

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

**SABBATH SCHOOL
TEACHER'S
HANDBOOK**

SENIOR GRADE
BOOK 2

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LESSON 1

Studies in The Shorter Catechism

THE MORAL LAW (1)

Catechism Questions - 39,40.

Scripture Text - Eccl. 12:13; Micah 6:8, Rom. 2:14,15.

AIM OF LESSON

To show, by reference to the Catechism and especially to the Scriptures, the need for God's Law in the world.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Catechism

'Duty' is what is due from us to God. 'Revealed will' -God's will is revealed (unveiled) in two ways: by conscience, the law of God written in our hearts (see Romans 2:14,15); and by the Law of God written in The Ten Commandments. 'Moral' Law means law concerned with conduct and character.

Scripture

Eccl. 12:13 - The book of Ecclesiastics has dealt with various ways in which man has sought to find fulfilment, only to discover that 'all is vanity' (12:8, that is untrustworthy, unsubstantial). The writer's conclusion at the end of the book is that the only real fulfilment is found in keeping God's commandments. 'Fear God' means to view Him with utter reverence and homage.

Micah 6:8 - In this chapter there is a clear contrast between man's view of what God requires of him and God's view. We can know God's requirements only because God has revealed them to us - 'He has shown...' We can never discover them for ourselves. God's requirements are: 'to do justly', i.e. to live righteously (which is possible only when a man is right with God): 'to love mercy'; the word translated 'mercy' means 'covenant, steadfast love'; applied to God, it means His unmerited grace to sinners; applied to man, it means covenant loyalty, to God and to man; 'to love mercy' therefore means to delight in God's covenant love and to show covenant love to Him and to others: 'to walk humbly with your God'; that means a life of obedience and humble fellowship with Him.

Romans 2:14,15 - What about people who do not have the Ten Commandments? They have a law written in their hearts - conscience - by which they know what is right and what is wrong. Does that mean that the Ten Commandments are not really needed? They are needed, because sinful man's instinctive reaction to conscience is to suppress it; and so God has set forth His unchanging standard by which men are challenged and judged.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Wouldn't it be great if there were no rules telling us, 'you must not do this' or 'you must not do that'? Or would it? Suppose you had twenty-two players on a football or hockey pitch, and every player decided to do exactly what he or she liked - no rules, no referee, just a free-for-all. That is exactly what it would become, a free-for-all, absolute chaos. In the same way, if there were no rules of The Highway Code, traffic would be absolute chaos, with some people - temporarily! - driving on one side of the road and another person meeting them coming the other way but on the same side of the road! The class might be asked to suggest other areas where rules are imperative, e. g. in other types of games, in school, or at work.

God in His grace has given us rules for living, The Moral Law, because, for one reason, life without rules can be chaos. The closing chapters of the book of Judges, for example, show what happened when 'every one did what was right in his own eyes.' Can the students give examples of the anarchy which results today when law and order break down?

Outline

Start with the Catechism questions, to show that God has given (revealed) rules for man's obedience. Those rules are revealed in two ways - in conscience (Romans 2:14,15), and in God's written Law. Why do you think God wrote down His Law? Possible answers: (a) So that people would never be able to say, 'We didn't know.' (b) Because people's consciences cannot always be relied on: If we don't pay attention to an alarm clock, we eventually don't hear it. (c) Because if people disagree about what is right, there needs to be a standard to refer to.

Go on to the Scripture passages:

1. Eccl. 12:13. Were any of you ever glad to get back to the routine of school because you were bored having nothing particular to do? You had gone from one thing to another, trying to find satisfaction, and nothing really satisfied. That is the story of the book of Ecclesiastics. The man who wrote it came at last to a conclusion that the only really satisfying life is the life that is governed by rules, and by respect for the One Who has given the rules - Eccl. 12:13. The class might be asked to give examples of the keeping of rules depending on our respect for those in authority who impose the rules. (Encourage the students to speak of respect for parents, teachers, employers, police, and lead on to speak of reverence for God as the basis of our obedience to Him: 'Fear God and keep his Commandments.')

2. Micah 6:8. Perhaps I could make up my own rules about what would be pleasing to God? Micah 6:6,7 suggests some possibilities, but they are man's ideas and not God's. The students might make a list from these verses of things that man might offer as pleasing to God. Verse 8 gives God's requirements. See Background Notes.

3. Romans 2:14,15 has already been referred to. Stress the point that no one can make the excuse, 'I didn't know.'

APPLICATION

1. Can you think of examples in your own experience when things went wrong because you broke God's rules? e.g. the chain of consequences that followed the telling of a lie.
2. If God has revealed His will to us in His Word, isn't it important that we should study that Word so that we may know what He is asking of us? For example, we need to study Matthew 5:21-37 to learn what, according to the teaching of Jesus, is involved in keeping the Commandments.
3. If God's Word shows us that we have broken His Law, must we not come to Him with confession and seeking forgiveness? It is important to stress that confession should be of particular sins.

FURTHER BACKGROUND READING:

PACKER, J. I. The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)

WATSON, Thomas The Ten Commandments

WILLIAMSON, G. I. The Shorter Catechism questions 39,40

LESSION 2

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

THE MORAL LAW (2)

Catechism Questions - 41,42.

Scripture Text - Ex. 31:18; Deut. 10:4; Matt. 22:37-40.

AIM OF LESSION

To show that the moral Law may be summarized in two ways -

- (a) in The Ten Commandments, outlining our duty to God and to man; and
- (b) in Christ's summary in Matt. 22:37-40, which sees the Law as enjoining utter love for God and for man.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Catechism

Q 41 - 'summarily comprehended' means summed up and shortly stated.

Q 42-'heart', 'soul', 'strength', 'mind', may be taken as different parts of our response to God: 'heart' refers to our emotional response; 'soul' to our spiritual response, 'strength' to our physical response (in action); and 'mind' to our intellectual response. But in view of the fact that these distinctions are not specifically made in Scripture, and that each of these different aspects of man's being are often in the Bible applied to the whole person, it might be better to take them all as expressing the totality of man's being rather than different parts of it. We are called to love God with our whole being.

Scripture

Exodus 31:18 - The Ten Commandments were written on two tablets of stone to emphasize their permanence; 'with the finger of God' to indicate their Divine authority. It is customary to think of one of the tablets as containing the first four commandments - our duty to God; and the second containing the other six - our duty to man, but this division is speculative. Some scholars think that the two tablets were duplicate copies, symbolizing one for God and one for the people, as terms of the covenant.

Deut. 10:4 - Here we have God's renewal of the Law when the tablets which had been broken were replaced, stressing (a) the permanence of the Law, and (b) the mercy of God who did not cast His people off because of their disobedience.

Matt.22:37-40 - The question was asked to test Christ - probably with hostile intent - but Christ used the occasion to go to the heart of what is required in God's Law - love to God and love to man, in that order.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

At the end of The Highway Code there are several pages which deal with major points of the law affecting safety on the roads (show a copy). Not all the traffic laws are given, just a summary of them. It is important to know that summary for your own good and the good of others. The Ten Commandments are a summary of God's Law, giving the broad outline of what God requires of His people. But there is an even briefer summary, which Christ gave in answer to a question from an expert in the Law, 'Which is the great commandment in the Law?'

Outline

We have two summaries of the moral Law, brought together in question 41,42 in the Catechism. Explain 'summarily comprehended' in question 41. Leave details of question 42 until the study of Matt 22:37-40.

1. The giving of the Ten Commandments - Exodus 31:18. God had given Moses detailed instructions on Mount Sinai. Now He gives him a summary of His Law, written on two tablets of stone.

a) Note that their being written on stone indicates their permanence.

b) Their being written with the finger of God indicates their divine authority. This is God's Law, and therefore must be obeyed.

c) We are not told how many commandments were written on each tablet, but it has been held one tablet contained the first four Commandments - our duty to God; and the second tablet the remaining six - our duty to our neighbour (That division seems to be borne out by Christ's summary in Matt. 22:37-40, though it does not speak of separate tablets). By looking at the Commandments, let the students note that the first four deal with our relationship with God and the second six with our relationship with our neighbour.

2. The renewal of the Ten Commandments - Deut. 10:4. The people immediately broke God's Law by making a graven image and worshipping it (which Commandments?) - Deut. 9:12 (See Exodus 32) - and Moses broke the two tablets of stone as a sign that the people had broken the Law of God and displeased Him. But in answer to the prayer of Moses, God renewed His Covenant, and again wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone.

That tells us:

a) that our breaking of God's Law is a very serious thing (Moses' breaking of the tablets before the people);

b) that God's Law still stands, even though we have broken it;

c) that God does not cast off His people, but renews His relationship with them.

Illustrate - A parent may show displeasure and inflict punishment for a child's disobedience: the command which has been disobeyed still stands: and the parent still loves the child.

3. Christ's summary of the Commandments - Matt. 22:37-40.

a) Why do you think the expert in the Law asked Christ which was the greatest commandment?

Possible answers: -

- (i) To see if Christ really was a competent teacher: did He really know? If not, He would be discredited,
- (ii) To provoke an argument between Him and the Pharisees; if He said something different from what they believed,
- (iii) Out of a real desire to know. In a similar but probably different incident in Mark 12:28-34 Christ said that the questioner was not far from the Kingdom of God.

Probably the question was asked with hostile intent.

(c) Where did Christ get His answer? The first part from Deut. 6:4, 5. This summary of the Law was one of the first things that every Jewish child had to memorize. This was called the Shema, from the first word in v. 4, the Hebrew word translated 'Hear'. (See background notes for discussion of the meaning of 'with all your heart...') .Alongside Deut. 6:4,5 Christ put Leviticus 19:18 - 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Note that, as Paul shows in Romans 13:9, all the Commandments relating to our duty to man are summed up in this command to love our neighbour as ourselves. Let the students show how stealing, killing, etc., are not loving one's neighbour as oneself.

APPLICATION

The most important word in Christ's summary of the Law, so far as our relationship to God is concerned is the word 'all' - 'all you hear'. Nothing less is acceptable. Note that the love for our neighbour must spring from our love for God, and is the proof of our love for God (See 1 John 4:20, 21).

FURTHER BACKGROUND READING:

PACKER, J. I. The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)

WATSON, Thomas The Ten Commandments

WILLIAMSON, G. I. The Shorter Catechism questions 41,42.

LESSON 3

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

THE MORAL LAW (3)

Catechism Questions 43,44.

Scripture Text - Ex. 20:2; Josh. 24:1-28; 1 Cor. 6:20.

AIM OF LESSON

To show the incentives we have for obedience to the moral Law - God's grace in redeeming us, and the price that was paid for our redemption.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Catechism

Question 43 - 'Preface' means 'what was said before' and what is said before The Ten Commandments is of vital importance (See Background Notes on Exodus 20:2 below).

Question 44 - Each of the names - 'LORD', 'our God', 'Redeemer' - is someone who liberates and pays the price for liberation. Note that the Scripture proofs given for the answer to Question 44 are from the New Testament, showing that the same incentive for obedience is found in the New Testament as in the case of the Israelites. It is worth noting that The Larger Catechism inserts the sentence 'we are bound to take him for our God alone' before 'we are bound to keep all his Commandments'. Commitment to the Lord comes before obedience. (The Larger Catechism is often of great value in amplifying the answer given in the Shorter Catechism).

Scripture

Exodus 20:2- It is most important to note that The Ten Commandments do not begin, 'you shall have no other gods before Me.' They begin with what God has done, bringing His people out of bondage. The Ten Commandments are not a set of rules by which people can be saved: **they are a set of rules for a saved people.** The motive for obedience is what God in His grace has done in redeeming His people.

Note the significance of the titles given to God in this verse - God, the God of might and power, the Creator; LORD, Jehovah, the covenant God of His people. There are therefore three incentives for obedience - God has created us; God has entered into an eternal covenant with us; God has redeemed us from spiritual bondage.

Joshua 24:1-28 - Before Joshua called the people to choose whom they will serve (v. 15), he reminds them of all that God has done for them from the time of Abraham right up to their victories in Canaan. Proclamation of what God has done must come before any appeal. (This is vitally important in presenting the Gospel).

In vv.17,18 the people accept the truth of the proclamation of God's mighty deeds, and then make their commitment to the Lord - 'We also will serve the Lord.' That is always the order in the Bible - first, acceptance of what the Lord has done and then, engagement to be the Lord's.

1 Cor. 6:20 - The incentive to obedience - and that involves the use of our bodies - what we find here is that we have been bought with a price, and therefore our lives - including our bodies - are not our own but God's. See 1 Peter 1:18,19 for the price that was paid for our redemption.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

How do The Ten Commandments begin? See Exodus 20:2. Not with 'you shall have no other gods before Me,' but with 'I am the Lord your God which brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage.' See Background Notes for amplification.

Who is this God? What titles are applied to Him in this verse? He is God, that is, The Almighty Creator. He made us, and that is one incentive for obeying His Law.

He is the LORD. When you find LORD in capitals in the Bible it stands for Jehovah, the God who entered into a covenant with His people Israel, and who is eternally bound to all His people in covenant love (in something of the same way as a husband and wife are united in marriage). So creation and Covenant together give God a double claim on our obedience.

God in His covenant love redeemed His people from bondage in Egypt. So the third incentive for obedience is redemption. See Catechism Questions. Define redemption by referring to the Old Testament use of the word to describe liberation from bondage in Egypt, and the New Testament use of the word to describe liberation from slavery. See 1 Peter 1:17,18. Go on to Joshua 24:18, which shows that God's grace towards His people is a continuous thing. Ask the students to list from Joshua 24 the things that God had done for His people from the time of Abraham to their victories in Canaan.

Note that in vv. 17,18 the people say 'Yes' to all that has been said about what God has done for them. The main thrust of the lesson is to stress the truth that we cannot give ourselves to the Lord and to His service until we realise and accept what He has done for us in Christ. Proclamation must come before appeal. John 3:16 with its tremendous proclamation of what God has done for us might be used to illustrate this.

Was there any price paid for the redemption of the people from bondage in Egypt? The Lamb (1Cor. 6:20) tells us that a price was paid for our redemption. What was it? See 1 Peter 1:17,18.

What follows from the fact that a price was paid for us? We are not our own any more, but God's. Therefore, since our lives are His, we must obey Him at all times. Our obedience will involve what we do with our bodies: in what ways?

APPLICATION

This lesson gives the opportunity to stress

(a) that redemption is all of grace, that it begins with what God has done for us in Christ

(b) the evidence of redemption is obedience to God's Law.

FURTHER BACKGROUND READING

MOTYER, J. A. The test of Faith pp. 50, 51.

PACKER, J. I. The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)

WATSON, Thomas The Ten Commandments

WILLIAMSON, G. I. The Shorter Catechism questions 43,44

LESSON 4

Studies in The Shorter Catechism

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT (1)

Catechism Questions - 45,46.

Scripture Text - Ex. 20:3; 1 Kings 11:1-10; 1 Chron. 28:9; Deut. 26:17; Matt. 4:10

AIM OF LESSON

To show what is required in this Commandment, and by reference to one example - Solomon – to show how easily this Commandment can be broken.

BACKGROUND NOTES

This Commandment is being dealt with in two lessons which show its relevance today.

Catechism

Note in the answer to Q 46 the need not only for a general statement - 'the only true God' - but also for a personal application - 'and our God.'

Scripture

Exodus 20:3 - Note the negative form to the Commandment - 'you shall not...' One explanation of this is the situation of the people of Israel when the Commandment was given. On all sides they were surrounded by worshippers of 'other gods' and there was a constant temptation to conform. That is no less true in the society in which we live today, and so the negative thrust of the Commandment is still necessary - 'you shall have no other gods before Me'.

The positive aspect is found in Matt. 4:10 - 'you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve'. Note the link between worship and service: the kind of God we worship will determine the way we live. Matt. 4:10 is a quotation from part of Deut. 6:10-15 - all Christ's answers to the tempter here are from Deuteronomy - and the context of the Old Testament passage is significant. The whole passage deals with the perils of prosperity - 'when you have eaten and are full...' - and it seems that the temptation to worship other gods is a special temptation of prosperity. To what extent is that true in a modern affluent society?

Deut. 26:17 brings out the truth that what is in view here is a covenant relationship. One party, literally, 'causes the other to affirm,' to make a solemn statement. The most obvious illustration is the mutual vows exchanged in marriage - an illustration with a special relevance here (See Background Notes on 'before me' in next lesson).

1 Chron. 28:9 - This passage is given in the Scripture proofs of the Catechism answer (Q46) to support the statement that what is required is 'to know God to be the only true God'. Solomon was

commanded by David, 'Know the God of your Father.' That implies that Solomon must not recognize any other gods. 1 Kings 11:1-10 shows how Solomon broke the first Commandment in spite all the warnings that he had been given. This passage could well be the focal point of this whole lesson, as a practical illustration of how the Commandment may be broken.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Why, do you think, are so many of the Commandments put in the negative form - 'You shall not'? See Background Notes on Exodus 20:3. The Israelites were constantly exposed to the temptation to worship the gods of the nations round about them, and so they needed precise and definite warning against the worship of other gods. King David was very much aware of the danger and when he came to give instructions to Solomon, his successor, he began with this - 1 Chron. 28:9. David put the issue positively to Solomon that he was to know the God of his father and serve Him. We find the same positive aspect of this Commandment in answer to the tempter in Matt.4:10 - 'you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve.' Note that Christ's answer to Satan was a quotation from the Bible: all His answers to the temptations came from Deuteronomy. Do we know our Bibles well enough to be able to meet temptation with a verse of Scripture?

See Background Notes for original context quotation from Deut. 6:10-15. The point that is stressed there is the peril of prosperity. Is it true to say that an affluent society is likely to substitute false gods for the true God? What gods do people worship today? J. I. Packer writes, 'your god is what you love, seek, worship, serve, and allow to control your life...anything that anyone allows to run his life becomes his god, and the claimants for this prerogative are legion.' It could be money, power, success, pleasure...

Let us look at the things which led Solomon away from the true God, as seen in 1 Kings 11:1-10. V. 1 tells us that 'King Solomon loved many foreign women.' Sex was one thing that lead him away from the true God. Chapter 10 tells us of his great wealth: that, too, may have been a factor in his getting away from God; the love of money and display can still have that effect. Behind it all was the desire to be successful. It may have been that some of his marriages were business arrangements, e.g. with Tyre (1 Kings 9:11). These are three things - sex, wealth, success - that people may still worship instead of the true God. Can you think of others? (See next lesson).

