give tithes to God's house? (The tithe supports the pastor and the needs of the local church.)
2. Who does the tithe belong to? (To God. The first tenth of your income belongs to God, not to you.)
3. Give some reasons to give an offering. (To help the church or the work of the church, to give aid to people in need, to show love or thanks to God, to support missions, etc.)
4. What does God promise to do when we give? (Luke 6:38: When we give, God gives generously to us.)

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and the reference:

Proverbs 3:9-10

"Honour the Lord with your wealth and with your first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."



Lesson 18

Christian Unity

A strong family, a strong church, and a strong community are always built where there is unity among 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. 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 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. When we demonstrate unity everyone receives 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. Many regions and nations are in a state of war and discord. 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, in the church and in our own lives, then we need to learn what God’s Word tells us about the need for love, peace and unity.

Read out: James 3:14-18

Disunity is present where personal plans or needs become more important to individuals than the welfare of the whole group. Disunity can occur where one person feels unvalued or disregarded. Jesus said that the most important commands from God are **to love God and love each other** (Matt 22:37-39). 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.”*

If Jesus valued unity this much, shouldn't we?

Unity in the Church

Quarrels and division in the body of Christ (the church) give the church a bad name in the community and 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 and Ephesians 4:3

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.

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 churches. 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. It is extremely difficult for someone who does not know Christ to keep God's commands; 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.

Pastor/Leader, read out these verses and then ask the group to answer the questions:

Read out: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

What do these Bible verses tell us about being in unity?

Read out: 1 John 3:14-18

How can we show our unity with other people who are Christians?

Read out: Ephesians 4:1-2

What do these verses tell you? What does it mean to have tolerance for another person?

Read out: Philippians 2:2-5

How would you try to obey what the Bible says in these verses?

Read out: 1 Peter 3:8-9

How can you help bring unity in your church or family?

Solving Difficulties

Read out: Genesis 13:5-17

Pastor/Leader, ask: *“What did Abraham do to solve a conflict between the men who worked for him and his nephew, Lot?”*

Here are some answers:

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 Abraham’s faith was in God, not in the man’s work or opinion. Because Abraham did this, God blessed him.

Since there are so many exhortations in the Bible for us to live in peace with each other, we ought to listen and obey them!

Unity in Diversity

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.

Roles and Gifts within the Church

Christ has called some people into some specific roles within the leadership of the church.

Read out: 1 Corinthians 12:28-31

This passage lists people who have been given certain abilities and responsibilities within 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.

Read about these gifts that God has given within the church

1 Corinthians 12:7-12 and Romans 12: 4-8

As believers we each have a role and a function to play within the life of 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. These gifts do not belong to us; they are God's. We don't own these gifts, but we serve the Lord by using what He has placed within us for the good of the entire church.

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. 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 growth and strength to the church.

Read out: Ephesians 4:14-16; Acts 2:43-47; and 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, your family, your church, your community?

2. Based on what you have learned, 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?

Pastor/Leader: after considering these questions, lead the people into a process of reconciliation, followed by prayers.

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Bible verse and the reference:

Philippians 2:2

“make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”

Lesson 19

The Cost of Discipleship

Being a disciple means more than learning about Jesus. Being a disciple means following Jesus. Often it is not easy to follow Jesus because of the pressures of life and the world around us. There are many things that want to pull us away from Jesus, and the devil uses many tricks in order to take us away from Him. Our brothers and sisters throughout the history of Christianity have been persecuted because they decided to follow Jesus and share His good news with other people.

When we decide to follow Jesus, life will not always be easy for us. People in the world will try to pressure us to behave as they do. When we refuse to go along with them we may be made fun of or persecuted. There is a danger of wanting so much to belong that we are pulled into bad ways and pulled away from following Jesus.

In many Muslim countries, if a Muslim comes to believe in Jesus he is cut off straight away from his family or his community. Sometimes these new Christians are punished or put in prison, and sometimes they are killed. Children have even been driven from their homes for believing in Jesus. In some countries, Christians are arrested for having a Bible; others have been killed for their belief in Christ. Missionaries have been arrested and killed for preaching the gospel. Anti-Christian violence and persecution is taking place right now in many countries of the world, especially in countries that are dominated by Muslim rule. It is important that we understand that not everyone in our lives will be happy that we have received Christ, and that there is a cost to being a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus warned us that sometimes such persecution would rise up against us:

Read out: Matthew 24:9 and John 16:2

Jesus tells us that not everyone will be glad we have followed Him, and that we should expect some persecution in our lives.

