

A Life of Servitude

*"For it is written,
'You shall worship the LORD your God,
and Him only you shall serve.'" Matthew 4:10*



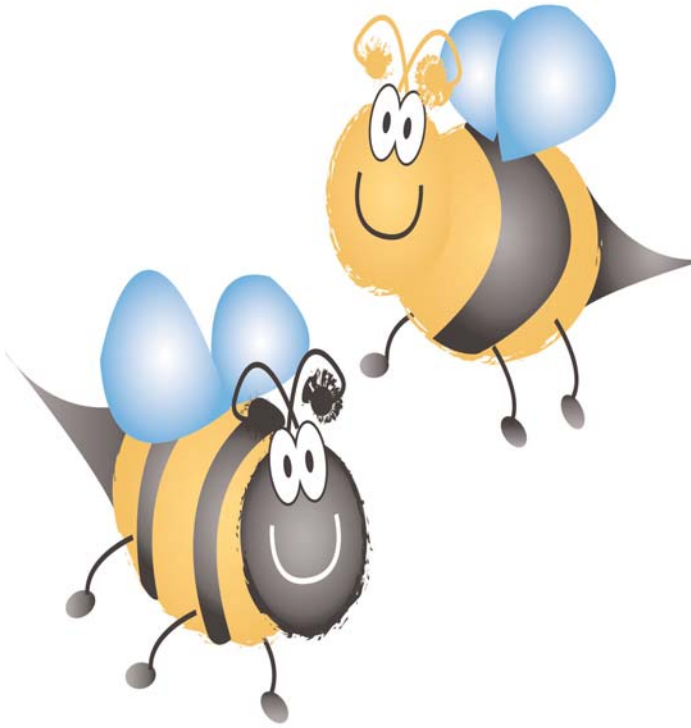
Student Spiritual Convocation Book 3

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Called . to . Serve

*"Even as the Son of Man came
not to be served but to serve,
and to give His life as a ransom for many."
(Mt 20:28)*



There is an inexpressible joy in serving that only those who love the Lord Jesus can understand. Jesus Christ manifested His love when He left His glorious kingdom and came to serve men. Likewise, one of the best ways for us to demonstrate our love to the Savior is to serve Him.

"But what are we to do?" you may ask. "We are still too young to do anything important for God," you may protest. Nevertheless, we have to realize that God remembers even the smallest thing that we do, such as giving a glass of water to a child. In this book, we will talk about the many aspects of serving the Lord so that we are prepared to be a useful vessel both now and in the near future.

SIX—BOOK SERIES

Student Spiritual Convocation

- Book 1
A Life of Prayers
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Living in the Words of God
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ASSIGNMENTS/QUIZZES

Please be reminded that assignments and quizzes are NOT merely means to keep your students busy. Rather, they serve as a tool to reinforce what you have taught them and a way to assess how much your students know about the subject. Therefore, be sure to give your students feedback as soon as possible on all the assignments and quizzes so that they may learn from their work.

QUESTIONS

Questions are provided at the end of each lesson. These are divided into three levels of difficulty. Questions in level 1 are informational and students can usually find the answers from reading the text. Questions in level 2 require some explanation. Questions in level 3 involve analysis, comparison, or more extended writing. Depending on the class level you are teaching, you may use any combination of questions from each difficulty level. For example, if you are teaching "Footwashing" to Elementary 2 students, you may include all the level

1 questions, two level 2 questions, and only one level 3 question. However, if you are teaching "Sabbath" to the Senior class, you may include two level 1, two level 2, and all of the level 3 questions. Every lesson can be tailored to a specific class depending on how you mix and match the questions.

GROUP DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY

We encourage the students to be involved in the class as much as possible through group discussions. If possible, you may ask other instructors or adult counselors to participate in the group discussion as well. Group reports or presentations can help your students to remember the material better. At the same time, you can find out how much your students are learning. If the group discussion or activity is not possible for any reason, you may modify it into an individual writing assignment.

* All Bible quotations are in NKJV.

Footwashing



1. FOOTWASHING IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Due to the climate of the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, it was common for people to wear sandals or go barefoot while doing their daily activities. Hence, the feet were constantly exposed and got dirty easily. Footwashing, like eating and sleeping, became an essential daily activity that one could not do without. This lesson will discuss the origin of footwashing, from its historical practice to its present significance in Christianity. The following is the historical background of footwashing and how it evolved from a social activity to a religious sacrament.

According to various documents, pictures, and texts of the Ancient Near East, footwashing was one of the daily activities within the cultural milieu of Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt. The people provided water to wash the feet of visitors as a form of greeting and as an expression of hospitality. In the Old Testament, it was customary to wash one's feet to purify oneself prior to performing religious sacrifices. However, this footwashing was different from that established by the Lord.

2. FOOTWASHING IN ANCIENT GREECE

From the literary texts and historical records of ancient Greece, it is clear that footwashing was a part of their daily, social, and religious way of life.

A. FOOTWASHING AND BATHING

In a poem written by Homer the protagonist, Odysseus, washed in the ocean to remove his perspiration after a battle. Following his bath and a footwashing, his feet were anointed with oil.

In the Grecian Baths, there were basins for footwashing as well as regular bathtubs. The last stage of bathing was footwashing. In the days before bathing was customary, people used a basin of water to wash their feet. When they were finished, they would dump the remaining water onto the street.

B. FOOTWASHING AS A FORM OF HOSPITALITY

The work of Homer, *The Odyssey*, showed that footwashing was a customary form of greeting honorable guests. It was only when Eurykleia washed the scarred feet of Odysseus that he was able to recognize him.

C. FOOTWASHING AS A RELIGIOUS RITUAL

As recorded in Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus would wash not only his own hands and feet, but also those of his men, after he killed someone. For the Greeks at that time, it was considered a form of blasphemy towards the gods if one were to enter the temple without washing one's feet. Water basins were provided in front of temples for people to wash their feet, as at the temple of Aphaia in Aegina. The term cleanliness and other terms relating to cleanliness were used in conjunction with footwashing as a special form of religious ritual to be performed before entering the temple.

D. FOOTWASHING IN A SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Footwashing was often the chore of female slaves, and was considered lowly work. However, if a free person washed the feet of others willingly, it was a great expression of friendship. At home, washing the feet of elderly family members was considered a form of respect. Aristophanes' *Wespen* mentioned the pride felt by a rich man when his daughter washed and anointed his feet upon his return from a day of hard work. *Wespen* also stated that since ancient times, the role of footwashing and anointment was considered a woman's task and was held as a precious virtue.



3. FOOTWASHING AND THE ANCIENT ROMAN EMPIRE

In general, Romans adopted Greek culture and their form of footwashing was similar to that of the Greeks.