What should have kept Solomon back from worshipping other gods? 1 Kings 11:9,10 tells us that God appeared to him twice and had given specific commandment on this matter. He had been well warned. Behind all Solomon's experience of God was the fact that God had made a covenant with David, and Solomon was part of that covenant (See 1 Chron. 17:7-14 and 1 Kings 3:5-9). He had acknowledged the Lord as his God. He had entered into a covenant relationship. See Background Notes on Deut. 26:17, but keep detailed study of the implications of a covenant relationship until the next lesson. Note that our safety lies in a continued acknowledgment that the Lord alone is our God (Catechism question 46).

APPLICATION

The failure of Solomon gives opportunity to stress the need for constant acknowledgement of the Lord as our God and for a constant watchfulness against the things which would challenge our allegiance to Him, e. g.

- (a) The friends we make
- (b) The pleasures we seek
- (c) The jobs we accept
- (d) The use to which we put our money.

LESSON 5

Studies in The Shorter Catechism

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT (2)

Catechism Questions 47,48.

Scripture Text - Habakkuk 1:15,16; Matt. 6:24; Phil. 3:18,19; 2 Tim. 3:4; Rom. 1:21-32.

AIM OF LESSON

To show how this Commandment can be broken by giving what belongs to God alone to someone or something else.

BACKGROUND NOTES**Catechism**

Question 48. The words 'before me' mean literally 'to my face,' and in Leviticus 18:18 this expression is used of taking a second wife while the first is still alive. That use of the expression, to describe the breach of an exclusive personal relationship, lets us see what is involved in this Commandment. To worship other gods is to give to someone else or something else what belongs to God alone. See the end of the answer to question 47.

Scripture

Habakkuk 1:15,16 - In this chapter there is a description of the Chaldeans who have brought many nations under their control. They are pictured as fishermen who catch all kinds of fish in their nets and who worship their nets because they are successful with their fishing. A man may make a god of his business or his work.

Matt. 6:24 - 'mammon' means 'money'

Phil 3:18,19 - 'Whose god is their belly, who set their mind on earthly things' - not just food, but everything that satisfies the body.

2 Tim. 3:4 - that man should be 'lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God' is one of the marks of the last days, that is, these days in which we live.

Romans 1:21-32- The point of this terrible passage is that when people put anything else in the place of God the door is opened to all kinds of unspeakable evil.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

The words 'before me' in the first Commandment are very important. What do they mean? See Catechism question 48, and see Background Notes. To worship other gods is to give to someone else or something else what belongs to God alone. God, as is declared in the second Commandment, is a jealous God. He can have no rival in our devotion to Him. There is no place for anyone or anything else. We may never be tempted to worship idols, but every day we are tempted to deny God the

rightful place on the throne of our lives. Every day we are tempted to let other things have what belongs to Him alone. Quite simply, the challenge of this Commandment is, ‘what comes first in my life?’

1. What does belong to God alone?

John Calvin (Institutes II viii 16) lists four things that are involved in our giving to God what belongs to Him alone - adoration, trust, invocation and thanksgiving.

- (a) Adoration. By that Calvin means worship. Part of keeping this Commandment is to worship God - and not on one day a week only! Calvin also points out that adoration includes obedience: ‘I justly consider as a part of adoration that fact that we submit our consciences to His Law.’
- (b) Trust. If God is truly a God of all power, and our God then inevitably we will trust Him. Failure to trust Him is a breach of His Commandment: if we do not trust Him, then we are denying His power, or we are trusting something else instead of Him.
- (c) Invocation. By that Calvin means ‘that habit of our mind whenever necessity presses us, of resorting to His faithfulness and help as our only support.’ Quite simply, prayer. In every time of need, if we fail to pray, we are breaking this Commandment.
- (d) Thanksgiving. If God is the only God, then all things come from His hand, and in our thanksgiving we must acknowledge His giving.

2. What things claim and get from us the devotion and attention that should be given to God alone?

Four of the Bible passages set for this lesson indicate four things that men worship instead of God.

Habakkuk 1:16 See Background Notes. It is still possible for a man to make a god of his business or his work. It is true that the Bible again and again exhorts us to be diligent in our business. But when a man’s work begins to edge out God, prayer, the study of God’s Word, the Sabbath Day, then this Commandment is being broken.

Matt. 6:24 ‘You cannot serve God and mammon’. Money can take the place of God. Can you give examples in which this happens? When people work so hard to make more money that they are too tired to pray or study God’s Word? When ‘double time’ on Sabbath means more than going to church? When a man uses wrong means to get more money.

Phil. 3:19 Not just food, but every thing that satisfies the body. But apply it for a moment to food. The man who spends twice as much on a meal as he puts on the Sabbath plate is giving some indication of where his worship is really centred.

2 Timothy 3:4 'Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.' If a T.V. programme means more than going to the prayer-meeting, or a united C.Y.P.U meeting, what is the object of your worship? Paul sums it all up when he writes in Colossians 3:5 that covetousness is idolatry. Anything that we want more than God is an idol.

3. What results from putting something else in the place of God?

Romans 1:21-32 paints a terrible picture of what happens when society puts something else in the place of God and worships 'the creature rather than the Creator.' All kinds of wickedness are the direct result of man's breach of this Commandment. It all begins when man refuses to glorify God as God, refuses to be thankful and puts the creature in place of the Creator and we are seeing those dire effects in our society today.

APPLICATION

It is vital to bring home the many ways this Commandment can be broken, so that conviction of sin may lead to confession and to full commitment to the Lord in words like those of Isaiah 26:13 - 'O Lord our God, masters beside You have had dominion over us; but by You only we make mention of your name.'

LESSON 6

Studies in The Shorter Catechism

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT (1)

Catechism Questions - 49, 50.

Scripture Text - Exodus 32:1-6; Deut. 4:14-26; Deut.12:32; Matt. 28:20.

AIM OF LESSON

To show that God must be worshipped only in the way in which He has commanded.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Catechism

Question 49 Note the distinction between the first Commandment and the second. The first Commandment forbids the worshipping of false gods. The second Commandment forbids the worshipping of the true God in the wrong way.

'Graven image' - this includes images of all kinds, things manufactured by man's hand.

'Likeness' - the reason why any likeness of God is so strictly forbidden is that man finds it difficult to be satisfied with purely spiritual worship: he wants something that he can see. Compare with the golden calf in Exodus 32:1-6, and note Deut. 4:14-26, where the fact is stressed that when God give His commandment to His people there was no likeness to be seen; there was only His word to be heard.

'Bow .. and serve' - these two go together. If our worship is faulty, it will be seen in our conduct. Compare with Israel's immorality linked with the worship of the golden calf. (Exodus 32:6,25)

'Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children' In the context of this commandment it is important to note that faults in worship are more readily transmissible than many other things. What may seem to be a slight divergence from Gods commands can in a few generations become a serious departure from his ways.

'Hate' This is not too strong a word to use for the attitude of those who are unwilling to accept what God says about His worship.

'Love' On the other hand love is seen in a willingness to do exactly as He has commanded.

Question 50 This is the positive aspect of the commandment, which is concerned not only with the prohibition of images but with the true (spiritual) worship of God. The words used in the Catechism answer summarize our duty to God.

'Receive' This means that we accept what God says; the word is basic.

'Observe' Here we are called to actively do what God says.

'Keeping pure' This means nothing is to be added to what God commands: see Deut. 12:32, where God's injunction is clearly set in the context of worship: the verses preceding and the verses following in the next chapter are all concerned with the danger of God's people being led away to false worship. Even if a prophet or a dreamer of dreams can authenticate, by signs and wonders, his suggestion that other worship may be adopted, he is not to be heeded, but rather is to be put to death, 'because he has spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God to entice you from the way

in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk.’

‘*Keeping entire*’ In our worship we are to do all that God says. Nothing is to be omitted.

‘*Ordinances*’ These are things which are ordered or appointed. The answer to question 88 suggests that these include the Word, sacraments and prayer.

Scripture

Matt. 28:20 - In the Great Commission Christ gave careful instructions for the organization and worship of His Church.

Deut. 12:32 - Note that God’s injunction not to add to or take away from what He has commanded is clearly set in the context of worship. See Notes on the Catechism above.

Exodus 32:1 - 6 - Behind the peoples’ request for an image was their desire for something that they could see as their gods. Note, as above, that their error in worship led to immorality in conduct.

Deut. 4:14 - 26 stresses the fact that when God gave these commandments to His people there was no likeness to be seen, only His spoken word. The whole passage amplifies the second commandment. Note that v. 25 confirms that disobedience will have its effects in succeeding generations.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

There is a story of an American soldier whose companions became very much concerned about the sort of life he was living. They decided that one way of making him realize the wickedness of his ways was to give him a copy of The Ten Commandments. He took the list of the Commandments that they gave him, read it over, and then handed it back with a comment, "well, I guess I never made a graven image." Most people would probably consider this commandment one of the ones we are least likely to break. We would never think of carving an image on to a piece of wood and worshipping it in place of God. This Commandment may apply to primitive savages, but certainly not to us. And yet here it stands as God’s unchanging Commandment, for us as well as for the world.

It is important to note that this is not just a repetition of the first Commandment: you shall have no other gods before Me." The first Commandment forbids the worshipping of false gods: the second commandment forbids the worshipping of the true God in the wrong way.

Outline

In this lesson, dealing with the commandment and what is required in it, we are concerned mainly with the positive side of the commandment, requiring true spiritual worship of God. Possibly the best way to teach the lesson is by a detailed study of the wording of the Commandment and the Catechism answer to the question, "What is required....?" with reference to the relevant Scripture passages. See Background Notes.

APPLICATION

Points to be stressed are:

1. True worship is spiritual worship, not dependent on outward things. Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24).
2. True worship receives the Word. Deut 4:12- 'You saw no form; (no likeness); you only heard a voice.'
- 3 True worship responds to Christ. We have a far stronger reason for obeying this command than any Israelite. The command was largely negative for him: 'you shall not make for yourself any carved image...' But it is positive for us, for we already have an image of God. See Hebrew 1:1-3 '...the express image of His person.' Also John 1:14 -' The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory.' Still there are two possible responses to the image of God revealed in Christ: 'He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him, but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.' To reject that image of God is to put something of our own in the place of Christ: To receive Him is to have eternal life.

FURTHER BACKGROUND READING

PACKER, J. I. The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)

PACKER, J. I. Knowing God Chapter 4

WATSON, Thomas The Ten Commandments

WILLIAMSON, G. I. The Shorter Catechism, Questions 49, 50.

LESSON 7

Studies in The Shorter Catechism

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT (2)

Catechism Questions 51, 52.

Scripture text - Ex.34:13,14; Deut. 4:15,16; Deut. 12:32; Ps.45:11; Ps.95:6.

AIM OF LESSON

To show that we must not use any representation of God in worship; and that we are forbidden to import into worship anything that is not commanded in the Word of God.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Catechism Question 51 - '*the worshipping of God by images*' - that means the representation of God in our worship. To take a very obvious illustration the use of a crucifix in worship is forbidden, for there we have a representation of Christ on the cross. No matter how it may be argued that others find the crucifix an aid to devotion, there is no getting round the fact that it is forbidden in the second commandment.

What about pictures of Christ? Pictures of God are unthinkable, but what about pictures of Christ? Some people think that children need a representation of Christ if He is to be real to them, but Christ was God.

The error of all representations of God is that they misrepresent God. Think again of the crucifix. What does it represent? The physical suffering of Christ, His sorrow and anguish, His death at the hands of wicked men. But Christ is not on the cross now: He is on the throne. We are not worshipping a poor shattered body; we are worshipping a conquering Saviour. We are not worshipping a dead victim, but a living victor. And so the crucifix misrepresents the Christ whom we worship.

In the same way a gold or silver cross completely obscures what Calvary was all about - our sins and shame borne by the holy Son of God and our old self being put to death there, as we are united to Him by faith. Any representation of the infinite is bound to be a misrepresentation.

So too with pictures of Christ. Some people to the end of their days are going to have difficulty in seeing Christ as a living, present, contemporary Saviour, because printed indelibly on their minds is a Christ in flowing Eastern robes, pictured from childhood days, and far removed from the world of today.

'Nor by any other way not appointed in His word' Not only images are forbidden, but everything else of man's devising. To worship God by image is to misrepresent Him: to worship God in any other way other than He appointed in His word is to misunderstand worship. If worship is something that

man devises, then he can do what appeals to him; if worship is something that God appoints, then it must be offered only as God appointed.

It is for this reason we as a denomination use only Divinely-inspired and Divinely-appointed psalms in worship. God states quite specifically (Deut. 12:32), 'whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.' We have a perfect book of praises - part of God's Divinely inspired Word - and we are commanded not to add to it. We have God's appointed way of worship, and we cannot alter that by anything that man's preference can devise.

Question 52 - *'God's sovereignty over us'* See Psalm 95:6 and Psalm 45:11. The God whom we worship is the God who is sovereign in all places of His dominion. There is no part of life to which His sovereign control does not extend: and so He can prescribe to us how we are to worship Him.

'His propriety in us' This means His owning us as His property. We are not our own, to do as we like: we are His, to be obedient to Him.

'The zeal He hath of His own worship' How we worship God is a matter of deep concern to Him.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Ask the students if they think it is right to have pictures of Jesus in children's bible books, or elsewhere? Do they think it is right to wear a silver or gold cross?

What does the Bible say about representations or images of God? The second Commandment tells us...

Outline

Follow the points made in the Catechism answers, as in Background Notes.

APPLICATION

True worship reverences God. "They who worship Him must do so in spirit and in truth.' I may reject the crucifix, I may sing only Psalms in the worship of God, I may be in my pew every Sabbath but if I am not worshipping God with a humble and reverent heart, according to His Word I am breaking the second Commandment.

FURTHER BACKGROUND READING

PACKER, J. I. The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)

PACKER, J. I. Knowing God, Chapter 4

TWEED, J BOYD The Communicants' Class, part IV, Chapter III

WATSON Thomas The Ten Commandments

WILLIAMSON, G. I. The Shorter Catechism, Questions 51,52

A Manual of Doctrine for young people, Chapter VIII

LESSON 8

Growing in Faith

THE SOURCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Scripture Text - John 15

AIM OF LESSON

To show the meaning and results of abiding in Christ

BACKGROUND NOTES

Jesus gave this teaching after the last supper when Judas has gone to betray Him and when He knew all the hardship that lay ahead for Him and the disciples. In view of this, He was anxious to impress upon them the need to abide or remain in Him. As was His custom He used a familiar, everyday object to explain His teaching. Not only were vines a familiar sight in Palestine but the metaphor of the vine would be familiar to the disciples from the reference to it in Old Testament scriptures: Isa. 5 vs. 1 - 7, Jer. 2 v. 21, Ezek. 17, Hosea 10.

Israel had been spoken of as a deceitful, unfruitful vine - now Jesus declares Himself to be the true vine who meets with God's approval and is the source of spiritual life for those who abide in Him. As the branches of a vine cannot live and bear fruit unless they receive sap through organic contact between them and the main vine, so Jesus teaches that believers are utterly dependant upon Him.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Jesus Teaches Three Principles of Abiding

1. To abide we must first be in him vs. 2 and 6

Some people look like Christians and they appear to be abiding in Christ, but the fact that they do not bear fruit shows that they are not really in Him and therefore eventually will be cut off from contact with Him. Judas is a good example. Hendriksen comments: "This allegory plainly teaches that the branches which are taken away and burned represent people who never once bore fruit, not even when they were "in" Christ. Hence they never were true believers and for them the in-the-vine relationship, though close, was merely outward" The students should be challenged about their spiritual position- are they ' in Christ' or in their sins? Explain how one comes to be ' in Christ' through repentance, confession and faith in Him.

2. Abiding involves discipline v.2.

As the vine is pruned and cleared so that it will bear more fruit, so God allows us to experience various hardships to make us bear fruit for Him, and to remove blemishes from our lives.

Note: A vine is pruned in Autumn after the leaves have fallen. At the same time unsightly loose shreds of bark are rubbed or pulled off (cleaning). In spring, all but the strongest two shoots are rubbed out with the thumb. Later the weaker shoot is removed. Further pruning is carried out in early and late summer.

Ask the students why gardeners prune various plants - someone will probably suggest the idea of producing better fruit as in v.2. Note that this pruning is a continuous process throughout the year and it is done by a careful Gardener who wants the best results from His vine. Use this to explain the place of difficulties in our lives (bereavement, unemployment, failing an examination etc.). What does 'fruit' mean in the spiritual sense? Explain from Gal. 5:22-23 and Eph.5:8. Even in old age the pruning and fruit-bearing continue- Ps.92:14.

3. Abiding means obedience vs. 9, 10 and 14.

To be obedient we have to know God's will. This is revealed to us through the Word which applies to everyone, and through the witness of the Holy Spirit about specific details for our individual lives. John 16:13,1 John 2:27.

Emphasize the importance of knowing God's Word to be able to obey His commands. Look at the commands in this first chapter vs. 12 and 17. 'Love each other'. Being a Christian is a practical business - it affects the way we live our lives and so 'loving each other' is not just a pleasant emotion but a matter of 'doing'. Ask someone to read James 2:14 -17 and 1 John 3:16 -18. Discuss ways to implement these verses. How do the students help at home, within the family and church and community? How can they help abroad? Probably some will have been involved in various 'sponsored' activities. Mention could be made of Tear Fund.

Jesus Teaches That Abiding Yields Results

1. Effective Prayer v.7

Underline the need for prayer to be based on God's Word; and the work of the Holy Spirit in helping us (Rom. 8:26). Emphasize God's promise to answer our prayers positively when we are in His will.

2. Bearing much fruit to the glory of God v.8.

Underline the need for prayer to be based on God's Word; and the work of the Holy Spirit in helping us (Rom. 8:26). Emphasize God's promise to answer our prayers positively when we are in his will. Producing fruit is not an end in itself - it glorifies the Father and proves our discipleship. As we see spiritual growth we are assured of our salvation.

3. Fullness of Joy v.11

Discuss what things give people in the world pleasure. Point out how short-lived such pleasures are. Christ's joy does not depend on circumstances e.g. Paul and Silas singing in prison Acts 16:25, and the joy of modern persecuted Christians. This joy is associated with answered prayer John 16:24.