Read out: Matthew 5:10-11

For some, persecution comes from their family. For others, it comes from their community, or in their work situation. For some Christians, persecution may come from people in power or government. Remember that the evil one, the devil, uses people and events to stir up trouble against believers in Jesus Christ.

Read out: Ephesians 6:10-13

We must remember that our enemy is the devil, and not the people who persecute us. We must fight in prayer to win our battles and use wisdom when persecution comes.

The World and Its Ways are against the Kingdom of God

The world and its systems are very corrupt today. You can suffer injustice simply because you don't want to associate with evil. Your values as

a Christian will not please many people because the way you live goes directly against the values and things they prize. For example, when you speak against corruption on the job, your co-workers will look at you as an enemy; if your boss is corrupt you can be persecuted or let go.

If you are in politics and work to help people, your fellow politicians may consider you an enemy and a threat to their plans.

In many countries around the world today the courts, law enforcement, and other government agencies are corrupt, with much taking and giving of bribes. Some justice systems have persecuted the innocent and allowed the guilty to go free. The world today is highly corrupt and it doesn't like righteousness.

Read out: 1 John 5:19

This verse tells us that people who do not know Christ are in the power of the devil and enslaved to their sinful natures. Much evil in the world comes from this.

Read out: 2 Corinthians 4:4

People persecute us because they are blinded to the truth by the devil, our real enemy. Your prayers are powerful to release people's minds from darkness.

You Must Determine to Pay the Cost

As you decide to follow Jesus you will have struggles. There will be costs to pay for your faith in Christ. Your decision to follow Jesus might cost you your job; in some places it is possible that you could be arrested, chased from your house or country, or even be killed. This was true for Jesus' disciples and for Christians throughout history. When challenges to Christians arise, there will be some who deny Jesus, as Peter did.

Read out: Luke 9:62

Some people turn away from following Jesus because of difficulties. You cannot serve God and the ways of the world. You cannot allow other things to distract you from choosing Jesus every day. Jesus says people who turn back from following Him do not belong in His kingdom. Will you turn away from Jesus?

Jesus Paid a High Cost for Us

Jesus paid the highest cost by giving His own life to save us. John 3:16 says: *'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'* Jesus thought of us, not Himself, when He was hanging on the cross.

Read out: Hebrews 12:2

By coming on the earth Jesus gave up the glory that He had in heaven. He freely came to live on the earth with us, to be like us and suffer as we do. He experienced hunger, thirst, temptation, and persecution as we do. Though He is God He accepted becoming flesh and blood so that we could be saved (Philippians 2:6-8).

Jesus paid a lot of costs: He was born in a stable full of animals which was dirty and had animal waste in it. He lived without a house, preaching all day and travelling constantly. In the evening He would go somewhere quiet to pray. He did not have a wife or a family. He was responsible for all the people who followed Him. He had no income or position. Jesus accepted that people would hate Him and try to kill Him. Even the religious leaders hated Him because He is God's Son.

Here are some of the things Jesus suffered for us:

- Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested and accused, and was taken to court (Luke 22:63-71 and Luke 23:1-5).
- Jesus was mocked and jeered at on the cross (Matthew 27:39-42).
- People reported that He was crazy (Mark 3:21; John 10:20).
- The religious leaders accused Him of being demon possessed (John 10:20 and Matthew 9:34).
- Jesus was asked to leave some towns because people were afraid of His power and did not value His work (Mark 5:13-17).
- He was attacked and chased away in His home town (Luke 4:28-30). Those who knew Him mocked and rejected Him (Matthew 13:54-58).
- Jesus left the comfort of His home and His mother and brothers to travel and teach every day. At times He slept in the open, and He was in danger of robbers and wild animals (Luke 9:57-58).
- His family did not believe in Him (John 7:5), and they considered Him insane (Mark 3:21).
- He was rejected by the people who knew Him well (Mark 6:1-3).

All these things happened to Jesus! How grateful we are for Him!

Read out: John 15:20

Jesus tells us that we, as Christians, will be treated in the same way He was (John 15:20), for the world is full of tribulation. We must accept this as true followers of Jesus Christ.