A. FOOTWASHING AND DAILY HYGIENE

For the Romans, footwashing was an important part of their daily activities. If a person did not wash his feet for a day, he would be considered uncivilized and harshly criticized. At dusk, after everyone had washed their feet, they would then pour the water out onto the street. Anyone unfortunate enough to be walking along the Roman street at night would often be drenched by this dirty water.

B. FOOTWASHING AND BANQUETS

The Romans were greatly influenced by Greek civilization. Preparing water to wash the feet of guests in a banquet was one of their customs.

C. FOOTWASHING AS A RELIGIOUS RITUAL

The Romans believed that people could only approach the gods if they were fully cleansed. The ritual of footwashing before sacrificial offerings was a significant act of religious cleansing.

D. FOOTWASHING AND SLAVES

Footwashing was among the lowliest types of work performed by slaves (often by females). In order to exert his authority, the tyrant Caligula forced the elders of the Senate to wash his feet.



4. THE JEWS AND THE CUSTOM OF FOOTWASHING

The significance of footwashing in the lives of the Israelites was based on the teachings of the Old Testament.

A. FOOTWASHING AND BODILY HYGIENE

The Israelites did not have the privilege of bathing every day, since water was scarce. Because of the mild Mediterranean climate, the people did not require daily baths. However, daily footwashing was a necessary form of hygiene. It was a comfort to return home and wash one's feet at the end of the day. (In 2 Samuel 11:8-13, David wanted Uriah to return home from the war to wash his feet.) It was also the last cleansing act before retiring to bed. After the feet were washed, the doors were closed, the working garments were removed, and one went to sleep. After having washed their feet, people were reluctant to open their door to visitors (c.f.



Luke 11:5-13, the story of the visitor who came at midnight to borrow some loaves of bread).

Since footwashing was a daily cleansing ritual, every family owned storage tanks of water for this purpose. Most families used wooden or clay water tanks, but wealthier families owned gold or silver vessels (2 Tim 2:20).

However, for those who were experiencing great tribulations or deep sorrow in their lives, garments were not changed nor did they bathe. The crippled Mephibosheth did not care for his feet from the day David departed from the city, until the day he returned safely (2 Sam 19:24).

B. FOOTWASHING AS A FORM OF HOSPITALITY

When guests paid a visit, it was customary to wash their feet as an expression of hospitality and welcome. When the faithful old servant went to take a wife for his master's son, he and his men were invited to have their feet washed upon reaching the house of Laban (Gen 24:32). Although the old servant insisted upon speaking about his master's commands before eating, he had to have his feet washed first.

Abraham's hospitality towards the three strangers was a moving story, for he stated "please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet" (Gen 18:4). Even Lot, who had gone astray in Sodom, did not forget that footwashing was an expression of hospitality (Gen 19:1, 2). The Israelite custom of footwashing as an extension of hospitality was preserved up until Jesus' time (Lk 7:44). The anointment of feet with fragrant oil after footwashing was not a common act but one that expressed the highest form of respect and honor (Lk 7:38, 46; Jn 12:3).

C. FOOTWASHING AS A RELIGIOUS RITUAL

Cleansing was the primary ritual conducted before religious sacraments (ref. Leviticus). The hands and feet were the parts of the body most easily soiled. Therefore, washing the hands and feet was not only a daily ritual, but later became accepted as a religious activity (Mt 15:20). In the Old Testament, the function of the bronze laver in front of the tabernacle was for the cleansing of the hands and feet of the priests before they made burnt offerings (Ex 30:17-21).

D. FOOTWASHING AS A FORM OF SERVITUDE

The type of relationship between two people may be revealed by the act of footwashing.

1. Footwashing conducted on masters by slaves

Washing the master's feet was considered the lowliest form of servitude, performed only by slaves in bondage. In Psalm 60:8, "Moab is my washbasin" denotes the lowly act of foot-washing. Hence, under the moral law of the Israelites, Jews who were slaves did not have to wash the feet of their masters; however, they could wash the feet of the master's sons and their students. "And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave" (Lev 25:39).

2. Footwashing conducted on husbands by wives

The washing of the feet of husbands by wives was not considered a lowly task of servitude, but esteemed as an honorable expression of love. The daily household tasks to be performed by wives included: grinding the flour, baking bread, washing the laundry, cooking, weaving, nursing the young, and spreading the bed covers for their husbands. If the wives had maids, the daily chores of the wives were performed by them. However, matters such as serving tea, spreading bed sheets, and washing



the hands and feet of the husband were tasks too personal for any maid to perform, even if there were sufficient maids.

Even today, orthodox Jewish women still abide by these rules. When accepting David’s proposal of marriage, Abigail, a beautiful and virtuous woman stated, “Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord” (1 Sam 25:41). This quotation has two meanings: on one hand, it expressed her willingness to serve, and on the other, her humility was evident by her immediate response when she “rose in haste...and became the wife of David.”

In the event of a funeral within the family, the wife was not permitted to wash the feet of her husband. The custom at that time was that husbands and wives were not permitted to lie together during the period of mourning. In addition, wives could not wash the feet of their husbands during their monthly menstruation or “period of impurity.”

3. Footwashing as a demonstration of piety towards the father by the children

Children showed their love and piety towards their father by washing his face, hands, and feet. In this context, footwashing was an act of love, not servitude.

4. Footwashing conducted on the rabbi by their pupils

The relationship between a Jewish rabbi and his student was similar to that of a master and his slaves. The pupils adopted the responsibilities of slaves, and foot washing was one of these responsibilities. However, the washing of the rabbi’s feet by the pupils was different in nature from that performed by slaves. The pupils washed the feet of the rabbi out of complete respect and honor. However, the pupils that came from foreign lands did not have to perform footwashing, lest they be mistaken as slaves. The foreign pupils wore Tephillim to identify themselves as students of the rabbi and not slaves.

The following case was recorded: Rabbi Jischmael (135 B.C.) returned home one day and wanted to wash his feet. His mother insisted that she wash his feet, in order to express her respect towards her son. Jischmael refused, since he was afraid that he would break the fourth commandment (the sin of not honoring one’s parents) if he permitted his mother to wash his feet. However, his mother then went to another rabbi to report the disrespect shown towards her by her son. In the end, her wish was granted, and she was allowed to wash her son’s feet.

According to the custom of Jewish society, one would wash the feet of those individuals who were highly respected, even if they were not “officially” a rabbi. Simon the Pharisee referred to Jesus as “rabbi,” but did not wash his feet. He was later reprimanded by Jesus for his inaction (Lk 7:36-50).

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5. FOOTWASHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The significance, mystery, and symbolism of footwashing as recorded in the New Testament is presented in the following sections:

A. FOOTWASHING IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND THE PASTORAL LETTERS

In Luke 7:44, the Lord Jesus praised the woman who washed His feet and rebuked the rudeness of Simon for not providing water for footwashing. He accepted the footwashing of this woman, a sinner; this symbolized the salvation that He was extending to all mankind (a Jewish man would normally accept footwashing only from his slave, wife, children or students). The sins of this woman were forgiven by her humble gesture.