4. Hatred from the World vs. 18-23

Jesus teaches the fact of the essential hatred for the world. Donald Guthrie (New Bible Commentary revised) says, 'Hate is the antithesis of love and involves hostility in spiritual matters like attracts like and repels opposites. Hate is inevitable 'because you are not of the world'. Discuss some ways in which this hostility can be shown to believers today, e.g. anger because a sportsman will not join in a 'Sunday practice', taunting at school for being the 'goody-goody', pressures in business not to be honest, prisoners who profess faith.

APPLICATION

Abiding will mean that we shall bear witness to Christ by our fruitfulness and our testimony to the world. Either we are good witnesses or poor witnesses but we cannot avoid being witnesses of some sort - Jesus teaches that it is a fact v. 27 " you also will bear witness". Does your life bring glory to God because you are abiding in Him?

Discuss the students' worksheets if time permits.

FURTHER BACKGROUND READING

Hendriksen's commentary on John's Gospel
New Bible Commentary Revised IVP

VISUAL AIDS

'Joni' by Joni Eareckeson. (Offer to lend it if the students have not yet read it)
Photographs of vineyards.

LESSON 9

Growing in Faith

THE NECESSITY OF GROWTH

Scripture Text - Eph. 4:1 -16; Heb. 5:12 - 6:3; 1 Pet. 2:1-3.

AIM OF LESSON

To show that the Christian life is one of continuous development.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Becoming a Christian is frequently compared to a new birth in Scripture - see John 1:13, John 3:7, 2 Cor. 5:17, 1 Pet. 1:23,1 John 3:9. Just as a new born baby is expected to grow, so the new born Christian is expected to grow - see Eph. 4:15,2 Peter 3:18. Although growth should be expected, it does not always occur spiritually, and today's lesson aims to show essentials for growth, and the results of growth.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Factors essential for growth and maturity

Ask the students what factors are essential for growth in the natural world. Discuss with them the five essentials.

1. Suitable Food -1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:13.

The best food for the human body is human milk, because it contains the ideal nutrients for the baby becoming stronger as the baby's needs develop. Spiritual milk is God's Word and in the same way it provides nourishment for the developing Christian - becoming 'strong meat' as his growth continues. Heb. 5:14; 1 Cor. 3:2.

2. Frequent Feeding

New babies are very hungry - they desire milk (1 Pet. 2:2) so they need to be feed frequently sometimes every 2 - 3 hours in the first few weeks of life. Believers need frequent daily feeding on the Word. As the Word will be considered in another Lesson it is enough at this stage to show that the milk of the Word is absorbed by reading, studying, memorizing and meditating.

3. Protection

Careful parents will ensure that the growing infant is not exposed to danger and will do everything they possibly can to protect their child. The young Christian also grows up in a hostile and dangerous environment and needs to be (a) warned, (b) protected.

(a) God's Word warns about the dangers the Christian will meet- 1 Pet. 5:8; 2 Cor. 2:11; Matt. 26:41;

Ps. 19:11.

(b) The Christian cannot and must not rely on his own strength to overcome the devil's attacks but we have the assurance that we are protected by a loving Heavenly Father - Matt. 18:14; Ps.91:4 - 5; 2 Chron. 16:9; Luke 21:18.

4. Exercise

Healthy development requires exercise and most children are very active, constantly running and jumping and moving all their limbs. If a part of the body is not used properly it fails to grow, e.g. Chinese girls used to have their feet bound to prevent full movement of them and so their feet were small and stunted, (this is thought to be desirable for beauty). Heb. 5:14 shows that Christian maturity knows good from evil and is gained by practice or 'reason of use'. The exercise of striving to be holy is described as a race in 1 Cor. 9:24 - 27; and Phil. 3:14.

5. Love

Although a child may be well fed, clothed, protected against disease and given opportunity to exercise, he will fail to thrive if he is deprived of love and affection. In this country most babies are born into families where they will be loved. When someone becomes a new Christian they belong to the family of God who will love them and care for them as they grow in the faith. God commands us to mix with other believers. More mature Christians are to provide love and care for others. Heb. 10:25; Rom. 15:1.

Eph. 4:1 -16 shows how the Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers so that they are prepared for service and built up to become more mature. The metaphor of the body shows how we all need each other and cannot do without each other.

The results of Growth and Maturity

1. Christians Finish Elementary Education

In the natural world when children grow up we expect certain changes in their situation. Unless there is some mental retardation, the adult does not stay at the primary school learning to read and count - he passes beyond the stage, not forgetting what he has learnt but using it as a foundation for further education. The same idea is brought out in Heb.5:12 - 6:3. We should not have to keep going over the basics of the Christian faith, but by using what we have learnt we must go on to deeper truths about God. Discuss how the students can consolidate what they are learning, (by sharing it with others, both Christians and non-Christians).

2 They are firm in their opinions

Young children are easily deceived because they tend to trust adults and believe what they say. Because their knowledge is limited they can be alarmed and distressed easily, e.g. if a parent has to go out of a room a young toddler may feel he has been abandoned. The mature believer is not easily disturbed by any strange cult or theory. Because he knows the truth (Eph. 4:15) he will speak out and refute error, continuing to grow as he does so.

3. They get a job

We do not expect them to remain dependent on their parents, but to start looking after themselves earning their own income and becoming helpful citizens. Eph. 4:11 -13 shows some of the work a mature Christian should carry out - We are all given different abilities to perform different tasks. The same idea is seen in 1 Cor. 12:4-31. The group should be asked to look at themselves without any false modesty to assess what gifts they know they have, or see in other members of the group and to discuss how these gifts can be used.

APPLICATION

Growing up can be painful business at times - it involves correction and discipline to train the wayward youngster into an independent adult prepared to take responsibility in the world. Growing up as a Christian doesn't just happen, it has to be worked at. Failure to grow and develop in human terms is a tragedy and we see it as being abnormal, but failure to grow spiritually is a worse tragedy because the fault lies in ourselves. Conversely, growing in the knowledge of God brings the greatest possible joy and satisfaction irrespective of our circumstances.

The students' worksheets asks the students to write down seven ways by which spiritual growth can be measured. Encourage the students to write down as many suggestions as they can before telling them the answers.

1. By an increasing knowledge of God's Word - what it says and means.
2. By increasing confidence in explaining to others the meaning of God's Word.
3. By an increasing ability to pray - both privately and publicly.
4. By overcoming temptation.
5. By increasing love for other believers and a desire for the company of believers.
6. By increasing signs of the fruit of the Spirit.
7. Being confident of knowing God's will.

LESSON 10

Growing in Faith

THE QUIET TIME

Scripture Text - Ps. 1:2, Ps. 119:9; Mk. 1:35; Matt. 6:16

AIM OF LESSON

To show the importance of a regular daily time of meeting with God.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Man is by nature a religious being - he has the need for worship. This is seen in the variety of religions throughout the world and throughout history. When man comes to know the true God and becomes a member of His family he learns that God the Father desires our fellowship and actually seeks our worship. John 4:23.

There is a place for joining with others to worship, but a very important part of spiritual development is private communication with God on an individual level. Today we are going to see why this is necessary and how to go about it.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. The need for a Quiet Time

Having a daily devotional time is not an option for the Christian, it is a command - Josh. 1:8.

There are many examples of people who would not miss an opportunity to be with God – see Gen. 5:22, Gen. 24:63, Ps. 63; Ps. 5:3, Ps. 77:12, Dan.6:10, Acts 9:11 Acts 10:9, Mark 1:35 Luke 4:42. Give these references to the class in advance so that they can read them to the group.

2. When you have a Quiet Time

Discuss the problem of finding a suitable time particularly for members of the group. It can be at any time but the early morning is best - time can be found by rising early.

3. Length of Time

There are no time limits. The Navigators have a helpful pamphlet called 'seven minutes with God' which gives guidance on how to start Quiet Time. This may be good for the younger students.

4. Suitable place

Matt. 6:6 - We need to be alone with God if He is to speak to us. Discuss the problem of finding a suitable place and suggest how this might be overcome in a crowded and busy household.

5. Practical suggestions

- (a) Get up and get dressed and properly awake.
- (b) Be well rested.
- (c) Be punctual.
- (d) Avoid distractions.

6. How to have a Quiet Time

The aim is to worship God and to listen to Him. This requires -

(a) A prepared Heart

Time should be taken to settle oneself and to remove distracting thoughts. If possible sit at a table. Pray for cleansing (Ps. 66:18; Ps 24:3 - 4). Approach God expectantly (Ps. 119:18).

(b) Reading the Word

Be systematic - have a regular programme to cover the whole Bible. Helpful aids are produced. Ask your minister for suitable materials. Have a note book to write down lessons learned, e.g. an example to follow, a command to obey, a promise to claim, etc.

(c) Prayer

Prayer should comprise Adoration, Thanksgiving , Confession, Supplication. Pray for guidance and strength to do God's will. The subject of prayer will be considered in detail in a future lesson.

7. The rewards of the Quiet Time

We are shown our sin, receive instruction, correction and guidance, become more Christlike, become more submissive to His will.

APPLICATION

Encourage the students to have a Quiet Time every day. Offer to obtain helpful aids for any who do not have them. Make it easy for any student to talk to you privately to discuss personal problems, e.g. don't always rush away after class.

LESSON 11

Growing in Faith

HOW TO RECEIVE THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture Text -1 Thess. 1- 2:13; 2 Chron. 34

AIM OF LESSON

To help the students to realize that they need to hear God's Word explained and to apply it to their lives.

BACKGROUND NOTES

See students worksheets

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

What is a service? What is the point of having a sermon in the service? Ask the class if they can remember anything of the previous Sabbath's sermon and if so, what. Possibly some will, but others will not. This will highlight the problem involved in this weeks lesson - how to gain benefit from the Word of God. We need to listen to God's Word to us, but it is essential that we should know how it comes to us, how we should prepare ourselves for it and what we should do with it.

1. How does God's Word come to us ?

Throughout history it has come in various ways.

(a) Directly - This is by God speaking Himself to the people concerned e.g. Moses (Ex. 3). This method was used before the people had all they needed to know in the form of the Scriptures.

(b) Indirectly

(i) Through the written Word, e.g. Josiah in 2 Chron. 34:1 - 3. How much background knowledge of God's Word did he actually have? What was his attitude to the little he knew? Compare the answers to these questions with the knowledge and amount of God's Word we have today. What happened when the book of the Law of the Lord was found? See 2 Chron. 34:14-18. Josiah had it read to him. But He did not understand all that he heard i.e. the consequences of the people leaving the Lord, so he needed to have it explained to him. Similarly we do not understand all that we read in the Bible and so we need to have it explained.

(ii) Through the spoken Word. Even though the people had left the worship of God and had become idol worshippers under Assyria, there were still some people who knew the truth in Josiah's time (approx. 621 B.C) there was a prophetess, Huldah, who received direct

messages from God, so Josiah sent her to have his questions answered. Today, we do not have prophets as God's revelation to us is complete; instead we have ministers and teachers to explain His Word to us. Roms. 10:14 shows that reading the Bible by ourselves is not enough, God is using preaching as the main method by which people come to believe in Him and to be built up in Him. In our churches the pulpit has the central position symbolizing the importance of God's Word and its exposition. The importance of discussion with other Christians in Sabbath School, young people's meetings and Bible studies can also be stressed at this point.

2. How should we receive God's Word?

(a) With an open mind. We must be prepared to accept:

(i) that it is the Word of God to us personally e.g. 1 Thess. 2:13; Gal. 1:11 and

(ii) that we have failed to come up to its requirements 2Chron. 34:21.

(b) With joy.

1 Thess. 1:6. Although the Thessalonians were up against the relentless pressure to which believers may be exposed in a world opposed to Christ, they had the true joy of the Spirit which could not be dampened (cf. Acts 16:23-25). What was this joy? It was the knowledge that the Scriptures were true, that there was a way of salvation and that they had been saved from their sins.

3. How should we respond to God's Word?

(a) When we hear God speaking to us, our lives should not remain unchanged.

(i) We should become obedient to the Word 1 Thess. 1:9; 2 Chron. 34:33.

We all have some form of idols in our lives e.g. money, material things which take up our time. We must allow the Holy Spirit to show us, through the Word, when we are wrong and when we realize this we will be helped to turn from them to God. (Jas. 2:22 - 25).

(ii) We should look for Christ's Return 1 Thess. 1

When Christ comes again we will go to be with God for ever and all His promises will be fulfilled. However we do not know when this will be and so we must keep ourselves ready for His return at any time. What does 'to be ready' mean?

(b) We should have an effect on others. Others should see these changes in our lives.

(i) We should be examples. 1 Thess. 1:6,7; Phil. 3:17.

People take more notice of our actions than of the words we speak, so we must be careful that everything we do is above reproach.

(ii) We should be witnesses. When others ask about our life and the changes in it or about our beliefs and ideals, we should be prepared to talk to them and to share God's Word with them, so that their lives might also be changed. 1 Pet. 3:15.

APPLICATION

In this Lesson, we have seen:

1. That it is essential to read the Bible so that we can hear God speaking to us about our lives.
2. We should listen to the preaching of the Word and have discussions with mature Christians.
3. Once we know that God is speaking to us, we must act, confess where we are wrong and seek the help of the Holy Spirit to do what God would have us do.

LESSON 12

Growing in Faith

THE STUDY OF THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture Text-1 Cor. 15:1-11.

AIM OF LESSON

To help the students to learn how to study God's Word systematically, using 1 Cor. 15:1 - 11 as an example.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1 Cor 15. The Resurrection. Paul comes to the last great subject of the Epistle. Some of the Corinthians had denied that the dead will rise, v. 12. He sets out to show that such a denial cannot be countenanced for a moment, for the resurrection of the Lord and the believers is integral to the faith. Lacking such hope Christians would be 'of all men most miserable', v 19. Paul starts from first principles. He shows that Christ's resurrection is fundamental to the gospel, v. 1 -11, then that the resurrection of the Christ implies the resurrection of the Christian. Next he goes on to deal with objections that were, or might be, raised, and shows how baseless they are. This is the classical Christian discussion of the subject.' Leon Morris

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

There are many ways in which a passage in Scripture can be studied and many helps available.. The following is a general outline which can be used in one's daily devotional time (review lesson 10, The Quiet Time), and also by spending longer and using the various aids for more thorough study.

Some of the aids available are: - Modern versions of the Bible, Bible Commentary, Bible Dictionary, Bible Handbook and Bible atlas.

By using this outline in class on 1 Cor. 15:1 - 11 the students will have a pattern to follow when studying the Bible by themselves .

1. Prayer

Ps. 119:18 and 1 Cor. 2:9 - 12. We must ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to aid us in our understanding, and to apply correctly to our lives the message we are studying.

2. Reading

Read 1 Cor. 15:1 -11. In order to achieve continuity it may be better to have one person read the passage. Rereading the passage quickly and quietly in other versions will allow various questions to form in the young people's minds and these can be noted down.

3. Study

One part of the Bible cannot be studied in isolation from the rest, so it needs to be placed in context. Various commentaries and handbooks can be used for this. It will be found that Paul has been writing to the Corinthians to answer several questions which they have asked (1 Cor.7:1). This chapter deals with the last problem, the reality and meaning of the resurrection of the dead. (A Bible Atlas may be used to show where Corinth is and to show its importance in Biblical times).

Returning to the passage itself, a Bible Dictionary can be used to show the meaning of the word 'Gospel' (v. 1) as Paul wanted to emphasise the essentials of this to the Corinthians. It is 'good news' but what is the good news? See vs. 3,4 - the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Why were these necessary for our sins?

In these two verses, one phrase is repeated, 'according to the Scriptures'. Why should Paul find this repetition necessary? A commentary shows that this draws attention to the Divinely inspired witness provided by the written prophecies. The students can now use the cross reference column in their Bibles to find these prophecies- Isa.53:5-12, and Ps.16:8,9.

4. Meditation

This involves thinking over what the lesson means and perhaps making notes on it e.g.

- (a) The Gospel is central to the Christian's life (vs. 1,2).
- (b) The basic facts of the Gospel are the death of Christ and His resurrection. His death was for our sins and His resurrection proved that His death was complete (vs.3,4).
- (c) The resurrection is a historical fact (vs. 5-8).
- (d) The Gospel shows God's grace which can change even the worst enemy of the truth into the hardest worker for it (vs.9-11).

5. Application

The students should be encouraged to recognise the fact that the message applies to each one of them personally. What lessons have they learned from their study. How has each reacted to the Gospel? Are they sharing the good news with others? If they feel able they should be encouraged to share what they have learned with the rest of the class.

6. Memorisation

Paul in writing to the Corinthians used Scripture to back his arguments. We should follow his example. It is useful if we can have key verses ready to quote, and so memorisation of selected verses along with their references is important. Verses 3 and 4 could be memorised from this passage

7. Prayer

This is the very important last step in Bible Study. Ask God to help the students to remember the lessons learned and through His Word to address them according to their need.

LESSON 13

Growing in Faith

THE PURPOSE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Scripture Text - Matt.28:18-20; Luke 22:14-20; " In Remembrance of Me" Chap.3

AIM OF LESSON

To explain the Reformed teaching as to the meaning and purpose of the Sacraments

BACKGROUND NOTES

Study :The Confession of Faith Ch 27, The Larger Catechism Questions 161 -17,
G.I. Williamson - The Shorter Catechism - page 96.

What is a sacrament? 'A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in His Church, to signify, seal and exhibit unto those that are within the Covenant of Grace, the benefits of His mediation, to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another and to distinguish them from those that are without.' (The Larger Catechism - answer to Question 162)

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Discuss what is a sacrament and the answer given in The Larger Catechism. The word ' Sacrament' is not found in Scripture. It was about 100 years after our Lord was on earth that Christians first used the word. It is derived from the Latin and means 'mystery' - something with a deep spiritual meaning - or an oath. The Latin word 'sacramentum' often meant an oath - especially the oath of allegiance taken by Roman soldiers.

A sacrament is a special rite or ordinance established by the Lord Jesus Christ, and which He has commanded the Church to observe. The Roman Catholic system teaches that there are seven sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Marriage, the Mass, Ordination, and Extreme Unction. The Church of the Reformation rejected five of these for several reasons.