Read out: Hebrews 12:1-4

Jesus endured the terrible pain of hanging on a cross with nails in His hands and feet, and a crown of thorns on His head. He lost all His blood and slowly suffocated on the cross. He allowed this because He was thinking about us and how we would belong to Him because of this sacrifice.

These verses in the book of Hebrews tell us to be strong in the Lord, knowing that we may also suffer for serving Jesus, but our suffering is nothing like the suffering that Jesus took on the cross.

Counting the Cost of Following Jesus

Although we may suffer for standing for Jesus, we must stay true and stand up for Him and His ways.

Read out: Matthew 10:21-23, 28 and 37-39

For some believers a time may come when our family members reject what we are doing because they do not understand. They may try to convince us to turn back from following Jesus. They may try to remove us from what God calls us to do. Jesus tells us to count the cost: we may even have to separate from our family for a while because of Jesus; or we may have to endure their anger and pressure while living with them.

Jesus Teaches Us to Carry the Cross

Jesus carried His cross and was willingly crucified on it for you and me. He tells us we must be ready to carry a cross of persecution or hardship that will come because we follow Him.

Read out: Luke 14:27

A true disciple will follow Jesus though there is hardship and suffering.

Read out: Mark 8:34-38

Jesus tells us there are more important things than the immediate concerns of this life. If we disown Him, He will disown us.

Read out: Matthew 10:38-39

Carrying the cross means you accept suffering because of Jesus. Our lives should not come first, but Jesus must come first. If by doing evil we want to save ourselves we will, in the end, perish,

Following Jesus means that you accept to carry your cross on a daily basis (Matthew 16:24). Carrying the cross is not like eating cake or chocolate; it is very sorrowful. You will not celebrate carrying the cross, but Jesus says we must accept the cross every day, denying what we would like in our lives and instead, obeying and choosing the kingdom of God. The Bible gives us many verses to encourage us that God is with us. (Psalms 16:11 and Psalms 34:7-8). These promises give us hope and comfort.

Stay True to Jesus

When you are pressured by people or the ways of the world, you may be tempted to turn away from Jesus. Satan wants to make you deny Jesus, as Peter did (Luke 22:54-57).

Read out: 1Peter 1:6-7

God has a purpose in allowing persecution: it is to make you strong and pure. You can have joy in Christ in your trials.

Read out: Mathew 10:32-33 and 37

If we disown Jesus He says He will disown us. Jesus knows that life is hard on the earth and when you decide to follow Him there will be times of testing to see if you truly love Him. If you do not stand firm in Christ you can lose your faith.

If we are persecuted by our family, we should continue to love and help them, even when they are angry or they persecute us. Remember, Jesus wants to save your family members. You can pray for them and know that God is working in their lives to bring them to Himself. Many believers who

have been persecuted by their families have had the joy of seeing their loved ones turn to Christ.

Promises for Us in Persecution

(Pastor/Leader, ask your people after each verse is read: “What promise does Jesus give us when we are suffering for His sake?”)

Read out: John 16:33 (Jesus promises us peace.)

Read out: Matthew 11:28 (Rest.)

Read out: Hebrews 13:5-6 (Jesus will never abandon us. He will help us.)

Read out: Mark 10:29-31 (Brothers, sisters, etc.)

Read out: Romans 16:20 (At the right time, God will crush our enemy the devil and his work.)

How We Can Help Others Who Are Suffering Because of Following Jesus or Preaching the Gospel

- Pray for them and assist them during the time of hardship.
- Assist them with food or other needs and visit them. They may need a house where they can live.
- Take care of their health.
- Invite other Christians around the world to pray for them.

How Should Christians Who Suffer Injustice Behave Toward Those Persecuting Them?

(Pastor/Leader: Read this list; read these verses if there is time.)

- Forgive your persecutors as Jesus did. **Luke 23:34**
- Pray for those who persecute you. **Matthew 5:44** and **Luke 6:27-29**
- Show love and not hate. **Matthew 5:44**
- Speak the good news to persecutors with boldness. **Acts 4:1-13**
- Don't return evil for evil. **Romans 12:17**
- Do good to those who persecute you. **Luke 6:27-28**
- Leave revenge to God. **Romans 12:19-21**

What God is Able to Do during Our Time of Suffering

1. God is able to deliver us from the hands of our enemies.

Read out Acts 12:6-18 (Pastor/Leader: you may read this passage if it is too long or difficult for your people.) 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 (Paul was delivered from evil men and from death many times.)