In 1 Timothy 5:10, one of the duties of widows in the church was footwashing. This included the washing of the feet of saints who came from afar and was an expression of love and servitude towards others.

B. THE SACRAMENT OF FOOTWASHING IN THE BOOK OF JOHN

John chapter 13 (verses 4-12) records how Jesus Christ washed His disciples' feet the night before His crucifixion. Jesus Christ did not give any explanation for this footwashing; it was an expression of His love. He rose from the table, laid aside His garments, girded Himself with a towel, and washed the feet of His disciples. When Jesus came to Peter, he refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet. According to Jewish custom, the master was never to wash the disciples' feet.

The act of footwashing by Jesus Christ was a significant one, since this had never occurred before. Jesus washed His disciples' feet after the meal was served and therefore was not meant to welcome the guests. Jesus Christ obviously was not the slave of His disciples, nor were His disciples His masters. Furthermore, this footwashing was not an expression of a wife's love to her husband.

Peter strongly objected to the Lord Jesus washing his feet since he was a strict follower of Jewish custom. When Jesus Christ replied, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me," Peter quickly replied, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" At this moment, Peter may have regarded the Lord Jesus' footwashing as a religious rite (priests were required to wash their hands and feet before performing sacraments); he therefore asked Jesus Christ to cleanse his entire body. However, the Lord Jesus did not grant Peter's request to wash his hands and head; He differentiated this particular footwashing from the cleansing rites of priests in the Old Testament.

Just as Jesus Christ set an example for us by being baptized by John the Baptist, the disciples also set an example for us by having to receive footwashing from the Lord Jesus in order to "have a part in Him." Furthermore, those who had their feet washed by Jesus were required to wash the feet of others. Jesus Christ conducted the footwashing in the form of a sacrament, which the people at that time could not understand. Even Peter, who had followed Him for years, failed to understand the significance of this event.

Each disciple had his feet washed by Jesus. Therefore, the relationship between each individual and Jesus was strengthened. After

this, the disciples were sent out to preach to others and to follow the examples set by Jesus. In order to "have a part in Him," they were instructed to wash the feet of other disciples who had already been baptized in the Lord Jesus' name. This was a once-in-a-lifetime sacrament performed by the master on the new disciples. However, the spiritual message of footwashing would be continually preached.



6. FOOTWASHING AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

A. THE SACRAMENT OF FOOTWASHING AND ITS CEREMONIAL PRACTICE

Historical records describe the existence of the sacrament of footwashing until the 11th or 12th century. After this, the churches of Ireland abolished the sacrament.

According to the research of E. Peterson, the disciples understood the relationship between the sacraments of footwashing and water baptism after they received the Holy Spirit. The disciples then performed the sacrament of footwashing in Antiochia. The sacrament of footwashing later spread to Milan, until the time of Ambrosius, the bishop of Milan (333-397). However, due to the rising doubts about the nature of the sacrament, opposition grew within the church. Ambrosius defended the importance of this sacrament against strong opposition.

B. THE SACRAMENT OF FOOTWASHING AND THE SUPPORT FOR IT AS A CEREMONIAL PRACTICE

Some priests believed that footwashing had the effect of removing minor sins committed after water baptism.

Theodore V. Mopsvestia from the Academy of Antiochia believed that the sins of the apostles (committed after receiving water baptism from John the Baptist) were washed away by Jesus when He washed their feet.

Gregor Von Nyssa (334-394) interpreted the verse in the Song of Solomon "washed my feet"(5:3) as the last cleansing act of the bride; this prefigured the Lord washing the feet of His disciples before His departure.

Clemens von Alexander, Hieronymus, and Kyrillonas believed that the apostles were able to succeed in spreading the gospel because Jesus prepared them for their mission by washing their feet.

In the "Baptism Regulations of Milan," the sacrament of footwashing was highly regarded, since it was a part of the baptism sacrament.

Bishops conducted the baptisms, while other divine workers washed the feet of the newly baptized.

Ambrosius wrote articles defending the ceremonial nature of the sacrament of footwashing. He stated that only through divine revelation of the Spirit of God could one understand the “ceremonial nature” of the sacrament of footwashing. Even Peter, who had followed Jesus for many years, could not understand the significance of this sacrament. Later, Peter emphasized the importance of footwashing and regarded it as an essential part of water baptism. He repeatedly told the believers that the footwashing practiced in the Milan area was correct, whereas the abolishment of footwashing in Rome was the result of deviation from the truth.

He also strongly rejected those who did not actually practice footwashing and merely interpreted it as a symbolic gesture of the Lord’s teachings to love one another, to serve, and be humble.

Other than the districts of Milan, literary records reveal that the areas of Gallien, Ireland, and North Africa also practiced footwashing.

C. OPPOSITION AGAINST THE PRACTICE OF THE SACRAMENT OF FOOTWASHING

After the era of the apostles, the importance of the sacrament of footwashing was in question. The greatest opposition came from Origenes, a teacher from the Academy of Alexander, who declared footwashing as merely symbolic. He believed that the importance of footwashing came not from the actual practice of footwashing as conducted by Jesus, but through the spiritual significance of the act itself. Our sins were completely cleansed during baptism; it was not through footwashing that sins were cleansed. If our sins were to be cleansed through footwashing, then the importance of baptism would be minimized. Christians should often practice the spiritual teachings in washing one another’s feet in accordance to the Lord’s command.

In his commentary of the Gospel of John, Origenes explained the mystery of footwashing as follows: “disciples should have a complete part in Jesus, since the Holy Spirit would dwell in them after footwashing. Through footwashing, they were prepared for the spreading of the gospel, because of the promise within the Bible: ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation’” (Rom 10:15; Isa 52:7).

The skepticism of Origenes is shared by modern theologians. The focus on “symbol” and “mystery,” and the argument of the “wisdom of God” versus the “wisdom of man” confused both Origenes and modern theologians. Therefore, the sacrament of footwashing was not understood correctly.

D. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SACRAMENT OF FOOTWASHING IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCHES.

Augustinus also did not believe that footwashing should be regarded as a sacrament. His reasons for opposing footwashing were similar to those of Origenes. While he was in Milan, he became familiar with the practice of footwashing. He reported that some people refused to receive footwashing on the same day as baptism because they feared that the effectiveness of the baptism would be reduced. There were even some who abolished footwashing from the list of



church sacraments. However, there were still people who continued to practice footwashing.