1. The Requirements of a Sacrament IT MUST BE:

- (a) specifically commanded by Christ, Matt.28:19,20; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-26.
- (b) a visible sign (that is an outward and visible representation of an inward and invisible work of God's grace in Christ), Matt. 26:26,27; Luke 22:19,20.
- (c) perpetual (that is to be observed by the Church until Christ returns), Matt. 28:19,20.
- (d) a seal intended to confirm and strengthen the faith of those who receive it. Discuss how the five additional ' sacraments' of the Roman system fail to meet these qualifications and that the only rites which qualify are Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Explain how in the Old Testament Church the two great ordinances were circumcision and the Passover, and that these have been replaced by Baptism and the Lord's Supper. See, In Remembrance of Me – page 19.

2. The Purpose of the Sacraments

- (a) They are signs, that is a picture or a symbol.
They are visible and pictorial representations of something which has happened - as a road sign indicates a bend or junction ahead.
- (b) They are God's seal to our salvation in Christ. They certify and assure us that God's promises are sure and certain of fulfilment to those who believe. (Explain how a seal is placed on a legal document to show that it is genuine and not a forgery, and that a duplicate seal is never made).
- (c) They illustrate in a physical and visible way what Christ has done for believers – just as an object may be used to illustrate an address.
- (d) They motivate us to greater faith, obedience and love.
- (e) They unite believers in fellowship.
- (f) They distinguish believers from unbelievers.

Explain what The Shorter Catechism means by 'sensible signs', that is, the sacraments are appreciated by the senses, sight, hearing, feeling, taste and smell.

3. For Whom are the Sacraments Intended?

See In Remembrance of Me - page 31.

The sacraments are not to be administered indiscriminately - explain how sessions have a responsibility to supervise the administration of the sacraments and how, if a person who is not a member, wishes to participate in the Communion service, the session must satisfy themselves as to the person's profession of faith and consistent Christian life.

4. How are the Sacraments Effective?

- (a) They have no power in themselves.
- (b) Their efficacy does not depend on the intention or inward spiritual condition of the minister who administers them contrary to what is taught by the Roman Catholic system.
- (c) Scripture teaches that the blessings and benefits received from the sacraments depend on: i) our spiritual condition and intention; ii) the working of the Holy Spirit on our heart; iii) our faith.

APPLICATION

It is the duty of Christians to observe the sacraments because Christ has commanded them. It is their privilege because the sacraments, when used in the correct manner, are a means whereby the blessing of Christ is received. A sacrament is a strengthening and NOT a saving ordinance.

LESSON 14

Growing in Faith

THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Scripture Text-Gen. 17:1-14; Gal. 3:15-29; Rom.6:1-14

BACKGROUND NOTES

The word 'baptise' in Jewish usage first appears in the Mosaic Laws of purification (Ex.30:17-21; Lev. 11:25) where it means washing or cleansing. The meaning of baptism as practised in the New Testament is linked to the meaning of circumcision as practised in the Old Testament and both relate to the Covenant of Grace. The mark of God's Covenant of Grace established in Genesis 17 was circumcision, which signified and sealed the spiritual blessings of the Covenant: union with God (Gen.17:7), the removal of defilement (Deut.10:12ff; 30:6; Rom. 2:28,29) and justification by faith (Rom.4:11). Christ, in ending the national administration of this Covenant, extended the 'new' administration to all nations and replaced circumcision, as the mark of the Covenant, with baptism (Matt.28:19, 20). This is confirmed in Col. 2:11, 12 which teaches that the spiritual realities of circumcision and baptism are the same. Whereas in the Old Testament the Covenant sign to be administered to those who were brought into the Church was circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14; Ex. 12:48), in the New Testament, at Christ's command, the sign of the Covenant was to be baptism (Matt.28:18-20). The New Testament makes it clear that baptism signifies the inward work of the Holy Spirit. Baptism with water is associated with baptism with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Acts 2:33; 10:44-48; 11:15,16) in fulfilment of Ezekiel 36:25-28 (cf. John 3:5; 4:14; 7:33-39). The water used in baptism signified the Holy Spirit's sovereign and mysterious regenerating and sanctifying work, which can come before, with or after the administration of the sacrament (John 3:5-8; Luke 1:15). Baptism symbolizes the work of the Spirit in applying the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, in particular, cleansing from the defilement and guilt of sin (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21), forgiveness (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 11:18), saving union with Christ (Rom.6:3; Col.2:11, 12), and admission into the visible Church of Christ (1 Cor.12:13; Gal.3:27,28).

Baptism is also a seal of God's Covenant of Grace. It certifies that God's promises are sure and that the blessings promised in Christ are valid. In this sacrament our Saviour seals the truth of His everlasting Covenant. In the case of baptised adults, baptism conveys the assurance of spiritual blessing.

To the baptised children of believers, the seal is an assurance that God will unchangeably adhere to His Covenant and that He will bestow all promised blessings on all who, by faith, willingly receive them. Such children also find baptism a confirming seal when they reach years of discretion and, by God's grace, look in faith to Christ and His finished work.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Approach the subject of baptism by drawing attention to:

The Unity of the Scriptures and the Message they Unfold. Matt. 5:17-20

1. The Covenant of Grace (the way of salvation): for Abraham and all Old Testament believers, salvation was by grace through faith in the promises (in Christ) (Gen. 12:1-3; John 8:56). The way of salvation in the New Testament is exactly the same (Eph. 2:8-10).
2. The covenant established was not temporary. Point out to the class the many references to the everlasting nature of the Covenant, e.g. Gen. 17:7; Ps. 103:17-18; Ps. 105:8-10; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:9, 14, 29; Heb. 13:20.
3. A sign and seal were attached to the Covenant in the Old Testament, Gen. 17:10-14; Rom. 4:11. Bring out the spiritual meaning of circumcision from such texts as Deut. 10:12-16, 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29. Show that at God's express command this sign was applied to believers and their children, Gen. 17:11, 12:24-26, 21:4. When we come to the New Testament we discover that, although the Bible is one and the way of salvation is the same and the Abrahamic Covenant is operative, the signs have changed. The Old Testament signs of God's saving work, circumcision and Passover, both involved the shedding of blood. Now that Christ had come his blood had been shed once for all and so new signs were instituted – the Lord's Supper for Passover (Luke 22:7-20; 1 Cor. 5:7) and baptism for circumcision (Matt. 28:19-20, c.f. Ex. 12:48-49). Col. 2:11-12 provides confirmation that the spiritual realities signified in circumcision and baptism are the same.

The Meaning of Baptism

Explain to the students from the background notes how baptism symbolises the work of the Holy Spirit. Take time to point out how this relates to the baptism of an adult who professes faith or the infants of believing parents. With reference to the continued use of wax seals explain how baptism acts as a seal.

The Subjects of Baptism

With regard to the subjects of baptism the Westminster Larger Catechism states, "Baptism is not to be ministered to any that are out of the visible Church, and so strangers to the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him, but infants descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptised" (Q. 166). No direct command to baptise infants is found in the New Testament. Such a command, however, is not required because God had already made clear in the Old Testament the status of such infants. The child Isaac was circumcised at 8 days as were children born into the Covenant community. They were recognised as being included in the Covenant of

Grace. God in the New Testament era has not withdrawn from the children of believers privileges enjoyed in the Old Testament. (Acts 2:38, 39). See pages 59-61 in RP Testimony.

The Mode of Baptism

Explain to the students that some denominations insist that immersion is the only valid mode. A biblical study, however, leads to the conclusion that pouring or sprinkling are also valid modes. Support this conclusion by referring to the RP Testimony page 62.

Application

1. Baptism is a New Testament ordinance commanded by Jesus Christ.
2. Baptism, like The Lord's Supper, is not essential for salvation, e.g. the penitent thief.
3. Baptism is a sign and seal and can never be made the substitute for that spiritual reality which is signed and sealed - the new birth. (John 3:3)
4. Baptism is a privilege and obligates all who have experienced it to look to Christ for salvation and live according to His commandments.
5. Baptism solemnly admits its subjects into the visible church. All such have the responsibility to contribute to the spiritual welfare of their local church.

LESSON 15

Growing in Faith

THE ACTIVITY OF PRAYER

Scripture Text - Heb.10:16-22; Romans 8:26-39

AIM OF LESSON

To show that the Christian has access to God in prayer and to instruct him in the use of it.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Hebrews 10:16-22 As the title states the recipients of this letter were Hebrew Christians. They had been reared in the old Jewish religion and had engaged in the ritual of the temple. But when they heard the Gospel they believed it, trusted the Lord Jesus Christ and became members of the Christian Church. For a time they rejoiced in their new-found faith but soon they experienced severe persecution which not only discouraged them, but also caused them to question the truth of the Christian faith (vv. 32, 33). They had been promised great things in the Gospel but they seemed to be receiving only persecution. They were being tempted to return to the temple and its form of worship. The writer here reminds them of the only way in which they can come to God in prayer.

‘to enter into the holiest...’ Here the writer takes up the analogy of the temple, a long building divided into sections by curtains. There was the outer court into which everyone could go. Then there was the first curtain leading into a court that was restricted to Jews only. Further on there was another curtain into an area reserved for the priests. Beyond that, there was yet another curtain, and beyond that again was ‘the holiest of all’. This was the innermost sanctum of the temple and into this only the High Priest was allowed to go and then only once a year. It was called ‘the holiest of all’ because there was this extraordinary splendour, this manifestation of the glory of God called ‘the Shekinah’, which the priest could actually see and feel as he entered. It was in this holy place that the priest came into the immediate presence of God as He came down to meet with the people.

‘By a new and living way which he consecrated for us.’ By calling it a new way the writer is again using language that these Hebrew Christians could understand. He is contrasting the new way to God in Christ with the old way to God through the ritual and blood sacrifices of the temple. However, while he calls it a ‘new’ way it was not new in its conception. The Scriptures show that this way had been planned before the foundation of the world but it was only opened recently through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The animal sacrifices were only types pointing forward to the perfect reality. It is also a ‘living’ way in contrast to the old because Jesus Christ is alive and a High Priest forever.

‘Which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, his flesh.’ The way of access could not be made through the blood of animals. It could not even be made through man because man had already

failed in Adam. No man could make a way to God. The God-man is the only way into the presence of God. Sin had to be removed before man could come to God. Christ died to atone for sin, appease the wrath of an angry God and satisfy the justice of a righteous God. Having satisfied every demand of the Law on behalf of sinners He opened the way of access to God.

Romans 8:26-39 'Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.' Christians are ignorant about what they should pray for. We cannot tell what is best for us; but instead of our ignorance sealing our lips, the Spirit gives our desires a language heard and understood by God. He intercedes for the children of God presenting His intercessions in the form of His own groanings uttered in the depths of their hearts.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Discuss with the students the main features of a motorway. One can take the direct route from one town or city to another without meandering through narrow roads along the way. Here in Hebrews 10 the writer tells us that there is a new way into God's presence.

1. The Privilege of prayer

Prayer is getting into 'the holiest', into the very presence of God Himself. From the background notes explain what this means and the fear felt by the people as the High Priest entered 'the holy of holies'. The more one knows of God, the more one is overcome with a feeling of reverence and Godly fear. See Ps. 15. Are we always aware of the awful majesty and holiness of God?

v.22 'having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience' John Owen the Puritan says, 'The way of removal of an evil conscience from our hearts is by...the efficacious application of the blood of atonement unto sanctification or inward purification. This sprinkling of our hearts is an act of the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, by virtue of the blood and sacrifice of Christ.' Can anyone apart from the Christian or the penitent enter 'the holiest'? Discuss.

2. The Provisions for Prayer

(a) A living way of access

From the background notes contrast the old way to God through animal sacrifices with the new way to God through Christ.

(b) A living High Priest

The Christ who died rose from the dead, ascended to the right hand of God in Heaven and there sits as an ever-living High Priest. As our priest He continues to pray for us on the basis of His atoning sacrifice. See Hebs. 2:17,18.

(c) The indwelling Holy Spirit

Rom.8:26 Not only has the Christian an intercessor in the court of heaven but he has also one in the theatre of his own heart, the Holy Spirit who prays with him and for him.

3. The Practice of Prayer

The exhortation of the writer in v. 22 is 'Let us draw near...' Let us go along this new and living way, he says. How are we to draw near?

- (a) With a true heart We must come to God with hearts that are sincere and honest (v. 22). Discuss with the students the way in which deceit spoils communication between two individuals. If we shield or hide sin in our hearts, the Lord will not listen. After all He knows us completely and so our hearts must be true, honest and open if we are to commune with God.

- (c) With full assurance of faith We are to come to God with confidence (v. 22). Indeed in v. 19 we are told to come with 'boldness'. What about the difficulties? How can we pray with confidence and boldness in face of the problems that we have mentioned? We have seen that prayer means going into the presence of a holy God. Does this new way guarantee that we will get there? Yes, because this is God's way to Himself and not man's. So we can come with confidence through Christ knowing that we will get to God. What about the accusations of conscience, do they not rob us of confidence when we pray? Again the answer is found in this new and living way. Sin has been punished in Christ so God is just in forgiving all who trust in Him. (1 John 1:9) The accusations of conscience have been answered by the cross. But what about this polluted nature that induces us to sin? God not only forgives us for Christ's sake, but He also gives us a new heart (v. 19). He gives us a new nature that enables us to walk in holiness. What about our inability to ask for the right things? The Holy Spirit who dwells in the heart of every Christian prays for him and with him. (Romans 8:26-27)

- (c) Holding fast our profession The writer tells these Hebrew Christians to keep to the new way to God through Christ and not to go back to the old way of animal sacrifice. So we are to hold fast to this new and living way. Herein lies our assurance of getting into God's presence and of holding communion with Him.

LESSON 16

Growing In Faith

LEARNING TO PRAY

Scripture - Luke 11:1-13

AIM OF LESSON

To show that prayer is communicating with God through Jesus, and by using the Lord's Prayer to discuss how we should pray.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In response to the disciples' request - "Lord teach us to pray", Jesus taught them "The Lord's Prayer" as a model for their praying, vv 1-4. Since prayer will always seem pointless unless we see an answer to it, Jesus was concerned to prove to His disciples that God answers prayer. To do this He used a parable, vv. 5-8.

vv 11-13 Stones for bread, serpents for fish - no loving earthly father would so harm his children. How much more will our Heavenly Father understand our needs. He has offered a gift which only He can give - The Holy Spirit. This gift is there for those who truly seek it.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Prayer is a very personal thing and it may be better not to embarrass students by asking them to discuss their own praying, however, make use of information volunteered.

Use the application section to stress:

- (a) What prayer is and its importance.
- (b) The example of prayer.
- (c) Making time to pray.
- (d) Answers to prayer.

The Students' worksheets are designed to help with this. A class discussion at the end of the lesson might prove interesting and helpful.

APPLICATION

Questions 98 and 99 in "The Shorter Catechism with Comments" (Lawson) are very helpful.

1. Prayer means asking of God in the following way -
 - (a) In Christ's name, i.e. Christ is the Mediator between God and men.
 - (b) Our petitions or requests should not be for trivial or selfish things, but for things of which God would approve.

(c) It is vital that we acknowledge that we are sinners and ask forgiveness for our sins. We should also acknowledge the mercies which God gives us.

2. Guidance for prayer

Shorter Catechism question 99 tells us that the whole Bible is a guide to prayer. But especially we have the pattern set us in the prayer Christ taught His disciples, commonly called The Lord's Prayer.

3. The example of prayer

The Lord's Prayer suggests the following guidance-

- (a) Draw near to God with reverence and confidence.
- (b) Glorify God.
- (c) Ask for the extension of His Kingdom.
- (d) Ask for help to know God's will and to do it.
- (e) Ask for the supply of our bodily needs and those of others.
- (f) Pray about our spiritual needs.
- (g) Ask to be kept from temptation.

Let us think about vv 5 - 13. Everyone wants to have friends and Jesus wants us to understand He can be our greatest Friend. If we trust in Jesus and keep His commandments, He is our Friend.

If we are to pray as we ought we need the help of the Holy Spirit. Who may expect to have this help? Those who believe in the Son, trust Him as Saviour and obey Him as Lord. How does the Holy Spirit help us to pray? It is the Spirit who gives us new life, enabling us to pray, strengthening and guiding us.

4. Possible reasons for failure to receive the answers we expect to our prayers.

- (a) Our requests are not really for things we need, ie, God's answer may be no.
- (b) We do not persevere in praying.
- (c) Perhaps our praying is shallow, because our faith is weak.

Consider some of the promises found in the Bible, which show that God hears and answers earnest prayer. James 1:5-7; James 5:15,16; 1 John 5:14 -15.

5. It is possible to pray anywhere, even the words, "Lord help us" can suffice. But note these personal examples given by Christ:

- (a) Luke 5:16 - alone with God,
- (b) Luke 6:12 - made time for prayer,
- (c) Luke 9:28 - prayed with others.

LESSON 17

Growing in Faith

THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

Scripture Text-Eph 6:18-20; Acts 2:41-42:Acts 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:1-8

AIM OF LESSON

To show that the Christian's prayer life must be disciplined and organised

BACKGROUND NOTES

Eph. 6:18-20 - Note the context, the Christian's conflict against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. In such circumstances there is the need to 'be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.' This requires putting on the armour which God has provided. Paul adds prayer, not as an afterthought but because it is to pervade all our spiritual warfare.

'With all prayer' a very general term indicating not only cries for help but also adoration, confession of sin and thanksgiving.

'And supplication' or 'petition' for specific needs

'In the Spirit' with the help of the Holy Spirit

'Being watchful' always on the alert, aware of what is happening

'For all the saints' those separated to serving God in a world where there is spiritual wickedness.

Acts 2:41-42 - note what is said about these people.

1 Tim. 2:1-8 Timothy was supervising the church in Ephesus.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Ask the students if they find it easy to pray and always have time to pray? Lead on to emphasise that the subject of prayer is one that cannot be stressed too much. Finding time to pray is a major problem with many Christians. There are too many demands on our time in the ordinary work-a-day life. In the evening the devil can arrange plenty to occupy us. A late night does not make it easy to find time for prayer nor does it help us to rise early in the morning. From the background notes what is essential if there is to be discipline in prayer?

1. **When to pray** - Eph.6:18

(a) On all occasions

Is it being realistic to be always praying? It does not mean we are to spend our whole lives on our knees. After all the Bible tells us that we are to labour six days of the week! But regardless of what we are doing we are always to be in the spirit of prayer. Ask the students to make a list of the times and situations when we can be practising the presence of God. e.g. waiting for a bus, driving the car, peeling the potatoes. The more we pray all the time, the easier we shall find it to pray at special times. See Nehemiah in the king's service and his reaction when confronted with the king's question- Neh.2:4,

also Phil. 4:6.