2. God gives us peace during the time of tribulation.

Read out: John 16:33

3. God gives us endurance.

Read out: James 1:3-4 and 2 Thessalonians 1:4

4. God teaches us to love those who hate us.

Read out: Acts 7:59-60 (Stephen cared for those who hated him and who were stoning him to death.)

5. God may provide miracles during intense suffering.

(Elijah the prophet, hunted by an evil king, was brought food in the desert by birds sent from God [1Kings 17:1-6].)

6. God uses our hard circumstances to spread the good news about Jesus. This means that your suffering can bring other people to the joy of salvation and eternal life in Christ.

Read out: Philippians 1:12-14 (Paul was put in prison for preaching the gospel and because of this many more people began to hear about Jesus.)

Summary:

Following Jesus is not always easy. There will be times of pressure and persecution. Persecution comes not because Jesus wants us to suffer, but because the world wants to take us away from Jesus.

In our times of hardship we need to stand firm and know that God is with us. We need to rely on Jesus and the Bible's promises for us. We can pray for strength and for deliverance from evil, and we also pray for those who attack and persecute us.

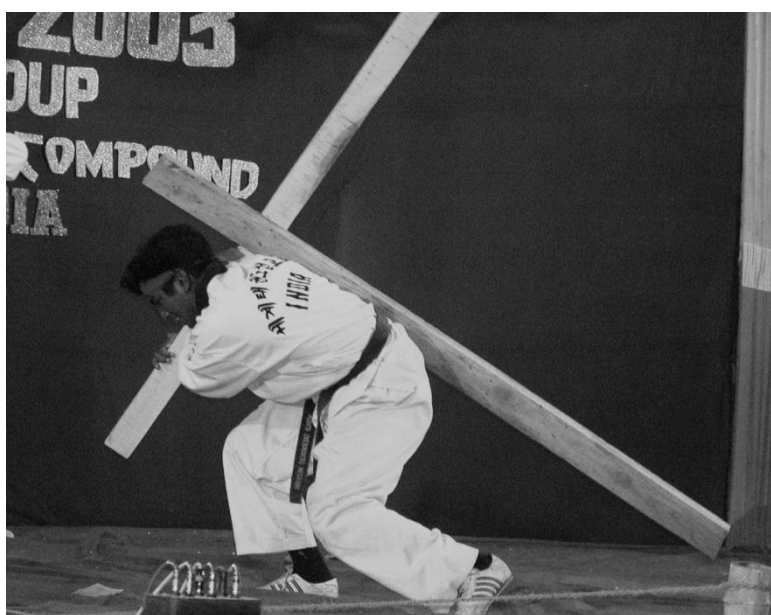
When we endure suffering and persecution for Jesus, we become strong and we can encourage others by our experience.

Memory Verse

Pastor/Leader: Help the group to learn and memorise this Scripture verse and the reference:

Matthew 10:32-33

"Whoever acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before others, I will disown before My Father in heaven."



Words to Know: Glossary

Angel: a spirit being who serves God day and night; there are also fallen or evil angels who rebelled against God, sometimes called evil spirits, devils or demons.

Anointing: The presence of the Holy Spirit in and 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)

Burnt Offering: Sacrificing a whole animal to God; God's people did this in the Old Testament time, before Jesus came.

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.

Corrupt: Evil, selfish, full of bad plans or actions, rotten.

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.

Good Shepherd: A name Jesus calls Himself. He takes care of those who belong to Him.

Gospel: The good news, or the story of Jesus. The Bible has four gospels, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Grace: God's undeserved favour and forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness extended to us only because of what Christ has done for us.

Hell: a place of torment for those who die without believing on Jesus.

Holy: A life without sin that is focused towards pleasing God.

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, justification: 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.

Offering: A gift given to God in thankfulness or given to meet a need.

Parable: A story about life that has a spiritual meaning.

Persecute, Persecution: To be punished, killed or cast out for believing in Jesus.

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, but God's gift of tongues.

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.

Testimony, testimonies, testify: Telling others about what God has done for you.

Tithe: One-tenth of the entire amount.

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.