Due to a predominance of “educated and wise people” in the churches, the sacrament of footwashing came under question and was eventually abolished. The wave of opposition against foot washing grew. This matter was not only analyzed and questioned by theologians, but also discussed among the highest levels in the churches. In the year 306, a major church conference was held in Spain where one of the topics discussed was the sacrament of footwashing. In the end, the resolution “Canon Act 48” prohibited bishops and priests from performing footwashing for the newly baptized. Therefore, the newly baptized did not need to have their feet washed by the bishops or divine workers. This prohibition greatly affected the practice of footwashing; since then, no trace of the sacrament could be found in the records of the Spanish churches.

Until the Carolingian Period, the church regulations issued by Rome were enforced everywhere. Footwashing, which was still performed in France, diminished in practice. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the Irish churches abolished the sacrament of footwashing. Since that time, the True Jesus Church is the Christian church that practices the sacrament of footwashing.



7. THE SACRAMENT OF FOOTWASHING

The True Jesus Church performs three sacraments: water baptism, footwashing, and holy communion. A sacrament is defined by the following: First, the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the act. Second, the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to perform it. Third, the act is directly related to salvation.

A. THE ORIGIN OF FOOTWASHING

1. The Lord Jesus Christ washed the disciples’ feet at the Passover (Jn 13:1-6).
2. The Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to wash one another’s feet (Jn 13:12-14).
3. The Lord Jesus promised to bless those who perform foot washing (Jn 13:14-17).

B. HOW THE SACRAMENT OF FOOTWASHING INSTITUTED BY THE LORD JESUS DIFFERS FROM JEWISH CUSTOM

1. The original purpose of footwashing was to cleanse the feet and demonstrate hospitality.
2. The Lord’s footwashing
 - a. Means that we must cleanse the filth of our hearts. The Lord Jesus said, “You are clean, but not all of you” (Jn 13:10) referring to Judas Iscariot (13:11).
 - b. Enables one to have a part with the Lord. Jesus Christ told Peter, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me” (Jn 13:8).
 - c. Footwashing is mystical in nature and retains spiritual teachings as well as blessings for those who perform it.

C. THE MEANING OF FOOTWASHING GIVEN BY THE LORD JESUS

Because the sacrament of footwashing given by the Lord does not pertain to social customs, we must still perform it even when the cus-



tom no longer exists. We may learn its intended spiritual teaching and receive the promised blessing if we perform it in the name of the Lord Jesus.

1. Teaching

- a. Footwashing signifies the great love of the Lord Jesus (Jn 13:1). We should love each other thoroughly just as the Lord has loved us (Jn 13:34; Jer 31:3).
- b. The Lord Jesus wants us to be holy.
 - i. He said, "He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over" (Jn 13:10).
 - ii. Those who have been baptized in the precious blood of Jesus Christ receive the remission of their sins. They must strive to live holy lives and figuratively keep their feet from filth (1 Cor 6:11; Rev 22:14).
 - iii. Judas Iscariot was not clean. The Lord Jesus wanted him to remove his evil heart by means of footwashing. Unfortunately, although Judas accepted the washing, he did not cleanse his heart with the word of God. Judas thus fell into sin and had no part in Jesus Christ (Jn 13:10, 11, 21-27).
 - iv. Believers who have been baptized and have accepted the washing of the feet must keep themselves holy. If they unfortunately sin, they must readily accept the washing of the word of God and keep holy for salvation (Prov 4:26, 27; Eph 5:26, 27; Jn 17:17, 19).
- c. The Lord Jesus wants us to be humble and to serve one another.
 - i. The disciples had argued over who was the greatest among themselves. The Lord Jesus taught them a lesson of humility by washing their feet (Mt 20:20-28).
 - ii. The Lord said, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn 13:14).
 - iii. We believers must bear in mind the Lord's footwashing and be humble, willing to serve others (Mk 10:42-45; Mt 20:28).
- d. The Lord Jesus wants us to forgive others.
 - i. Despite Judas' intention to betray the Lord, Jesus Christ washed his feet, hoping that he would repent. This shows the forbearance and forgiveness of Jesus Christ (Jn 13:11, 21). If there is misunderstanding, resentment, or ill-treatment among the brethren, we must learn from the love of the Lord and forgive (Col 3:12, 13; Mt 18:21-35).

2. The blessing implied in footwashing

- a. The Lord Jesus blesses and gives grace to those who believe and accept footwashing, for He said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me" (Jn 13:8).
- b. Every word from the Lord Jesus is faithful, effective, and of power and authority. This is the reason why Peter was alarmed and requested that his feet, hands and head also be washed by Jesus Christ (Jn 13:8, 9; Mt 24:35; Jn 12:48).



D. THE WAY TO CONDUCT FOOTWASHING

1. The Sacrament of Footwashing

- a. In order to have a part in the Lord Jesus Christ, every newly-baptized person must receive this sacrament in the name of the Lord. The Lord Jesus said, "He who receives whomever I send receives me" (Jn 13:20). A minister performs the sacrament in the name of the Lord Jesus and the one who receives this receives the footwashing given by the Lord.
- b. The newly baptized must believe the word of the Lord and accept the sacrament of footwashing. They must make the determination to walk in the righteousness of God. If they commit sin, they should be willing to listen to the correction of the brethren and receive the cleansing through the word of God. By so doing, they will be holy and preserve their fellowship with the Lord (Jn 13:7; Eph 5:26, 27).
- c. The newly baptized must keep in mind the important teachings implied in the sacrament. They must constantly learn from the great love, humility, and forgiveness of the Lord Jesus.

2. Mutual footwashing

- a. Believers may wash one another's feet in humility (Jn 13:14; Lk 7:44; 1 Tim 5:10) even after they themselves have already received footwashing administered by church ministers.
- b. In a place where no such custom exists, believers should practice the spirit and teaching of mutual footwashing in their daily lives (cf. 2 Cor 3:6).

E. THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS DURING FOOTWASHING

The actions of the Lord Jesus during footwashing implies the following spiritual teachings:

1. **He rose from His seat: He departed from the throne in heaven in order that the Word was made flesh (Phil 2:6-8; Jn 3:16; Acts 2:30).**
2. **He laid aside His garments: He forsook the glory in heaven.**
3. **He girded Himself with a towel: He assumed the likeness of a servant.**
4. **He washed the disciples' feet: He came to serve the people (cf. Jn 13:405; Phil 2:5-8; Mt 20:28).**