(b) Early

Often our private devotions are left until our day's work is over and we come to the Throne of Grace tired and unable to concentrate. Paul says 'Be alert' and we are more alert in the early morning when we are conscious of the difficulties and temptations which face us in the coming day.

There are many examples of people in the Bible who rose early to pray: Mark 1:35, Gen. 28:18, 1 Sam. 1:19, 2 Chron.29:19, Ps.5:3, Job 1:5.

We are also to be alert:

- (i) to the needs of others
- (ii) to God's will for us
- (iii) to God's answers to our prayer
- (iv) for attacks from Satan

(c) Night and Day

In Luke 6:12 we read that Jesus went out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God and when it was day He called unto Him His disciples. Christ found it necessary to spend all night in prayer.

Acts 12:5 - Peter in prison 'but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church'

Gen. 32:24 when Jacob wrestled with the angel, he wrestled all night.

(d) Persevering

Prayer also requires perseverance. 'Never give up' or Paul says 'always keep on praying for all the saints'. The word means to attend constantly, to continue steadfastly. The apostles before Pentecost and the believers on the Day gave themselves to prayer like this.

2. How to pray

Paul says 'with all prayer' which means 'with all kinds of prayers'. Consider some of the kinds of prayers:

(a) Private

Matt. 6:6; 1 Kings 17:19-20; Daniel 6:10; Acts 10:9; Acts 10:30.

(b) Public

Discuss

- (i) How a worshipper can identify himself with the prayers that are being offered.
- (ii) Should we signify our assent by responding 'Amen' at the end or during prayers?
- (iii) Should we repeat the Lord's Prayer in unison?
- (iv) The Prayer Meeting - why is it so neglected? Consider the practice of the early church. Compare your own congregation. Is the congregation exercising discipline to attend and participate in the prayer meetings ?

Examples of Social and Family Prayers:

Matt. 18:19; Luke 1:10; Acts 1:14; Acts 2:41; Acts 4:24; Acts 12:12; Acts 21:5.

Discuss the part which united prayer has played in revival in the early church and in modern times e.g. the 1859 Revival which started with a small group praying for

revival.

- (v) What are the Scriptural postures for prayer?

See 1 Kings 8:22; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:13; 1 Kings 8:54; Ps.95:6; Acts 7:60; Joshua 5:14; 1 Kings 18:42; Matt. 26:39

Emphasize the need to stand reverently in prayer - not lying over the seat in front. We are coming before the King of Kings with our petitions.

3. What to pray

Paul goes on to say 'pray with all kinds of requests'.

- (a) Our prayers should be wide ranging

We are to pray for 'all the saints'. We should have a world wide vision remembering missionaries in Russia, China, South America, Europe, Africa, as urgently as anywhere else. A map with marks to show areas of concern will help.

- (b) Our prayers should be personal

Paul asks 'Pray also for me'. Discuss the need to have personal news in order to pray for the individual and how this can be obtained e.g. correspondence, Church magazines, Prayer letter, etc. We should 'chat' about God's achievements.

- (c) Our prayers should be specific

Paul asks for the power to open his mouth boldly that he might perform the task which he had been given even though he was in prison. He did not ask to be released from his chains. It takes courage to speak boldly. Ask the students to suggest and prepare a list of who should be included in 'all the saints' - our missionaries, ministers, elders and others outside our denomination.

4. Cures for Mind Wandering in Prayer

- (a) Read an appropriate Psalm - Psalm 42 or Psalm 20.

- (b) Write down a prayer of your own.

- (c) Go through the day with Christ. In the morning review the day ahead. In the evening pick up the bits and ask forgiveness. Praise Him for what He has done.

- (d) Have a notebook for noting:

(i) What God says to you

(ii) Prayer list for others

(iii) Answers to prayer

- (e) Talk to God:

He is present

He hears

He created you for communion with Himself

He wants you to speak to Him

He wants to speak to you - have a silent time when the Holy Spirit can speak to you.

FURTHER BACKGROUND READING:

CARSON, Dr J. T. God's River in Spate (History of the 1859 Revival)

Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church page 41 on Prayer in Worship

LESSON 18

Studies in the Psalms

THANKSGIVING, SUPPLICATION AND ANTICIPATION

Scripture Text - Psalm 85

AIM OF LESSON

To understand the Psalm in an Old Testament setting and to see it as a model for prayer today.

BACKGROUND NOTES

(a) The setting of the Psalm

There were various times during the history of God's people when this Psalm could have been written. The time of the return from exile is one such time. It is reported in Haggai that, although the people had returned to their land, things were not going well with them. Haggai 1:4 gives us the reason: the people had been building nice homes for themselves while neglecting the house of God. Haggai 1:6-11 describe how God had withheld His blessing from them. Haggai 2:6-9 tell how, in God's providence, things will be in the future '...and in this place I will give peace.' Against such a background we can understand this Psalm and the meaning it would have had for the people of that day.

(b) The poetic structure of the Psalm

Verses 1-5 follow a pattern typical of Hebrew poetry where one idea is stated in two different ways in each verse, e.g. in v. 1 'You have been favourable to Your land' and 'You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.'

Verses 6-9,12 and 13 are a little different with the second idea being dependant on the first.

(c) The outline of the Psalm

Verses 1-3 Thanksgiving Before the psalmist asks for God's deliverance he praises Him for past blessings.

Verses 4-7 Prayer for deliverance These verses are a prayer for God to show mercy (covenant love) to His people. When the psalmist asks God for deliverance, he also gives a reason - 'that Your people may rejoice in You' (v. 6)

Verses 8-13 Trust in God Here we see the psalmist's trust that God will answer his prayer so that 'glory may dwell in our land' (v. 9) The psalmist anticipates blessing for all those who truly trust God.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Ask the students why the Psalms are so relevant for Christians today. In the discussion be sure to bring out the point that many of the Psalms were written in the type of situations which Christians still have to face today, e.g. opposition or personal failure. This Psalm deals with a situation in which

God's people had found themselves more than once. They know of God's blessing on them as a people in the past but are presently living with the consequences of their disobedience - God is angry with them. Now they are turning back to God, asking that He would show mercy to them once more. Refer to the Background Notes and Haggai for a probable setting for this Psalm.

Consider each of the three main sections of the Psalm. (See Background Notes on the outline of the Psalm.) You may ask the students to fill in part 1 of the worksheets as you do this.

Consider with the students what the writer of the Psalm was really concerned about. Note that he was concerned because the people were alienated from God. They had incurred God's wrath (v.4-5), they did not rejoice in Him (v. 6), and He was not glorified in the land (v. 9). Have the student's complete parts 2 and 3 of the worksheets.

APPLICATION

Conclude the lesson by turning to Isaiah 37:14-20 where we have Hezekiah's prayer at a time of national crisis (the threat from Assyria). Consider the Psalm and Hezekiah's prayer as a model for prayer. What do they suggest to us about how we should pray? (see worksheet no. 4)

1. Start by worshipping God and praising Him for His goodness to in the past. It is only when we realise the blessings received at God's hand that we can put our needs before Him in confidence.
2. Proceed to tell God of your needs and to ask for those things which will bring glory to Him.
3. Trust God to supply your present and future needs.

LESSON 19

Living the Christian Life

OBEYING OUR PARENTS

Scripture Text - Luke 2:41 – 52

AIM OF LESSON

To show the students that obedience to parents is God-honouring while at the same time making them aware of the fact that parents have their part to play (Eph. 6:4).

BACKGROUND NOTES

Obedience is one of the keynotes of Scripture. Disobedience was man's first sin. Our Lord delighted to do His Father's will. He said to His followers, 'You are my friends if you do what I command you'. The Fifth Commandment calls upon children to honour their parents as does Eph. 6:1.

Study the passage Luke 2:41-52 prayerfully and carefully.

These verses cover the 'silent years' of the life of Christ. Apart from them and the reference in Mark 6:3 'Is this not the carpenter?' Scripture is silent about the life of Jesus from infancy till the age of thirty. Why? We do not know. This one incident, inserted by Luke under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has many lessons to teach about the humanity and divinity of Christ.

- (a) It gives the lie to those who say that He assumed divinity at His baptism.
- (b) It raises the question 'When did He become aware of His divinity and His divine mission?'
- (c) It stresses His humanity (vv 40 and 52). Like a merely human child He passed through the natural development of body, mind and spirit so that at every stage He was perfect for that stage.

At the age of 12-13 a Jewish boy became a "Son of the Law". While the best known verse is probably v 49 - 'Why is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?' The key verse for this lesson is v 51, 'Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them' ...

Consider other Scripture passages or texts relating to the subject of family life, e.g. Eph. 6:1-4; Eli and his sons; Isaac, Rebekah and their sons.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

This passage is so short and the subject matter so well known that there is no need to re-tell the story. Instead do a Bible Study using question and answer method to draw out points which bring out the theme and lead to discussion.

1. The atmosphere in which Jesus grew up

To show that children are obedient more readily when the example set by parents is consistent, when standards are clearly set and understood and when there is a loving, caring atmosphere in the home. It has been said that Jesus did what Mary said because Mary did what God said. (Luke 1:38).

Q. v 41 What does v 41 tell us about the example set by Joseph and Mary?

A. They regularly honoured God's appointed ordinances and they honoured them together.

Q. Do you think it is important that parents attend church / attend church together / attend church regularly? Why?

v 42 The distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem was 100 kilometres, the journey troublesome and fatiguing, and the 2 weeks required for the journey and the observance of the Passover must have been a considerable expense for a poor family.

Q. Does serving God cost us anything?

Q. Should the whole family be involved in this?

vv 43 - 44 It would appear that Jesus at the age of 12 was allowed a considerable degree of freedom.

Q. What factors should parents take into account when deciding how much freedom their child should have?

v 44 The extended family (aunts, uncles etc) meant something in Jesus' upbringing. There is great security for children in a closely knit family.

Q. Why should this be so?

Q. In what ways should the church be like a wider family circle?

vv 45 - 48 The anxious search - Mary and Joseph showed a natural parental concern for the safety of their Son.

Q. Have parents the right to "check on their children", to know where they are going and with whom? At what age does this right cease?

2. The attitude which Jesus displayed

v 42 At the age of 12 when He became a "Son of the Law" He conformed to the religious practices of His parents.

Q. Have young people the right to decide whether or not to attend Sabbath School/Bible Class/Church?

Q. Have Christian young people the right to oppose decisions of non-Christian parents about their activities if these decisions are in conflict with the Word of God?

v 46 The respectful attitude of Jesus to the teachers indicates good home training.

- Q. Is there any connection between obedience to parents and respect for teachers and others in authority?
v 49 Jesus was unique because of His special relationship to God. Therefore we cannot compare our position with His in all respects.
- Q. v 51 What can we apply to our own experience from Jesus' answer in v 49 and His action in v. 51?

LESSON 20

Living the Christian Life

WHEN TO FORGIVE

Scripture Text - Matt. 18:15-35

AIM OF LESSON

To study Christ's teaching on offences committed against us.

BACKGROUND NOTES

This passage falls naturally into four sections which makes it very suitable for group study.

1. Christian reproof (vv. 15-20)

When a brother (Christian) sins against you, for example spreads malicious gossip, insults you or owes you money etc. Christ outlines the course of action you should take:

- (a) reason with him privately and try to resolve the matter.
- (b) if this does not work ask a few other Christian friends to support you and reason with him.
- (c) if this is still unsuccessful report the matter to the Church (minister and elders) who should persuade and reason with the offender.
- (d) Only if these three approaches are unsuccessful should the matter be dealt with by the law of the land.

v 18 states that if the Church has followed the procedures set down in God's law, then it is certain that such action is approved by God.

vv 19 - 20 demonstrate God's presence with the believer in these difficult situations. If (a), (b) and (c) fail it must be doubted whether such a person is truly a Christian.

2. The frequency of forgiveness (vv. 21-22)

How many times do we forgive our neighbour (fellow men)? Christ's answer to Peter is very plain - there should be no bounds to our forgiveness.

3. God's forgiveness of us (vv. 23-27)

Christ explains, by means of a parable, the clemency of the master towards his servant. He forgave him 10,000 talents, out of pure compassion.

4. Our forgiveness of others (vv. 28-35)

In the second part of the parable we see the servant's unreasonable severity towards his fellow servant despite the Lord's clemency towards him. The debt was small in comparison, only 100 pence. Note his severe approach ("caught him by the throat") and the humble response of the debtor, who was his equal. No leniency was shown and he was put in prison. The other servants were distressed but unwilling to reprove their fellow-servant since he was so unreasonable, perhaps a sign of cowardice. They told the master. The master reacted by:

- (a) reproving the servant "O you wicked servant",
- (b) showing him his obligation to his fellows,
- (c) revoking his pardon and cancelling the acquittance.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Stress the themes of:

- (a) Christian reproof.
- (b) The frequency of forgiveness.
- (c) God's forgiveness of us.
- (d) Our forgiveness of others.

Discuss these using the Students' worksheets and questions.

Discuss the questions of Church discipline and its place today.

APPLICATION

Christian reproof is an ordinance of Christ. It must be done with reason and in a spirit of love, and on repentance, the wrong doer must be received back into the fellowship and welcomed.

If repentance is not evident the wrong doer should be expelled from the fellowship.

The answer to Peter's question intimates that we should make it our constant practice to forgive, even until it becomes habitual. God multiplies His pardons and so should we.

The parable is based on the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer - 'And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors'. Every sin we commit is a debt to God. An account is kept of these debts. The debt of sin is very great, to the extent that we cannot pay, only Christ can forgive. God in His infinite mercy is very ready to forgive the sins of those who humble themselves.

Two points should be noted about the unreasonable servant in the parable:

- (a) He should have shown more compassion, since he himself had been in a similar position.
- (b) He should have shown an example of his master's tenderness, having experienced it to his own advantage.

Overall application 'so likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you'.

FURTHER READING

James 5:16

Lev. 6:2 - 1

Luke 17:3 - 4

Matt. 5:23-24; 6:14-15

LESSON 21

Living the Christian Life

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN

Scripture Text - Luke 20:19 - 26; Romans 13:1 - 7

AIM OF LESSON

To show that while we are to obey the civil authorities, God claims and deserves, our highest obedience and whole-hearted allegiance.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Luke 20:19-26

v. 19 The scribes and priests carried out their attack on Jesus because they realised He had spoken out against them. We need to know the situation of the time in order to see why they chose to ask a question about paying taxes to Caesar. The Roman Empire controlled and taxed the country through Pilate, the procurator and there was much resentment, violence and even guerrilla warfare because of the intrusion of Rome. Many Jews agitated against the situation by saying it ran against the true service of God. It was a time of political unrest and upheaval comparable to today's similar unrest in many quarters.

v. 20 'Spies' were sent to carry out a subtle and hypocritical attack on Jesus, and their 'disguise' was to use flattery and so (hopefully) catch Him off His guard.

v. 21 The spies began their insidious attack by seeming to praise Jesus for His fairness and wisdom. It is interesting to note the irony of this situation, for the spies meant their remarks to be flattering - they had no respect for Jesus at all - yet these words are nevertheless true and give a good picture of the character of Jesus. The spies, therefore, were condemning themselves by trying to trap Jesus in order to do Him harm.

v. 22 The question Jesus was confronted with was a trick question which, the spies hoped, would guarantee the success of their mission. If Jesus answered 'Yes', the crowd would probably turn against Him; they had heard His exposure of the harsh, greedy political system and would expect Him to be consistent in His attitude. If Jesus answered 'No', however, He would place Himself in a dangerous position and probably be arrested by the Romans as an agitator. The question was a real issue, because the tax system was often unfair and discriminating and the money could be used for pagan festivals as well as for maintaining law and order - this, of course, would be offensive to the Jews.

v. 23 God sees into men's thoughts and hearts, and the Son of God knew exactly what His enemies were trying to do.

v. 24 Jesus answered the question with another question, and so forced His enemies to say that the coin bore Caesar's image and inscription. Caesar claimed divinity and this would be abhorrent to the Jews; the inscription on the coin would have read "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus". Here again there is irony, for the scribes and priests were carrying pagan idols in their pockets, an ironic comment on their original question and motive.

v. 25 Jesus' answer means that if Caesar ruled the empire then ultimately its money was his, and so he could demand part, or all, of it to be repaid in the form of a tribute. If Caesar owns the coin which bears his stamp and image, what does God own, if not the creature made in His image - Man? God claims our whole being and total allegiance and we must not only recognise this fact but also 'return' ourselves to Him for His service.

v. 26 Jesus silenced His enemies by His wisdom, because He turned the tables and made them see their guilt.

2. Romans 13:1 - 7

Paul continues where Jesus stopped, by explaining that we should obey temporal leaders because they have been placed in their position of authority by God and through obeying them we obey Him.

But the state needs to be warned that God is still the supreme leader and the Lord of all. If the claims of the state clash with the claims of God, the Christian must follow God, even if he puts himself in danger. This is why many Christians today willingly suffer imprisonment and persecution, just as Paul did.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Look at some coins, and discuss why the monarch's head is pictured on them and in what sense the coins belong to the government.
2. Read Luke 20:19-26.
3. Briefly explain the political system of Roman rule in Christ's time, and ask for comparisons from today's world.
4. Questions and discussion on the passage:
Why did they try to flatter Jesus? (They thought they could deceive Him by making Him think they were followers).

Discuss Jesus' dilemma: what would happen if He answered 'Yes' or 'No'? (See Background Notes)

Why did Jesus ask the spies to produce a coin? (It links up with the question about taxes).

Discuss the implications of Jesus' answer: what is the correspondence between Caesar/God and tax/payment to God? (See Background Notes).

5. Read Romans 13:1-7.
6. Ask students to answer the questions on this passage (No. 1 of the students' worksheets) and discuss their answers briefly. Continue from there by introducing the problem: what if the rules or the rulers are not worthy of respect? What if they clash with God's rules? Outline some cases of this; eg, in some Communist-controlled countries Christians are forbidden to witness to others about their faith, which goes against God's law. They must not teach their beliefs or preach the gospel in public; their children are expected to wear red neckties in school to show support for the Communist regime; often their services are held in secret, perhaps in a forest, but often these services are broken up by the authorities and those present are arrested. Those who appear in court are often given harsh prison sentences or long spells in labour camps and they are under constant harassment and pressure from then on. Peter says in Acts 5:29 that we must obey God rather than men - how do Christians cope with this?
7. Read the second extract in the Students' worksheets about the Church in China.

APPLICATION

We may not live in such a tense Church / state situation as those we have considered, but we must, nevertheless, get our priorities right when it comes to obedience.

What authorities do you have to obey now, if you follow Jesus' teaching? (Parents, teachers, etc.)
 What authorities will you have to obey when you get a job? (Pay taxes, obey employers, etc.) Why do you think God wants to be in complete control of our lives? (He made us and knows what is best for us, so we must trust Him with all aspects of our lives).

Some areas in our lives (parental relationships, personal relationships, etc.) may not yet have been handed over to God; how will a refusal to acknowledge Him as Lord in any area hinder our Christian growth? (We will not be complete in our relationship with God if we put ourselves first in any way).

LESSON 22

Living the Christian Life

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Scripture - Matt. 4:1-11; 1 Cor. 10:1-13.

AIM OF LESSON

To help the students to resist and overcome temptation.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION AND APPLICATION

The New Testament frequently uses the imagery of warfare. We are told to 'fight the good fight of faith', to 'put on the whole armour of God', to 'endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ' etc. So it is clear that being a Christian is not a bed of roses. Rather it is a constant struggle against Satan and the forces of evil. Paul says, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members'. Rom. 7:22,23.

It is important in this war to:

1. Know your enemy

Paul in writing to the Ephesians (6:12) says, 'We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities,...against spiritual hosts of wickedness...' Christ called Satan the 'Father of lies', and three times 'Prince of this world'. He is elsewhere called a murderer (John 8:44), a liar, a deceiver, the accuser of the brethren, the god of this world, your adversary.

Here is an enemy with tremendous powers and resources. He doesn't fight clean but uses subtle traps and ambushes to catch his victims. He can be like a roaring lion at one moment and an angel of light the next.

Consider the artful simplicity of Satan's methods in Matt. 4.

(a) v. 3 'If you are the Son of God command that these stones become bread.'

Jesus was hungry. He had been fasting 40 days and 40 nights. The desert stones possibly resembled bread. He was the Son of God - 'Seeing you are the Son of God'. How reasonable that He should use His divine power and command the stones to become bread.

(b) v. 6 Leap from the pinnacle of the temple - act in a spectacular and sensational way to win the allegiance of the people. Was there not a promise that the angels would bear Him up lest any harm should come to Him? Ps. 90:11-12. God had promised to take care of Him so

why not force His hand?

- (c) vv. 8-9 Worship me and I will give you the kingdoms of the world. God had already promised this to His Son, (Ps. 2:8), but God's way would involve the cross. There could be no crown without the cross. Satan suggested just a little compromise with evil.

Satan is clever enough to vary his attacks. He varies the timing. He varies the methods. He comes at school, at home, at church. He comes through our bodies - what our eyes read and see, what our ears hear. He comes through our ambitions - for advancement or easy financial gain. His camouflage is excellent, his timing precise and unexpected but he is powerless against those who resist his attack. He cannot make you sin.

2. Know your Captain

It must help a soldier to know that his captain has surveyed the battlefield beforehand, that he knows the way, that his tactics work and he has had previous victory over the enemy. Our Captain has Himself been tempted, therefore He is wonderfully able to sympathise and help us (Heb. 2:18). What is more our Captain has shown that it is possible to have victory over temptation. Let us see how He dealt with Satan. The way to victory is set before us in our Captain's example.

- (a) Jesus used the Shield of Faith.

'It is written' was His answer to all three temptations. Matt. 4:4,7,10. This means for us that we should let the Bible become part of the fibre of our being in such a way that all our thinking and actions are in accordance with its teachings. This is why Bible reading, study and application of its truths to our lives is so necessary. Our shield will always be in the right position. We will not be caught off guard.

Suggest specific temptations to which we can find a specific 'it is written', e.g.

Pride - 1 Peter 5:5 'Be clothed with humility'.

Selfishness - Rom. 15:2 'Let each of us please his neighbour'.

Dishonesty - 2 Cor 13:7 'Do what is honourable'.

- (b) Jesus never acted independently of God. Matt. 4:4. 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'. God had not commanded Him to turn the stones into bread, (Matt. 4:7). He would not go ahead of God's timing nor act contrary to God's methods.

Matt. 4:10 God's way for Him to redeem the world was by the cross not by compromising with Satan.

It has been said of Christ that on meeting Satan He had God's will in His heart and God's word in His mouth. If we follow our Captain in this way we shall not be drawn aside and enticed by Satan. "He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin". (Heb4:15)

3. Know that the war is already won

See the Students' worksheets about Churchill and the second World War.

Jesus resisted the devil and he left Him - for a season. On the cross He bruised Satan's head and because of that Satan is a defeated enemy.

Sin need not have dominion over us. J. C. Ryle said 'Satan cannot rob us of heaven but he can make the journey painful. He can bruise our heels but he cannot destroy our souls'.

If we belong to Christ and abide in Him He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that we may be able to bear it.
See 1 Cor 10:13

FURTHER READING

Corrie, R. B. - Overcoming Temptation (Falcon Booklet)

Lewis, C. S. - Screwtape Letters.

LESSON 23

Living the Christian Life

CHOOSING OUR FRIENDS

Scripture Text - 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1.

AIM OF LESSON

To show the importance and value of true friendship, and the necessity of avoiding friendship with the world.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In this passage the Apostle Paul is seeking to re-establish and strengthen his relationship with the believers at Corinth, which had suffered through the activities of some false teachers who had slandered and misrepresented him in the eyes of his Christian friends. Paul had shared the gospel and his faith in Jesus Christ with them and a real bond of love had been formed as a result. Paul was being very frank and open with them about the whole matter, as he wants them to be with him. 2 Cor. 6:11-13; 7:1-3.

The Apostle had been sharing with the Christians something of his own inner struggles and pressures. Such openness and willingness to share are essential parts of true friendships. Paul was anxious that nothing should be allowed to come in between and make things awkward, and so spoil the real friendship which had been established between him and the believers at Corinth. Hence he warns them against forming the wrong kind of friendships or associations either of a business nature or of marriage which would compromise and spoil their relationship with Christ and with Paul, His servant.

Paul here makes an earnest plea for single-minded devotion to Christ and complete separation from everything that could spoil the relationship between a Christian and his Lord. "There is a jealous sensitivity about love that hates anything that spoils the openness between two hearts in love with one another".

Basically what Paul is saying here is that friendship with Christ and friendship with the world are incompatible. They cannot co-exist. For Christians there must be separation from the world to God. Jesus Christ taught the same principle when He said, 'You cannot serve God and mammon'. Paul puts it this way, 'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?... What part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols'? Paul concludes the passage and reinforces his argument by reminding the believers that Christians are:

- (a) Part of a building - the temple of the living God - dedicated to God, in whom God, who is holy, dwells.
- (b) Members of a family, the family of God's people, and God is their Father and they are His sons and daughters. Therefore they should live lives separate from all uncleanness.

While Christians obviously cannot cut themselves off completely from the world in a physical sense, yet spiritually they are to be separated from the world and different.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. **Avoiding friendship with the world**

Paul says, 'Do not be bound together with unbelievers'. What kind of friendship does Paul warn against and why? Paul warns Christians against close friendship with non-Christians, as in immoral business associations where one is obliged to work on Sabbath, or serve intoxicating drinks. Where marriage is contemplated, Christians must carefully guard against close friendships with members of the opposite sex who are not Christian. Christians must be ready to separate rather than compromise their Christian faith and conduct. They should avoid the kind of friends that have a bad influence on them.

How would you answer a Christian who wanted to marry a non-Christian and argued that he or she would win the other to Christ? It rarely, if ever, happens that way. Usually the Christian loses his love and zeal for Christ.

A certain man had a beautiful singing canary. His neighbour had a sparrow, and he wanted to teach the sparrow to sing by putting it in the cage with his neighbour's canary. They put the two together for a while, but instead of the sparrow learning to sing, the canary began to chirp like the sparrow. The canary lost its own song instead of teaching the sparrow to sing.

Christians are of necessity bound to come in contact with non-Christians almost every day, but they need not enter with them into their worldly practices.

2. **Importance and value of true friendships**

Cicero the Roman orator wrote, 'There is nothing in the world more valuable than friendship'. A notable Englishman wrote, 'Those men who banish friendship from their lives remove as it were the sun from the earth, because of all God's gifts to man, it is the most beautiful and the most pleasing'.

We all know the influence that friends have on one another. True friendships can be very helpful and enriching. It is therefore important that Christians have the right kind of friends. In choosing their friends it will help if they remember that they are 'in the world but not of it'. Because Christ is now their Friend and they love Him, Christians will no longer please themselves, but Christ. Their first loyalty and love is to Christ. Because they are separated to God

and are living in fellowship with Him they will have a different outlook on life, (Rom. 12:1-2). They will be different in their attitudes to worldly activities and things that may become idols and take the place of God in their affection.

This does not mean that they are to cut themselves off completely from the world and live like hermits. They should be like their Master and be friendly with Christians and non-Christians alike. They may have non-Christian friends so long as they do not compromise their Christian faith and standards of conduct. They may take part with non-Christians in clean harmless activities. In this way they have opportunities to influence them for good and let it be seen that they are Christians. Such friendships must attract others to Christ, the one true Friend.

Discuss how Christians can best share their Christian faith with non-Christian friends, e.g. offer them a book, invite them to their home or to a young people's meeting.

3. Marks of true friendship

The greatest, most enriching friendship of all is that between two Christians who share the same faith in and love for God and His kingdom. Perhaps the outstanding example of this, either in Scripture or elsewhere, is the friendship between David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 18:1-4; Ch. 20; Ch. 23:16-18). Study also the friendship between Ruth and Naomi, (Ruth 1:6-18).

The following are some marks of true friendship as illustrated by the above examples and described in the book of Proverbs.

(a) **Constancy and faithfulness**

Fair weather friends are many. (Prov. 14:20; 19:4,6,7). On the other hand 'there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother' and 'loves at all times'. (Prov. 17:17; 18:24).

Christians must not only expect this kind of loyalty and constancy from others but they must be prepared to give such friendship to others, especially to whom? (Prov. 27:10).

(b) **Candour or openness**

Such was Paul with his Corinthian friends. 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend'. (Prov. 27:6; 29:5).

(c) **Counsel and comfort**

This is specially true in time of need. (Prov. 27:9,17).

Such was Jonathan to David when his life was in danger and he was being sought after by Saul in order that he might kill David. Jonathan risked his own life.

Christians can have such deep and enriching friendship with other Christians with whom they have spiritual fellowship.

APPLICATION

The most wonderful friendship of all is that between Jesus and the sinner. We can have Jesus as our friend for He is the Friend of sinners and He is at the same time separate from sin. (2 Cor. 5:21).

Is He your Friend? You can become His friend. (John 15:14,15).

‘You are My friends if you do what I command you’.

LESSON 24

Living the Christian Life

THE CHRISTIAN AND SUFFERING

Scripture Text - John 11:1-6; James 1:1-5; Rom. 5:1-5; 8:18,28; Job 1.

AIM OF LESSON

To show what the Christian's attitude should be to unmerited suffering.

BACKGROUND NOTES

John 11:1-6 Sadness came to people who loved Christ. It was not the result of their sin nor was it the consequence of their witnessing to Christ, but it was for the glory of God, that Christ's power might be revealed.

v. 1 It was in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany where Jesus had often been a welcome visitor that sickness and death came.

v. 3 The women sent a simple message to Jesus. They were not complaining, not telling Jesus what to do. Instead, it was simply an appeal to the heart of One in whom they had implicit confidence. They did not emphasise that Lazarus loved Jesus but that Lazarus was the one loved by Jesus. 'Christ's fathomless love for us, and not our feeble love for Him, is what we ever need to keep steadily before our hearts. Our love varies; His knows no change.' A. W. Pink. This passage shows that sickness in a believer is not incompatible with the Lord's love for such a one.

v. 4 By His answer Jesus shows He has full knowledge of and is in full control over the situation. He tells Martha and Mary enough to kindle their hope, but not so much as to make them leave off seeking God's help. Compare John 9:2,3. There is much suffering which is not due immediately to sin. God has His own wise reasons for permitting sickness; often it is that He may be glorified thereby. (2 Cor. 12:9 and John 21:19). God has a purpose in connection with every detail in our lives.

v. 5 Note that this comes immediately before what is said in v 6. 'Among other things, Christ designed to strengthen the faith of these sisters by suffering it to endure the bitterness of death, in order to heighten its subsequent joy. Let us learn from this that when God makes us wait, it is the sign that He purposes to bless, but in His own way - usually a way so different from what we desire and expect.' A. W. Pink (Isa. 30:18). It was this delay that led to the utterance of Christ which has been a source of comfort and encouragement to believers ever since, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live." (v 25). The glory of God was further revealed as Lazarus was raised from the dead, (vv 40,43,44).

James 1:1-5 James was writing to believers who were being persecuted for their stand for Christ.

Such trials are the means by which one's faith is proved because they bring about steadfastness.

Rom. 8:18 Paul indicated that suffering helps him to think more about eternal things and not to set his heart on this world. In the same way, God allowed the people of Israel to suffer as slaves to make them realise that Egypt was not their home, (Ex. 2:23-25). The sufferings of the present age are not worthy to be compared with the glory of the age to come for Christians shall be with Christ and shall share with Him in His glory. (Rom. 8:18).

Job 1 Job was a believer, a righteous man, (vv 1, 5). He trusted in God's promise of forgiveness through the Saviour, as is indicated by his offering sacrifice. Yet he suffered. The reason? 'Job's trials were the result of transactions in heaven.' Robinson. 'God permitted Satan to press Job to vindicate his real, living, well-motivated faith, love and service.' Peter Masters. We do not receive God's salvation because we are 'good living', as Job's 'comforters' mistakenly suggested and we are not to judge God's blessing on us merely by wealth, success and outward appearances.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Introduction

Someone who speeds when driving a car or motorbike, crashes and injures himself, cannot blame anyone else. But what can we say to an innocent passerby who is injured? What comfort can we give parents of a deformed or retarded child? Why should Christians suffer? Maybe this is something you have thought about or maybe you know someone who is bitter because of what has happened to them.

Outline

Study John 11:1 - 6 with the students, bringing in the other scripture references and points of application. You could ask, 'Is sickness in a believer incompatible with the Lord's love for such an one?' Look at Job and have the students bring out the character of Job, the reason for his suffering (of which he was totally unaware), and his commendable response.

APPLICATION

1. Mary and Martha's approach to the Lord, (John 11:3), shows us to whom we should go in time of need. 'Cast your burden upon the Lord'. Think about Ps. 46:1.
2. We also see the manner of prayer - not a command but a humble request. 'Not my will, but Yours be done'.
3. Jesus did not make light of Mary and Martha's distress and neither should we when comforting another. At the same time, point the students to Christ's love and the realities of eternity.
4. Waiting is not easy but here we have encouragement to continue trusting in the Lord knowing He has a purpose in every detail in our lives and He will bless us through it all.

LESSON 25

Living the Christian Life

THE CONTROLLED TONGUE

Scripture Text - James 1:19-26; 3:1-13

AIM OF LESSON

To show that what we say is very important in our Christian witness to others and that God must control thoughts and words so that we use them for good and not for evil.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In James' epistle there are 54 imperatives in 108 verses - it is a forceful letter which stresses the importance of practical Christian action and in this passage James warns us of dangers of an uncontrolled tongue.

James 3:1-13

v. 1 It seems that there was a tendency in the early Church to seek the office of teaching and James insists that it must be sought for the right reasons. Obviously, a teacher of God's Word must be very careful that he expounds that Word very faithfully and with no additions or subtractions according to his own ideas of importance: greater privilege means greater responsibility.

v. 2 Men are apt to make many mistakes, especially in what they say, simply because they are imperfect creatures. A 'slip of the tongue' can have very grave consequences, especially for a teacher, because words are the tools of his trade he must take great care not to mislead anyone. James adds that everyone makes mistakes - if we did not, we would be perfect.

vv. 3-5 Although small in size, the tongue is great in achievement. James gives 3 illustrations of small things exercising control over large things. We must use rightly the speech that God gave us since it has such great possibilities, both for good and for evil.

vv. 6-12 Rightly used, our words can accomplish much in the service of God. Wrongly used, they can cause much damage and grief. We are as people, wholly affected when we misuse our tongues, because not only that part is affected - mind, will and personality are also involved. There is something satanic about the wrong use of words, because the desire behind them is to hurt or destroy.

James further notes that man has shown skill as a tamer of wild beasts, but in contrast to controlling fierce animals more powerful than himself, he cannot control so small a thing as his own tongue. This shows us that controlling our words is often a difficult struggle, not something that can be done automatically.

The final point James makes is perhaps the most effective and when we read it we can see that even as Christians we must beware of the inconsistency he mentions. It is unnatural and hypocritical, to use the same mouth for blessing and cursing; how can a child of God praise Him in one set of circumstances and then, in another, insult or hurt one of God's creatures made in His image? The moral of James' words is that as Christians we should be consistent; our behaviour towards God should set the tone for our behaviour towards other people.

v. 13 Our life as a whole is, of course, very important, and James turns from control of our words to control of our whole personalities.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me'.
Discuss this rhyme; is it true? How do people hurt each other by the things they say? Why are such things hard to forget? Why do you think people take pleasure in hurting others? What sort of things would you not like to have said to you? etc.
2. Read James 3:1-13
Explain any difficulties and ask the students to tell you what the passage is about.
3. Stress the power of the tongue.
Look at the 3 different comparisons in w. 3 and 4 (bits controlling horses, ships guided by rudders), and in v 5 (a forest destroyed by a small fire). What do these show us about the tongue's power? Although so small it can control us and do tremendous harm.
4. Discuss the widespread use of blasphemous language today.
(See application section)
5. Explain the meaning of inconsistent speech and God's dislike of it.
(See Background Notes)

APPLICATION

It is important to stress the following points about the gift of speech:

1. Gossip
We must think before we speak because as Christians we are responsible to God for everything we do or say. If we love Him we must also love other people and not want to hurt them.
Ask - is it necessary to say this, is it hurtful, and would I say it to Christ's face?
2. Language (Blasphemy)
Remember the third Commandment. Improper use of God's names is very common today, The Lord will not suffer them to escape His righteous judgment'.