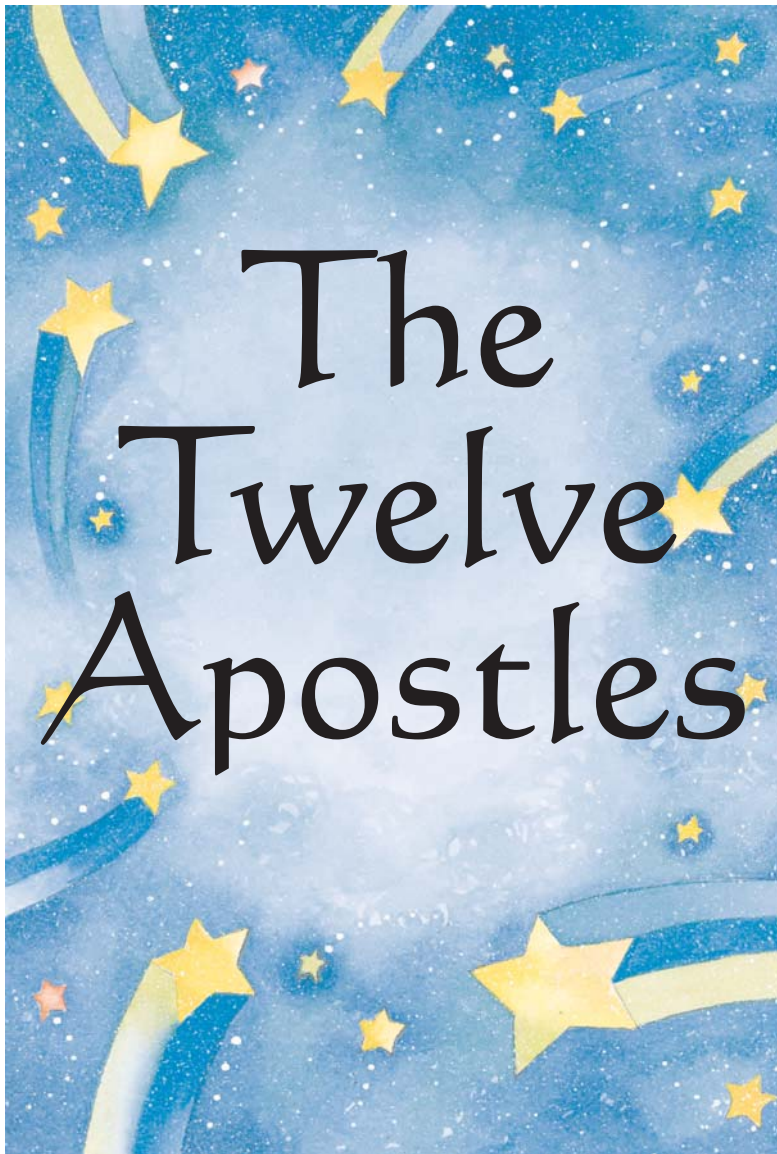
If we ever wish to correct fellow brethren, we should learn from the Lord Jesus' humility and speak with gentleness and compassion (Mt 11:29; 1 Thess 2:11, 12, 4:6).



QUESTIONS

- 1A. Why did the people in ancient Greece wash their feet?
- 1B. When did the ancient Romans wash their feet?
- 1C. Why did the Jews wash their feet?
- 1D. In Jewish society of the Old Testament period, who used to perform the footwashing? Who were the ones that received the washing?
- 1E. Why did Jesus reprimand Simon (the Pharisee who invited Jesus to his house) but praise the sinful woman (Lk 7:36-50)?
- 2A. Why was the footwashing recorded in Luke 7:36-50 a special circumstance?
- 2B. Why was the footwashing recorded in John 13: 4-12 unusual?
- 2C. How is the sacrament of footwashing different from the Jewish custom of footwashing?
- 2D. What are the four meanings of footwashing?
- 2E. What is the proper way to conduct footwashing?
- 3A. Why did some people oppose the sacrament of footwashing?
- 3B. In the course of church history, how did the sacrament of footwashing disappear?
- 3C. What spiritual teachings can we learn from the Lord's washing of His disciples' feet?
- 3D. Why is footwashing essential to one's salvation?





2. THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Mt 10:1-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16

1. Peter (Simon)
2. Andrew
3. James (the son of Zebedee)
4. John (the son of Zebedee)
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew (Nathaniel)
7. Matthew (Levi)
8. Thomas (Didymus)
9. James (the son of Alphaeus)
10. Simon (the Zealot)
11. Judas (Thaddaeus, the son of James)
12. Judas (Iscaiot, betrayer)

* Other apostles: Matthias (Acts 1:24-26); Barnabas and Paul (Acts 14:14)

A. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBER "TWELVE"—REPRESENTS TODAY'S BELIEVER WHO POSSESSES THE APOSTLES' QUALIFICATION

1. Twelve springs (Ex 15:27)—a living and dynamic faith, filled with the words of God (Ps 1:2, 3) and the Holy Spirit
2. Twelve precious stones (Ex 28:16-21)—on the breastplate of the High Priest (Lord Jesus), most beloved by the Lord Jesus, possess spiritual beauty and glory, has divine nature and virtues (Ezek 1:26-28; 1 Pet 3:1-5)
3. A crown of twelve stars (Rev 12:1)—heavenly, the light in the darkness, the star which leads people to Jesus Christ, the glory and the crown of the Lord (Gen 22:17; Dan 12:3; Phil 2:14-16)
4. Twelve pearly gates (Rev 21:12-21)—the messengers of God, possess perfect truth, with hearts open to the four corners of the Earth, loving all races (Rom 1:14, 15)
5. Twelve foundations (Rev 21:14, 19, 20)—the foundations and the pillars of the church (Eph 2:19, 20; 2 Chron 3:15-17; Gal 2:9)

B. BELIEVERS—> DISCIPLES—> APOSTLES

Three levels of faith represented by:

1. The Israelites at the foot, halfway up, and at the top of the mountain (Ex 24:1-18)
2. The outer court, the sanctuary, and the Most Holy (Heb 4:16; 9:1-5)
3. The outer limits of the garden, inside the garden, and in the depths of the garden (Mt 26:36-39; Lk 22:39-41)

C. THE THREE APOSTLES CLOSEST TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (LK 8:51; 9:28; MK 14:32, 33)



1. THE DEFINITION OF AN APOSTLE

A. ONE SENT FORTH, CHOSEN TO BE SENT WITH A SPECIAL COMMISSION AS THE FULLY AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SENDER

1. Chosen among the chosen (Mk 3:13-15; Lk 6:12, 13; Jdg 7:3-7)

B. THE WORKERS OF GOD

1. Sent forth to preach (Jn 20:21-23; Mk 16:15, 20)
2. Given the power to heal illnesses and to cast out demons (Ps 62:11; 1 Cor 4:20)



3. THE APOSTLE PETER

Bible Study: Mt 4:18-24, 14:22-36, 16:13-28, 17:1-8, 24-27, 26; Lk 22; Jn 6:66-69, 13:1-7, 18, 21

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. He was the son of Jonah (Mt 16:17)
2. His original name was Simon (meaning "hearing"). The Lord changed it to Peter. In Greek, it means "stone" (Mt 16:17, 18). Sometimes, he is also called Cephas, which is Aramiac (1 Cor 15:5).
3. He was one of the first four apostles chosen by the Sea of Galilee. He was a fisherman (Mk 1:16-20).