3. What we say reflects our heart
Matt. 12:34 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks'.
4. Knowing when to use our tongue
We must speak out for what is right, silence implies support for wrong.
5. Hypocrisy
God hates a hypocrite. We must mean what we say and not use flattering and shallow words.
Examine the serious warning given in Matt. 12:36 - 37; and the root of uncontrolled words in Matt. 15:18-19.

Ask the class what Christians should 'gossip' about? (See John 1:43 - Jesus speaks to Philip, Philip finds Nathanael and tells him the good news). Make Ps. 39:1 your resolve - 'I said I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue'.

LESSON 26

Living the Christian Life

SUPPORTING THE CHURCH'S WORK

Scripture Text - 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 9.

AIMS OF LESSON

- (a) To show that Christ has ordained that 'those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel';
- (b) To show that it is the Christian's duty to support the work of the Church in every way possible, especially financially;
- (c) To show the blessing promised to those who contribute.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The Apostle Paul likens the Church of Christ to a body. The body is composed of various members, each one of which has its own function to perform. So it is with the Church. The Spirit has given to each Christian some gift for the benefit of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). Among the gifts the risen Christ has given to His Church are 'pastors and teachers' (Eph. 4:7-14). Such gifts, together with that of Evangelists, required more time to be devoted to their use than other gifts. Consequently the Lord in His wisdom made provision for them (Luke 10:7). He permitted these preachers of the Word to receive gifts from their converts and so avoid having to spend time 'earning a living'. They could devote themselves wholly to the study and proclamation of the Word of God.

In making this provision, our Lord appears to have followed the practice of ancient Israel whose priests (the traditional teachers of the people) were divinely permitted to keep part of the offerings for themselves. (1 Cor. 9:13).

Under the New Covenant, ministers etc, are to be supported by the Church members themselves (Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17; Phil. 4:14-18; 1 Cor. 16:1-4). This is not the only way, of course, of supporting God's ministers. There is prayer (2 Cor. 1:11), obedience (Heb. 13:17), and witnessing (Phil. 1:27), but it is a tangible proof of commitment. If a congregation of ten Christians gave a tenth of their income to the church, they would be able to support a pastor at the same financial level. Moreover, God has promised to bless us as we give (2 Cor. 8:9).

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION AND APPLICATION

Have the students read the section, 'Work in the World'. Concentration on the practical realities of 'work' may help to sensitize them to the question of supporting God's ministers.

The two following sections are meant to lead logically to the discussion of the issue being studied. The points to be stressed are that such support should be viewed as:

- (a) a divine command;
- (b) a way of sharing in God's work;
- (c) a challenge to our faith or depth of commitment and that there are other forms of support which God expects, which likewise enable us to participate in the spread of the Gospel.

LESSON 27

The Church

THE ELDERS AND OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEM

Scripture Text -1 Tim. 3:1-7; Heb. 13:7

AIM OF LESSON

To teach the students that Christ has appointed elders to rule in His Church for the good of the members. To show how each member of the Church should appreciate and support the elders in their work.

BACKGROUND NOTES

One of the names by which our church is known is The Reformed Presbyterian Church. The name 'Reformed' refers to its doctrinal position and historical roots. The name 'Presbyterian' refers to its form of government. Presbyterianism is that system of government which believes that the Bible teaches a form of government by elders. Elders are appointed by Christ to rule in His Name in accordance with His law and to oversee His flock.

1. The work of the Elder

Elders have leadership responsibility in two areas:

- (a) To rule. 1 Tim. 5:17, 'elders who rule well'. They rule by receiving people into membership, by overseeing the administration of the sacraments, by ensuring that all activities within the Church are 'done decently and in order'.
- (b) To care for the members. Paul sent for the elders at Ephesus and gave them a parting instruction - to care for the people. (Acts 20:17)

2. The Character of the Elder

Christ has set down in His Word the kind of men who ought to be appointed by a congregation as elders. Read 1 Tim. 3:1 - 7 (Note: 'bishop' or 'overseer' is synonymous with 'elder'). Emphasis should be placed on the elder's godliness and humility.

3. Our Attitude to our Elders

Jesus Christ has given the elders authority in the Church. They have a responsibility to care for every member - to ensure that all are taught the Word of God, are disciplined when they go astray, are encouraged and given the opportunity to use their gifts for the good of the Church. Our attitude to the elders should be marked by thankfulness for them, and respect for them (Heb. 13:17). We should pray for them (Heb. 13: 18) and support the activities which they lead.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Scripture reading, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Heb. 13:17
2. After reading the introduction on the Students' worksheets ask some general questions which will focus class attention on the subject. What are some of the responsibilities of the elders? Is the minister an elder? How does a man become an elder? What is the Presbytery?

Take the question on Acts 14:23 and show the necessity of elders in each local congregation.

3. Go through the background notes giving a brief summary of elders in each point and then deal with the questions on the Students' worksheets relating to that point.

FURTHER READING

Acts 20:17-38; 1 Peter 5.

Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 30.

The Testimony of R.P. Church of Ireland, Chapter 7

LESSON 28

The Church

CHRIST THE CHURCH'S HEAD

Scripture Text - Col.1:1-29; 3:1 -4

AIM OF LESSON

To show that the only head of the Church is Jesus Christ and that all the affairs of the Church must be governed by Him.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Paul wrote to the Colossian church to warn them about false teachers who were saying that the Lord Jesus Christ was less than God the Father. Paul insisted that not only was He equal with the Father but that God appointed Him head over all things. There are three important aspects of this headship.

1. **His universal headship over all things** 'All things were created by Him and for Him'. He has that universal headship by virtue of the fact that He is God and that He is the One by whom everything came into being. He is the ruler of the universe and all people are obligated to worship and serve Him. He also has universal headship given to Him by His Father (Eph. 1:22); this is extremely significant because it was for the benefit of the Church that He received that universal appointment, 'And God gave Him to be head over all things to the Church'. He so orders all things that His cause and kingdom will flourish and prosper. Even times of persecution are ordered and directed for the glory of God and for the ultimate benefit of the Church.
2. **His organic headship over the Church** 'And He is the head of the body, the Church'. Christ is the source of the life of the Church - without Him there is no life. A body can function and live if one or more of the limbs are missing, but if the head is missing the body is a corpse! So it is with the Church. The Church can function without some of its members, albeit with its effectiveness impaired, but remove the Head and it ceases to be a Church and becomes a religious club. It is only as the body is vitally joined to the Head that there can be any true life. It is Christ alone who gives life to the members of the Church.
3. **His governing headship over the church** That in everything He might have the supremacy'. The Church is not free to organise its affairs in any way that it chooses, its government, laws, worship, evangelism - indeed all its affairs - must be subject to the word and the will of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:23,24). A professing Church only has claim to be the Church of Jesus Christ in the degree to which it submits all its practices and activities to the authority of the One who is "King in Zion".

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Read the relevant scripture passages together.
2. Explain how Christ rules over all things for His Church - see Background material (1) – relate that to difficult times in the history of the Church, e.g. the Killing Times in Scotland, when the cause of Christ was under great attack and many of Christ's people suffered imprisonment and death for refusing to accept that there could be any king in the Church but Jesus Christ. Discuss - How can Christ's headship be seen in times of persecution? (Strengthening His people, restraining the full fury of the enemy, purifying His Church, deepening the love of His people for Himself, chastising for wickedness and disobedience).
3. Explain the relationship between Christ and the Church - see Background Notes (2). Use John 15:5 to illustrate the absolute necessity to be joined to Jesus Christ in a personal way and to receive the life that comes from Him. Challenge the young people as to their own relationship with Jesus Christ.
4. Explain how Christ rules the Church - see Background Notes (3). Relate this to the situation that occurred in England in the sixteenth century when Henry VIII declared himself to be the supreme head of the Church of England. He denied the headship of the Pope because the Pope would not give him a divorce from Catherine of Aragon and he made himself the head of the English church so that he would be able to do as he pleased. Discuss with the students the implications of having the king - or any other person - as the supreme head of the Church. How would this affect church government, doctrine, worship etc? How would it affect the faithful presentation of the truth of the Word of God?

APPLICATION

The important things to stress in this lesson are:

1. That all things are under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that everything is ordered for the good of the Church.
2. That because Christ is the supreme Head over the Church the Church is not free to do what is popular or what is acceptable to the majority of the people if it conflicts in any way with the teaching of the Word of God. We are only free to follow the directions of the King and Head of the church, Jesus Christ.
3. That the most important thing as far as the individual student is concerned is that he has a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON 29

The Church

THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Text - Acts 2:41-47; 5:1-11

AIM OF LESSON

To show that there are certain characteristics of the true Church of Jesus Christ which distinguish it from the false.

BACKGROUND NOTES

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, there was a great influx of new believers into the Church. Up until this time the Church had been identified with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and with the disciples of Christ in the New Testament. Now that the group was so greatly enlarged and would become more so, it was important that they should understand the distinguishing marks of their fellowship.

1. The first main characteristic was the **preaching of the Word of God**. (Acts 2:1ff; Acts 2:42 and Matt. 28:20.) People came into this new fellowship because they had accepted Peter's message, v 41. Preaching was central in the work and witness of the New Testament Church:
 - it was a radical departure from the mere recitation of the teaching of learned Rabbis that went on in the synagogue, and from the philosophical dialogue that was the custom of the Greeks;
 - here there was a prophetic declaration of, 'Thus saith the Lord'.
2. The second mark **of the Church, the proper administration of the sacraments**, can be found in vv. 41-42. Those who believed were baptised and having been baptised, they met together in the observance of the Lord's Supper. These two sacraments have been part of the Church of God since the very earliest times. The New Testament sacraments correspond to the Old Testament ceremonies of circumcision and Passover. Here in this passage is a clear indication that the Church is one in all ages; the church did NOT begin at Pentecost. At that time the administration of the church changed and it passed from the narrow boundaries of Judaism, but its essential unity is demonstrated here by the insistence on the continuation of the ordinances. The sign of entry into the company of the people of God, formerly signified by circumcision, was changed to baptism; and the sign of deliverance from bondage was changed from the Passover to the Lord's Supper.
3. The third distinguishing mark, **discipline**, is found in the verses from Act 5:1 -10, the account of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. They claimed to be what they were not, they lied to the Holy Spirit and to the church. They had to suffer the consequences of their sin which was not allowed to go unchallenged, they were disciplined and punished. For the good order of the

Church and to prevent the name of Christ being blasphemed among the ungodly, it is necessary that discipline be exercised.

These marks were evident in the early years of the New Testament dispensation and they have come to be accepted as the evidences of a true Church of Jesus Christ.

It is important that there should be some criteria by which to judge whether people meeting for religious worship can be considered to be a part of the true Church of Jesus Christ. It is also important that the marks of the true Church be properly understood so that we can examine our own fellowship to make sure that we exhibit the evidence of the true Church.

The three main points to emphasise are:

- (a) **The true preaching of the Word.** This means that the Word be accepted as inspired and infallible and that it be expounded and applied.
- (b) **The proper administration of the sacraments.** If the sacraments are indiscriminately administered to all, without regard to the need for a credible profession of faith, then this mark cannot be said to be present.
- (c) **The faithful exercise of Biblical discipline.** It is conceivable that a true Church may exist where the exercise of discipline has been allowed to decline, but such a congregation is in a weak and sickly condition. If discipline fails it is often accompanied by a lax administration of the sacraments, which will in turn lead to a diminishing of the true and authoritative preaching of the Word.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

There should be discussion of the three main points made above in relation to the passages cited. The students should be encouraged to see that it is of vital importance that these marks be evidenced in the church.

1. Read the relevant passages together.
2. Present the first mark (the preaching of the Word).
 - Question (a) How do we know that the Word is being properly taught?
 - Question (b) What should be the effect of the true preaching of the Word?
3. Present the second mark (the administration of the sacraments).
 - Question (c) When can it be said that the sacraments are not rightly administered?
4. Present the third mark (the exercise of discipline).

This section should be dealt with very briefly as the whole subject of discipline will be dealt with

in a later lesson.

5. Read the Student worksheets together.
6. Answer the questions for discussion in the Students' worksheets.

FURTHER READING

Westminster Confession of Faith - G. I. Williamson, pp 190-192.

Testimony of the R. P. Church in Ireland, Chapter 5.

LESSON 30

The Church

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Scripture Text - Matt. 18:15-17; James 5:19-20

AIM OF LESSON

To help the students to understand the nature and importance of Biblical Church discipline and to show that Christ ordained discipline for the good of His people.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Read the opening story in the Students' worksheets and briefly discuss the questions, directing class attention to the concept of discipline. The teacher might enlarge by asking the students to show how discipline is exercised in their school; what school or any institution would be like if there was a total lack of discipline.

1. The Need for Discipline

The true members of the Church of Jesus Christ are those who are saved by His grace and are being sanctified by His Spirit. Why then are true members at times in need of discipline?

- (a) Because they are still sinners and are not yet perfect. They are likely to commit sins which are open and known to their brethren and the world.
- (b) For their own spiritual wellbeing. (James 5:19,20). To restore them to a faithful walk with God.
- (c) To remind others of the seriousness of sin and to deter them from falling into similar open disobedience. The Church is a body and the conduct of one member affects the other members.

2. The Nature of Discipline

- (a) Discipline is not to be confused with punishment. Its purpose is to restore and not to punish.
- (b) Discipline is spiritual and not physical. The Church does not impose fines or boycott members as in industry. Rather it addresses itself to man's heart, through the application of the Word of God to the life.
- (c) Discipline is corrective and not punitive. Its purpose is to see the brother who has gone astray return to an obedient walk with God. We cannot see what is in a person's heart,

but we ought not to ignore our brother when he falls into open sin. Discipline is informal before it becomes formal. If, however, our informal individual efforts fail, then direction is given as to the next, formal stage. (Matt. 18:15-17).

3. The Exercise of Discipline

Whether it is by an individual speaking as brother to brother, or by the Church through its elders, there are some things which are essential to the proper exercise of discipline - it must be exercised in love and in humility. (Gal. 6:1).

Discipline is the responsibility of every true member of the Church and in particular of the elders in the local congregation, Presbytery and Synod. It is one of the means by which we are to demonstrate our love for one another in the Lord and our concern for the glory of His Name. Yet we must acknowledge that discipline is little practised. This should cause us to be concerned. R. B. Kuiper says, 'The Church which fails to exercise discipline is sure to lose both its self-respect and the respect of those without'.

FURTHER BACKGROUND READING

2 Cor. 13:2,10; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10:11.

"Unto every Good Work" Ch. 14.

The Code Chapter 6.

LESSON 31

The Church

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

Scripture Text - Deut. 12:32; Mark 7:1-13; John 4:24

AIM OF LESSON

To present the regulative principle of worship, and from it outline the divinely prescribed elements of true worship.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The regulative principle stated that whatever is not commanded in Scripture with regard to worship is forbidden, (Deut. 12:32).

Scripture shows that even by natural revelation all men know that they owe God worship and obedience (Rom. 1:18-23; 2:14-15). However, Scripture also shows that by nature man is alienated from God. When man sinned, not only was God's presence withdrawn from him, but his heart became darkened, all of his being was depraved. How then can fallen man render acceptable worship to an all-holy God? He needs God to tell him. From the beginning of the history of redemption, God made clear to man the principle that must govern all true worship - man must worship God only as God Himself commands. Whatever is not commanded by God in His worship is therefore forbidden. God may NOT be worshipped properly in any way invented by sinful men. Such 'will-worship' (formal acts of worship outside of God's command) is not true worship.

This is the great principle of the second Commandment (as Questions 50 and 51 of the Shorter Catechism bring out) and is clearly stated in Deut. 12:32.

Old Testament history confirms this regulative principle of worship. Note how the following were punished severely for disobeying it, for worshipping God according to their own wills and doing things God had not commanded.

Cain (Gen. 4:5); Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2);
Saul (1 Sam. 13:8 - 14); Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:16-21);
The children of Israel (Isa. 1:12; Jer. 19:5).

Christ in His 'great commission' to the New Testament Church reaffirmed the 'regulative principle' for all of her life (Matt. 28:19 - 20). The reason why He condemned the Pharisees' worship as vain' was because they had substituted 'the tradition of men' for The commandment of God' (Mark 7:7-8). Paul warns against worship invented by men (Rom. 1:21-25). But it might be urged, it is men who are sinners who 'must worship in spirit and in truth... for the Father is seeking such to worship him'. (John 4:23-24). Yes, but note also Christ's promise here: '...the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth'. Through the

work of the Holy Spirit in a man's life, he is enabled, not only to offer a pure form of worship, but to offer that form in a true and acceptable manner to the God of his salvation, through Christ the Mediator.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Start with the story in the Students' worksheets
2. Show the need for the regulative principle and make a clear statement of it.
3. Give Scriptural confirmation of it. (NB. Read "The Singing of Psalms in the Worship of God" - G. I. Williamson - pp 15-18 to see how the ancient history and tradition also confirm this).
4. Outline the elements in worship -
 - (a) The reading, preaching and hearing of the Word of God (1Cor. 1:17-18; Rom. 10:17). (This will entail proper church discipline.)
 - (b) Prayer (Matt. 6:9 -13; 1 Tim. 2:1 - 8; 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18; Rom. 8:26 - 27).
 - (c) Administration of the two sacraments (Matt. 28:19; 1Cor. 11:24).
 - (d) The singing of the Psalms (Ps. 105:2; Eph. 5:18 -19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13). NB. The Bible uses the three titles, 'psalms', hymns' and 'spiritual songs' as titles for individual Psalms in the Old Testament Book of Psalms. It has never been proved that God had commanded His Church to sing the uninspired compositions of men rather than, or along with, the 'spiritual' (Spirit-given or inspired) psalms, songs and hymns of the Bible which form the Psalter. Rather we are commanded (in Eph. 5:18-19 and Col. 3:16) to fill ourselves with Christ's Spirit and Word by mutual instruction and admonition, in singing from the book of praise God has provided - the Psalter.
 - (e) The receiving of offerings for the maintenance of the ministry (Mal. 3:10; 1Cor. 9:14; 16:2).
5. Discuss the implications of the principle, especially elements current today that are not commanded, e.g. uninspired hymns, use of crosses, candles, pictures, vestments, organs, altars etc.

FURTHER READING

Testimony: Doctrinal and Practical.

Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. 21, and Shorter Catechism questions 49 - 52; especially G. I. Williamson's Studies on The Westminster Confession and The Shorter Catechism (Volume II).

The Singing of Psalms in the Worship of God - G. I. Williamson.

Songs of Zion - R.P. Church of N. America.

LESSON 32

The Church

SEPARATED FROM THE WORLD

Scripture Text - John 17:11 - 24; 2Cor. 6:14-18

AIM OF LESSON

To give guidelines as to the Bible's teaching about the 'world' and avoid some common misunderstandings about this subject.

BACKGROUND NOTES

What do we mean when we talk about 'worldliness' or when we say that a particular person, place or attitude is 'worldly'? In some circles it is considered to be the height of 'worldliness' for a Christian girl to wear make-up; in other circles it is not considered inconsistent with godliness. Some Christians consider it 'worldly' to go to the cinema, others would consider it acceptable providing the film was not immoral, etc.

1. It must be recognised that the Bible uses the word 'world' in different senses. Sometimes it means the whole of God's creation, the universe or our planet earth (e.g. Acts 17:24). It can also refer to the inhabited earth, to the world of people (e.g. John 3:16), or to the world of corruption and sin (e.g. 1 John 2:16). We see that Jesus in His High Priestly prayer in John 17 uses the word 'worldly' in these three senses (e.g. verses 13, 14 and 18).
2. Because Christ did not come from this world (vv. 14, 16, 18 and 24), its values are not His and so they must not be the values by which His Church lives. Hence Jesus prays that we would be protected from the corrupting influences of the evil one. Obviously this is at the back of the 'world' of sin. (v 15).
3. It is the Church's task to take her Biblical values into the world, just as Christ brought these to bear upon the world of His day (v. 18), yet the Church must be sanctified (Greek - separated, set apart) from the corrupting influence of the world (v. 19). But this does not come about by standing aloof from the people of the world, but by adhering to the guidelines of God's Word in the world, (v. 17).
4. Christians then are living in the world (planet Earth), are part of the world (its inhabitants) but they are to be separated (sanctified) from the world (all that is unholy and sinful in it).

Hence it is legitimate for Christians to take part in cultural and recreational pursuits (indeed, as the salt of the world it is imperative that we do so), provided that we do not compromise our testimony to Christ or fall into sinful practices.

5. Therefore, in regard to the many things which are neither explicitly condemned nor condoned in Scripture, it is up to the individual to be guided by these general principles of the Word in relation to the world.
6. This is illustrated in 2Cor. 6:14-18 where Paul has a very strong statement concerning our need for separation from unbelievers, but his words in chapter 7:1 show that he does not mean a separation from all that is good and beautiful in the world.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION AND APPLICATION

1. Explain the different uses of the word 'WORLD' in the Bible and then take the students through the passage in John 17:11-24, stopping at each occurrence of the word 'world', and asking them into which category it fits. In this way you will fix the distinctions in their minds and help them to differentiate the meanings in their own Bible reading. (Background notes Section 1)
2. Stress the Bible's teaching of separation from 'the world' as corrupt, not from 'the world' as people; showing that it is our duty not to separate from people but to mix with them and witness to them. (Background notes Sections 2 - 4 and 6).
3. Emphasize that a person's attitude is important here, e.g. a girl who wears lipstick may be more holy than a girl who has scruples about it but thinks nothing of being ungracious and unforgiving. (Background notes Section 5)
4. If you have time, allow the students to ask questions and discuss problems of a more specific nature, e.g. should Christians go to the theatre or cinema, read non-religious books, dress in modern fashions, etc. remembering the principles already laid down.

FURTHER READING

For principles relating to freedom of conscience and the 'weaker brother', 1Cor. 8; and 10:23-11:1.

For Jesus' attitude to the entertainment and recreation of the day, John 2:1 and 2; Matt. 11:16-19; Luke 7:36, etc.

LESSON 33

The Church

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Scripture Text - Mark 10:1-12; 1 Peter 3:1-7

AIM OF LESSON

To examine the Biblical teaching concerning the nature of marriage and the respective responsibility of husbands and wives.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Mark 10:1-12

The chapter begins with one of the familiar occasions in the ministry of Jesus when the Pharisees came to Him and tried to trick Him by asking a difficult and controversial question. Among the Jews there were different opinions concerning divorce - two opposing schools of the Pharisees interpreted Deut. 24:1 in differing ways. One had a strict interpretation which limited divorce to adultery; the other was much more lax and emphasised the "...if then she find no favour in his eyes...", which meant that a man could have a divorce on the slightest pretext.

Jesus recognized that the whole basis of the question was wrong. It is as if they were saying, 'If the marriage does not work out, we can always get a divorce'. Jesus takes the people right back to the institution of the marriage ordinance in such passages as Gen. 1:27 and 2:24. He shows that the concession given by Moses was not a licence for easy divorce but rather a protection for the woman who would be rejected because of the hardness and impenitence of the man who wanted to get rid of her. If a man was going to disobey the clear command of God that the marriage bond was to be for life, then he must, at least, give his wife something in writing that indicated that she was no longer married to the man.

The Pharisees virtually ignored the original command of God in favour of the later concession. The Lord Jesus Christ clearly teaches the permanence and indissolubility of the marriage bond in the words in verse 8, 'and the two will become one flesh'. In referring back to the book of Genesis, Christ indicated that the institution of marriage was a Divine ordinance:

- (a) Planned by God (Gen. 2:18, 22); it was His will and He brought Eve to Adam;
- (b) Instituted by God (Gen. 2:24); for this reason God made a help-meet for Adam to make him complete, and thus a man will leave father and mother to be united to his wife.

This is further emphasised by the teaching of Jesus to His own disciples. If a man callously puts away his wife and then joins himself to another woman, he is committing adultery and is sinning against the woman, by exposing her to the sin of adultery, as well as sinning against God. "Thus, by means of a few simple words, Jesus discourages divorce, refutes the rabbinical misinterpretation of the law, reaffirms the law's true meaning, censures the guilty

party, defends the innocent and throughout it all, upholds the sacredness and inviolability of the marriage bond as ordained by God". (Hendriksen)

2. 1 Peter 3:1 - 7

The context of this passage is the setting out of the Christian attitude to personal relationships, in society, at work and at home.

(a) The Christian woman as wife

The emphasis of this passage is concerning submission and obedience. The wife is called to submit. This indicates an attitude of the heart. The Christian wife has an inward attitude of submission to the authority that God has vested in her husband. She is also called upon to obey her husband (v 6) - this is the outward expression of the inward attitude of submission. Submission in the heart is the source and cause of obedience; obedience is the fruit and manifestation of submission. The true beauty of a Christian wife is not to be found in outward adornment but in the gentle and quiet spirit of submission which leads to a willing obedience.

This attitude of submission and obedience has a great effect:

- (i) It pleases God.
- (ii) It makes a happy and well-ordered home.
- (iii) It may well convince an unbelieving husband. (It must be stressed that this is in the context of a wife becoming a Christian after her marriage; it gives no support to a believer who wishes to marry an unbeliever, that is clearly contrary to the Word of God).

(b) The Christian man as husband

The emphasis here is on sacrificial love. Just because the wife is to be subject to her husband, it does not mean that the man is free to treat his wife just as he pleases, for he is just as much under authority as his wife. He is under the authority of God and is to be subject to the revealed will of God. There are three aspects of the responsibility of the husband laid down in the passage:

- (i) He is called to live with his wife - this means that he is not to try to live independently from his wife, with his own interests and ambitions from which she is excluded. The Christian is to share with his wife and make sure that she is included in all his plans and activities. He will make time to be with his wife and family. A Christian man will not be so busy going to various meetings that he will not have time for his wife.
- (ii) He is called to be kind and understanding towards his wife. This passage speaks of the woman as the weaker vessel and the Christian man is to be careful in his behaviour so that he does not injure or break the weaker vessel. His treatment of her is to be like that given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ He will treat her kindly not only because she is a weaker vessel but also because of the spiritual oneness

that exists between them. They are both joint heirs of the grace and mercy of God.

- (iii) He is called to exercise spiritual headship in the home (Eph. 5:23 and 1Cor. 14:35). He is called to lead his wife and teach his wife in the things of God. He is not to abdicate that responsibility and pass over the spiritual headship to the wife. He must take the lead in family worship and must seek to help his wife to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is very significant that if the husband fails in his duty with regard to his relationship with his wife, his prayers will be hindered and rendered ineffective.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Spend ten minutes going through Section A of the students' worksheets and answering the questions.
2. Read the passage in Mark and 1 Peter together.
3. Deal with the issues raised in these passages.
4. Answer the questions in Section B of the students' worksheets.

APPLICATION

There are two vitally important issues to be stressed in this lesson:

1. The permanence and indissolubility of the marriage bond. People must come to an understanding that divorce is not an option that is open to them as they contemplate marriage.
2. The responsibilities that exist within the marriage bond. The teacher will want to correct the false views of love and marriage that young people imbibe from their own magazines, television and films; and will seek to show that a Biblical view of marriage is not based primarily upon emotional attraction which is easily stirred up, and can just as easily disappear; but upon a mutual love for God, respect for the other person as a creature of God and a joint-heir of the kingdom of God and a willingness to fulfil the role and responsibility as laid down in the Word of God.

FURTHER READING

Testimony of R.P. Church of Ireland Chapter 10

LESSON 34

The Church

WORKING FOR GOD

Scripture Text - Eph. 6:5-9; 2Thes. 3:6-13

AIM OF LESSON

To show that in his daily employment a Christian is working for God.

BACKGROUND NOTES

In evangelical circles it is often considered that only those engaged in missionary work or in the pastoral ministry are in 'full time Christian work'. This attitude is quite clearly not Biblical as an examination of the scriptural passages at the head of this lesson clearly show.

1. Eph. 6:5 - 9

In this passage the apostle Paul is dealing with every kind of social relationship, here it is specifically related to the world of work. The attitude that is to characterize the work of the slave is wholeheartedness, not simply seeking to please his master but seeking above all to please the Lord Jesus Christ. He is to work as though he was working solely for Christ. This attitude does not only apply when the master is good and kind, but also when he is unkind and cruel (1 Peter 2:18). The Christian is 'working for God' in his every day job because even the slave was called upon to do the 'will of God from his heart' in the exercise of the duties that his master set him.

No matter what the job may be the Christian does it as well as he possibly can because he knows that in the final analysis he is doing that work for God.

2. 2Thes. 3:6 - 13

This passage is an injunction against idleness. Some believers, expecting the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ, were sitting around in idleness, neglecting their jobs and falling into the sin of gossip. The apostle sternly warns that they will be subject to the discipline of the church if they continue in this way. Laziness should be no part of the Christian life. A lazy Christian brings shame upon the Lord whom he professes to serve. A man may take it easy at his work so that he may devote his energy to what he may call 'Christian' work during the evenings. This is a wrong attitude and fails to understand that all work is God's work and that the Christian serves God best by applying himself diligently to the work that he has to do. A builder's labourer who does his work to the very best of his ability in order that he might please God is a much better servant of the risen Christ than a lazy minister or missionary.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Ask the students what they understand by the term 'working for God'.
2. Read the stated passages, plus Eph. 4:28 and 1 Peter 2:9.
3. Give a brief explanation of what it means to work for God (using the Background material).
4. Read through the students' worksheets.
5. Answer the questions and seek to relate them to the students' own personal experience.

APPLICATION

The students must be shown that working for God has a much broader application than the one commonly accepted. Each student should be asked to see his own work or studies as being a calling from God to be undertaken for the glory of God. Ask the students how they view their own present occupation - whether at home, at work or at school - and together seek ways of helping each one to a greater appreciation of the fact that they are working for God.

LESSON 35

The Church

CALLED TO BE WITNESSES

Scripture Text - Luke 24:13-53

AIM OF LESSON

To study the Lord's command that as Christians we should be His witnesses "among all nations".

BACKGROUND NOTES

This passage divides into three sections.

1. vv. 13-35 - The happenings on the Emmaus Road

Emmaus was a village about two hours walk from Jerusalem. This is a human and touching description of two friends walking home together and talking of the happenings in Jerusalem which had saddened them (v 21 'But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel').

As they conversed Jesus joined them, but they were prevented from recognizing Him. He was concerned for their comfort and enquired about their sadness. Cleopas' reaction was one of surprise that anyone could not have heard about Christ's death.

Christ in reply rebuked them for their doubts and weak faith in the Scriptures of the Old Testament (vv 25 - 26). Christ's death had been foretold from the very beginning (see Gen. 3:15), also in God's revelation to Isaiah (see Isa. 53:5).

The two disciples marvelled afterwards, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us on the road, and while he opened the Scriptures to us?" (v 32). And well they might, for the Scriptures all teach of a suffering and risen Saviour.

2. vv. 36-49 - The Risen Christ

Christ appeared to the eleven disciples, but they were full of surprise and frightened. Again He had to reprove them for doubting and as proof of His resurrection He showed them His hands and feet, and ate with them.

He reminded them of the words which they had heard from Him and what they had read in the Scriptures and were now seeing being fulfilled in Him (vv. 44-45). They were to go and assure the world about what had happened, and the same Spirit which had enlightened them would enlighten others - 'You are witnesses of these things' (v. 48).

3. vv. 50-53 - Epilogue

Christ never showed himself openly to all the people after the resurrection, only to chosen witnesses.

The disciples were allowed to see Him ascend, He did not go away in displeasure, rather in love, and He left a blessing behind. Note that the disciples “were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God”.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Concentrate discussion on (2) above – “The Risen Christ”, especially the call to be witnesses. Using the “Application” section ask the class to discuss the following:

- (a) What is a witness?
- (b) Why is it our duty to witness for Christ?
- (c) How can we witness for Christ?
- (d) What problems do you foresee, and how can they be overcome?

Examples and questions from the Students’ worksheets should prove useful.

APPLICATION

The lesson is stressing the topic of witnessing, and the following points should be emphasised:

1. A witness is someone who tells what he has seen and experienced.
2. To be a witness for Jesus does not mean that we need a great theological brain, but it does mean that we need a living, growing relationship with Him.
3. It is a wonderful privilege to belong to God’s family, but it carries a great responsibility. Much has been given but much is also required of us.
4. The disciples were commissioned to preach "among all nations", but they had to begin on home ground in Jerusalem. This implies that we should witness for Christ at home, school, by example in our locality, perhaps even in distant lands.
5. There will be opposition even suffering. We must expect to be scoffed at or even persecuted.
6. v 49 - ‘You shall be endued with power from on high’. Christ assures the disciples that the Spirit would be poured out, furnishing them with all the gifts and graces necessary to witness for Him (John 14:26). Since the disciples had often missed the point of His teaching, without the presence of the Holy Spirit they would have failed miserably.
7. Joy lay behind the witnessing of the early church. They knew that the Lord, whom men had despised and killed, was glorified in heaven. We are His task force to-day. Do people see us as filled with great joy?

8. We may be hesitant in our response to the call to be witnesses. The Old Testament has many similar examples viz Moses and Jeremiah,

Moses - "I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue".

Jeremiah - "I cannot speak, for I am a child".

In both instances God supplied their needs, and difficulties were overcome, (see Students' worksheets).

FURTHER READINGS

Exodus 3:10-14; 4:10-16

Jer. 1:4-10

Acts 1:8

Matt 28:19-20

LESSON 36

The Church

ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE CHURCH

Scripture Text -1Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:12-16

AIM OF LESSON

To show that membership of the church involves full participation in her work and witness.

BACKGROUND NOTES

The Church is not a physical building. Rather Paul refers to the 'household' of God as made up of 'living stones' which 'are being built up as a spiritual house' in which the Holy Spirit dwells and from which 'spiritual sacrifices' are offered up (1 Peter 2:5). However, the most common metaphor for the Church in the New Testament is that it is a body with different organs (1Cor. 12:12-27). Paul says to the Corinthians, "You (plural) are the body of Christ and each one of you is a limb of it". Many young people to-day, disappointed and disillusioned with the Church (or just untaught) turn away from their corporate responsibility in the Church to private experience, group activity and evangelism outside the organised Church. Thus there is a great need for young people to understand the doctrine of the Church and be actively involved in her life. God planned the Church, Christ gave Himself for it and the Holy Spirit is building us together in it. Looking at 1Cor. 12:12 - 27, five important principles emerge.

1. God is sovereign over the body and its members, (vv. 11 and 13). God has chosen the members so we must accept them whether we like them or not. God has sovereignly given gifts and functions to each individual member - so there is no place for envy or jealousy.
2. There is unity between the members of the body. One cannot be a Christian without 'belonging', without being joined to Christ the Head, and the other members. "Christ is not divided", says Paul. That is why he was so grieved to hear of 'divisions' (1Cor. 1:10-13). Since the body is one, we must at all costs 'maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. 4:3-4). The first duty of members who are at odds with each other is to seek mutual forgiveness and reconciliation.
3. There is diversity in the members of the body (v. 14 forward). Each limb is different, but each one is important and must play its part if the body is going to function. Thus no limb should belittle its role or be envious of another more outstanding limb. Rather every limb, having discerned his gifts, dedicates them to God in total commitment to the body. Thus the church is like a great orchestra with all the instruments playing in harmony.
4. The members of the body are dependent on one another (vv. 24-26). Christians cannot be 'free-lance' individuals. They belong to each other and they need each other. Christ said, "By

this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another”, and the early Church caught the world’s attention so that they said, “Lo, how they love one another!” The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) is demonstrated by the Christian as he interacts with other members of the Church. What happens to one limb affects them all, just as one small toothache makes the whole body ache.

5. The body is meant to grow and develop to maturity. (Eph. 4:12-16). When a local body grows in maturity in the faith, then it is ready to grow numerically. Evangelism will follow on naturally from healthy fellowship and so the Church will be as God meant it to be - salt in a rotting world and light in a dark world.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Read 1Cor. 12:12-27 and Eph. 4:12-16
2. Present the five principles which emerge from these passages. (See background notes)
3. Use the students’ worksheets to challenge the class concerning their membership of the body, and how their gifts are being used to enrich the Church’s fellowship, and extend her outreach.

APPLICATION

Stress:

1. The central significance of the church in God’s plan of salvation.
2. The importance of young Christians coming into full church membership.
3. The functioning of the church as a body.