B. PETER'S QUALITIES:

1. He recognized his own unworthiness (Lk 5:8; Acts 10:25, 26).
2. He had a child-like faith, a simple belief. He was obedient (Mt 4:18-20, 17:4, 24-27; Lk 5:4-6; Jn 13:8, 9).
3. He was straightforward, affectionate, and generous (Mt 26:31-35; Lk 5:1-3).
4. He had a sensitive conscience—recognized his own shame (Lk 22:61; Jn 21:7).

C. PETER'S SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION:

1. He denied the Lord Jesus three times but he changed into one who loved Jesus Christ the most (Mk 14:66-72; Jn 21:15-17).
2. He was proud and self-assured but he changed into someone who relied on God (Lk 22:31-34; 1 Pet 5:5, 6).
3. He was lazy in prayer but he later became known as the "praying apostle" (Lk 9:32; Mt 26:40-46; Acts 3:1, 10:9).
4. He was timid but he was later filled with spiritual boldness and preached for the Lord (Mt 26:69-75; Acts 4:13-19, 12:4-7).
5. He once followed the flesh but changed into one who obeyed the Spirit (Mt 16:21-23; Acts 10:19, 20).
6. He lived according to his own will but realized he needed to submit to God's will (Jn 21:18, 19; Gal 5:16-24).
7. He was stubborn but later became a living stone (Mt 16:18, 19; Gal 2:9; 1 Pet 2:4, 5).

D. OTHER INFORMATION:

1. Peter died for the Lord Jesus. According to legend, he was crucified upside down on a road in Rome.
2. He was a pillar of faith and an apostle of the Jewish world. His acts are recorded in Acts 1-12. He also wrote 1 and 2 Peter.



4. THE APOSTLE ANDREW

Bible Study: Jn 1:19-42, 6:1-15, 12:12-22; Mk 13

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Andrew is a Greek name meaning "manly." Be manly in faith (1 Cor 6:13, 14)
2. He was Peter's younger brother.
3. He and John were the earliest followers among the twelve (Jn 1:35-42).



B. THE FIRST FAITH (HEB 3:14)

1. Longing for the Lord and desiring to abide with Him (Jn 1:35-39; Ps 32:1, 2; Isa 26:8, 9)
2. Firmly believed that Jesus Christ is the Messiah (Jn 1:41)

C. THE APOSTLE WHO LOVED TO LEAD OTHERS TO CHRIST

1. He went and found his brother (Jn 1:41); saved family and relatives first (Acts 10:24); he had the spirit of “finding” (Lk 15:4, 8). Unexpectedly, he led the most precious vessel of the kingdom of God to Christ.
2. He led a little boy to the Lord (Jn 6:8, 9).
3. He led the greeks to Jesus (Jn 12:20-22). He had a great heart that desired every Gentile to be saved (Rom 1:14, 5; 2 Pet 3:9)

D. CONCERNED ABOUT THE TEMPLE AND THE SIGNS OF THE LAST DAYS (MK 13:1-4)

1. Be concerned about the future of the church (Ps 113:6).
2. The end of all things draws near—be awake and prepared (1 Pet 4:7, 8; 2 Pet 3:10-14)

E. HE BECAME A MARTYR

According to early tradition, he even preached the gospel to the nations near the Black Sea, was finally crucified on an X-shaped cross and died after two days. While in deep agony, he still witnessed Jesus Christ to the people who stood by the cross.



5. THE APOSTLES JAMES AND JOHN

Bible Study: Mt 4; Mk 1; Lk 9; Jn 13, 19; Acts 12

A. TWO SONS OF ZEBEDEE (MT 4:21)

1. Family background—well-to-do fishermen by the Sea of Galilee (Mk 1:20); acquainted with the high priest (Jn 18:15, 16); probably had a house in Jerusalem (Jn 19:27)
2. A great mother—Salome (Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40)
 - a. Could be the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ (Jn 19:25)
 - b. Had strong faith toward the kingdom of the Lord Jesus and hoped her sons would be highly rewarded (Mt 20:20-23)
 - c. A woman who loved the Lord deeply
 - d. Dedicated her own treasure for the ministry of the Lord (Mt 27:55, 56; Lk 8:1-3)
 - e. Stood under the cross to share the sorrow and pain of the Lord (Mk 15:40; Jn 19:25)
 - f. Prepared ointment to anoint the body of the Lord (Mk 16:1, 2)
 - g. Willingly offered two sons (maybe her only two) to the Lord

B. THE APOSTLE JAMES

1. One of the four Jameses in the New Testament (Mt 10:3, 13:55; Mk 15:40)
2. The quietest apostle among the three apostles whom Jesus loved (Prov 17:27; Eccl 5:2, 3)
3. Transformed from self-centered to self-sacrificing (Mk 10:35-40; Acts 12:1, 2; Lk 9:23)



C. THE APOSTLE JOHN

1. Hebrew name, means “The Lord has been gracious”
2. Transformed from “Son of Thunder” to the “Apostle of Love” (Mk 3:17; Lk 9:49-56; Jn 13:23-25). His hot-tempered, fiery, and selfish personality was entirely converted to a meek, kind, and compassionate spirituality (Col 3:9, 10; 1 Pet 1:4-11).
3. Perpetual love for the Lord Jesus (Jn 19:25-27; Rom 8:35-29). He suffered for the Lord on the island of Patmos (Rev 1:9).
4. The pillar of love (Gal 2:9; 1 Jn 2:15-17, 3:11-18, 4:7-5:3; 2 Jn; 3 Jn)
5. The youngest and the first of the apostles to follow the Lord lived the longest of all the apostles—to about 100 years old (Jn 21:21-23).
6. Early tradition says that the last sermon of the elderly apostle John consisted of only one sentence spoken from his feeble and weak body, “Little ones, love one another.”



6. THE APOSTLE PHILIP

Bible Study: Jn 1:43-46, 6:4-7, 12:20-22, 14:6-11

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Hebrew name, means “Lover of horses”
2. One of the four Philips in the New Testament (Mk 6:17; Lk 3:1; Acts 6:5)
3. From the city of Bethsaida (Jn 1:44); the Lord chose five apostles from this blessed and glorious city

B. PHILIP'S EXCEPTIONAL QUALITIES

1. Simplicity—Though he was not a disciple of John the Baptist and hadn't received any formal theological training, or seen any miracles performed by the Lord Jesus, he believed that Jesus Christ is the Messiah (Jn 1:43, 45)
2. Affectionate and loved his friends (Jn 1:45, 46). “Come and see” (Jn 4:28, 29)
3. After he was filled by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he preached the gospel in Asia Minor. According to legend, he was scourged and hung on a stone pillar.

C. PHILIP'S WEAKNESSES

1. Lost faith when he encountered difficulty; did not know to rely on the Lord; only thought of solving problems through human methods (Jn 6:4-7; 2 Cor 5:7)
2. His recognition of the Lord was not deep enough (Jn 14:6-11); complacent after encountering the Messiah, failed to pursue a deeper understanding of the Lord (Hos 6:3; Col 1:9, 10)
3. Lack of determination in doing right—failed to comprehend the Lord Jesus' heart (Jn 12:20-22; Rom 12:2)





7. THE APOSTLE BARTHOLOMEW

Bible Study: Jn 1:45-51; Rom 2:25-29

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Son of Tolmai, also named Nathaniel, a good friend of Philip

B. BARTHOLOMEW'S EXCEPTIONAL QUALITIES

1. Straightforward and quick to speak (Jn 1:46). Being straightforward is fine, but we should be slow to speak (Jas 1:9).
2. A true Israelite, in whom was no guile (Jn 1:47, 2:21-25); true Jew (Rom 2:28, 29), without any hypocrisy (Mt 23:27)
3. Spiritual cultivation—under the fig tree (Jn 1:48); rabbis often meditated and prayed under a fig tree.
4. A simple faith—at first, judges the Lord Jesus by His outer appearance (2 Cor 5:16), but after meeting Him, Bartholomew changed his attitude completely (Jn 1:49, 50, 4:16-19, 29). He regarded the Lord as Christ and King (Lk 1:46).
5. After he was filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, an early account says he preached the gospel in Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. Finally, he died as a martyr.



8. THE APOSTLE MATTHEW

Bible Study: Mt 9:9-13; Mk 2:13-17; Lk 5:27-32

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Son of Alphaeus (Mk 2:14); Matthew—Greek name meaning “gift of Yahweh,” Hebrew name: Levi, meaning “united.”
2. Tax collector, a pawn of the Roman government; oppressed, cheated, and extorted people’s money (Lk 19:8). Despised in society and considered equal with sinners, prostitutes, and Gentiles (Mt 9:11, 18:17, 21:31)

B. MATTHEW'S EXCELLENT EXAMPLE

1. Forsook everything and followed the Lord Jesus (Lk 5:27, 28)
 - a. Left a lucrative profession, despised the wealth of the world, and counted Christ as of surpassing worth (Phil 3:7, 8)
 - b. Committed himself to depart from the pleasures of sin; was willing to suffer with the Lord Jesus (Heb 11:24-27)
2. Opened the door of his house, prepared a great feast for the Lord Jesus Christ, and invited his unbelieving friends to hear the gospel of salvation (Lk 5:27). He also dedicated his own house as a place of worship and for spreading the gospel (Mk 2:1-4; Acts 18:24-26; Rom 16:3-5).
3. Put down the pen of accounting and took up the pen of the gospel (Rom 12:1). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and his personal witnessing, he wrote the ageless masterpiece—the Gospel according to Matthew—that introduced the life of Christ and His teachings to the Jews.
4. After he was filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he preached the gospel in Africa and finally died for the Lord Jesus in Egypt.





9. *THE APOSTLE THOMAS*

Bible Study: Jn 11, 14, 20

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Hebrew name means “the twin,” also called Didymus in Greek

B. WEAKNESSES IN THOMAS' CHARACTER AND FAITH

1. Spoke irresponsibly and in an ungodly way (Jn 11:15, 16; Prov 13:3, 21:23; Eph 4:29, 5:3, 4)
2. Had a wandering heart (Jn 14:5; Heb 3:7-11)
3. Doubted (Jn 20:25-27; Heb 11:1, 6; Jas 1:5-8)

C. THOMAS' TRANSFORMATION

1. After being filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:13), he was totally transformed. Some accounts say he preached in Persia and India, and was finally killed for the Lord Jesus with darts.



10. *THE APOSTLE JAMES (THE SON OF ALPHEUS)*

Bible Study: Mk 3, 15, 16

A. ONE OF THE FOUR MEN NAMED JAMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT; ALSO CALLED “JAMES THE LESSER.” NONE OF HIS WORDS AND DEEDS WERE RECORDED IN THE BIBLE.

B. HE HAD A MOTHER WHO LOVED THE LORD JESUS DEARLY—MARY (POSSIBLY A RELATIVE OF THE LORD'S MOTHER)

1. Great mothers who gave birth to great sons
 - Jochebed (Num 26:59; Heb 11:23, 24)
 - Hannah (1 Sam 1, 2)
 - Eunice (2 Tim 1:5; Acts 16:1, 2)
2. Shared the suffering of the Lord Jesus beneath the cross (Mk 15:40)
3. Prepared ointment to anoint the Lord Jesus' body (Mk 16:1)

C. AFTER THE DAY OF PENTECOST, HE WAS FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (ACTS 1:13). EARLY TRADITION REPORTS THAT HE PREACHED IN JUDEA AND FINALLY WAS STONED TO DEATH BY THE JEWS FOR THE GOSPEL.





11. *THE APOSTLE SIMON (THE ZEALOT)*

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The Zealots were a political party among the Jews, also called Patriots. They resisted the Roman government and were willing to shed blood and sacrifice their own lives for freedom. At that time there were also the Herodians, another political party (Mk 3:6). There were three major religious parties among the Jews: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.
2. True freedom and peace (Jn 8:32-36; Mt 11:28, 29): Revolution of a nation or transformation of human hearts does not come through violence, which the Zealots often resorted to (Ezek 36:26, 27).
3. One of the nine Simons in the New Testament (Mt 4:18, 13:55, 26:6, 27:32; Lk 7:40; Jn 6:71; Acts 8:9, 9:43)
4. The Bible teaches us to be good citizens (Rom 13:1; 1 Tim 2:1, 2). However, we should be more concerned with the future of the kingdom of God (Ps 122:6; Acts 1:6-8) than the politics of this world.

B. SIMON'S TRANSFORMATION

1. According to tradition, after Simon was filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he preached the gospel in Africa and was finally sawed in two for the sake of the Lord Jesus (Heb 11:37).



12. *THE APOSTLE JUDAS (THE SON OF JAMES)*

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Also named Thaddaeus (Mt 10:3), meaning "wisdom."
2. The Bible only records one statement he made (Jn 14:21-24): "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"
 - a. There is true wisdom in speaking less (Prov 10:19, 20, 17:27, 28, 25:11)
 - b. Recognized his own unworthiness (Jdgs 6:15, 16; 2 Sam 7:18, 19)
 - c. Wished others would receive the same blessings of salvation (1 Cor 9:23, 10:33)
3. Some early accounts say that after being filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he preached in Armenia and Syria. Finally, he became a martyr for the gospel.



13. *THE APOSTLE JUDAS (ISCARIOT)*

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The only non-Galilean; Iscariot was located in the land of Judea.
2. He did not believe from the beginning (Jn 6:64, 65) but the Lord Jesus still gave him a chance to change.

B. AN HONORABLE NAME BECOMES ABHORRENT

1. Judas—a Hebrew name meaning "praise," but because of his betrayal, his name became abhorrent (Ecc 7:1).
2. Listed last among the apostles



C. CHANGED HIS MOTIVATION, SINKING INTO THE DEPTHS OF GREED, UNWILLING TO REPENT (ROM 2:3-6)

1. Greedy for money (Jn 12:5, 6; Eph 5:5)
2. Greatest concern was money, not the Lord Jesus (Lk 16:13-15; 1 Tim 6:6-10)
3. His greed produced covetousness; craved the thirty pieces of silver (Jn 12:1-6; Mt 26:12-14; Zech 11:12, 13)

D. COMPLETELY LOST HIS CONSCIENCE, BETRAYED THE LORD JESUS AND HIS FRIENDS (1 TIM 1:19, 20; 2 TIM 3:1-5)

1. His manner of betrayal was heartless and cruel: He betrayed the Lord Jesus with a kiss (Mt 26:48; Lk 22:47, 48).

E. AWOKE TOO LATE AND WAS DESTROYED BY SATAN, LOST EVERYTHING (MT 27:2-5; ACTS 1:13-18)

1. Lost thirty pieces of silver
2. Lost his life
3. Lost the honorable name and office of apostleship
4. Lost eternal life and the heavenly reward
5. Lost his soul in the eternal fire (Jn 17:12)

F. WOULD BE BETTER IF HE HAD NOT BEEN BORN, THE MOST PITIFUL AND MISERABLE LIFE (MT 26:24)

1. Treasure our lives—do not be foolish and love the world (Eccl 11:9, 10, 12:1-7, 13, 14)
2. The most foolish people in the Bible: Lot, Esau, Achan, Samson, Saul, Solomon, Gehazi, Judas, Demas.



14. CONCLUSION

A. THE TWELVE APOSTLES HAD MANY GOOD QUALITIES THAT PLEASED GOD, BUT THEY ALSO HAD MANY WEAKNESSES LIKE US (JAS 5:18.) WE SHOULD IMITATE THEIR VIRTUES AND LEARN FROM THEIR SHORTCOMINGS (PHIL 4:8, 9; HEB 13:17).

B. BESIDES JUDAS, ALL OF THE APOSTLES GREW STEADILY IN THEIR FAITH BY:

1. The edification of the words of the Lord (1 Pet 1:22-25; 2:1, 2)
2. The inspiration of the great love of the Lord Jesus (1 Jn 4:11, 19)
3. The infilling and power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Isa 32:15)

C. THEIR CHARACTERISTICS, PERSONALITIES, THOUGHTS, SPEECH, AND DEEDS WERE TOTALLY TRANSFORMED:

1. From a dry and dead rod to the Rod of God (Num 17:1-11)
2. From a lowly vessel to a noble vessel (2 Tim 2:20-22)
3. This is also true for us today, for God does not show favoritism to anyone (Acts 10:34, 35; Rom 2:7-11).

D. MOST OF THE APOSTLES WERE MEN OF LOWLY STATUS AND LITTLE EDUCATION, BUT GOD MADE THEM RICH IN FAITH AND IN SPIRITUAL WISDOM (ACTS 4:13; 1 COR 1:26-29; JAS 2:5).

1. The same holds true today; a man's worldly education and status has little to do with the degree of God's usage of him. God is seeking those who possess exceptional spiritual qualities and are willing to surrender their lives unconditionally to Him so that He can transform them to become precious vessels to accomplish great work (Ps 14:1-3; Ezek 22:30).



E. THE APOSTLES WERE WILLING TO FORSAKE EVERYTHING AND FOLLOW THE LORD.

- 1. They despised the world as refuse and counted Christ to be of surpassing worth. They upheld the correct philosophy of life and labored toward the goal of eternity. Ultimately, they suffered and died for the Lord, but they lived the most glorious and valuable lives. They received eternal life and the reward in heaven (Mt 19:27-30; 2 Cor 4:16-18).

F. WORLD EVANGELISM IN THE LAST DAYS DEPENDS UPON THE WORKERS WHO POSSESS THE APOSTLES' SPIRIT AND QUALITIES.

- 1. We need self-sacrifice, courage, fearlessness, even unto the point of death; and the determination to preach to every corner of the world and save souls to repay the love of Christ (Mt 19:20; Mk 16:15-20).



QUESTIONS

- 1A. What does it mean to be an apostle?
- 1B. Describe how we also possess the apostles' qualifications based on the significance of the number "twelve."
- 1C. Who are the three apostles closest to the Lord?
- 1D. List the twelve disciples and the meaning of their names (if available).
- 1E. How was Peter different before and after his spiritual transformation?
- 2A. How is a disciple different from an apostle?
- 2B. With the exception of Judas Iscariot, how did the apostles grow in their faith?
- 2C. How did Judas Iscariot fail as an apostle?
- 2D. What is the one thing most of the apostles had in common (in terms of their background)? What can we learn from it?
- 3A. Among the twelve apostles, who had qualities that you admire the most? Please explain.
- 3B. What is the most important element you consider as necessary for one to be called an apostle? Why?





INTERVIEW WITH THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Objective: To demonstrate the students’ knowledge of the apostles by preparing biographies of them

1. Assign one apostle to each student. In case the class has more than 12 students, two students may work together as a team.
2. Allow 15 minutes for the students to study the Bible references and compile a short “autobiography” of the apostle he/she is assigned to.
3. Have the students sit in a circle.
4. The instructor will act as the host who will ask a set of questions so that the rest of the class will get to know not only the background of each apostle but also their personalities (if available). See sample questions below.
5. Be sure to maintain a friendly atmosphere and invite the whole class to ask each other questions.
6. Conclude and pray.

Sample questions:

- a) What do you think was your most significant contribution to the ministry of Jesus Christ?
- b) Why did you decide to follow Jesus Christ?
- c) What are some of the most unforgettable moments when you were with Jesus Christ?
- d) What do you think Jesus Christ liked the most about you?
- e) What is one thing about yourself that you believe Jesus Christ was disappointed in?
- f) Did you ever think of leaving Jesus Christ when you encountered hard times?
- g) What did your family think about your following Jesus Christ?

Note:

Some of the answers do not have direct references from the Bible, but the students may make inferences based on their understanding of the apostle.



Nehemiah



1. SUMMARY

Nehemiah's brother, Hanani, reported to him that "the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire" (Neh 1:3). There can be little doubt that the direct cause of the fallen state of the walls was the incident recorded in Ezra 4:8-23: Artaxerxes had given Rehum and Shimshai authority to make the men stop work, and so "they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease" (Ezra 4:23). Nehemiah was cupbearer to this same Artaxerxes and evidently in sufficiently high favor to be able to influence the king's policy and secure permission to return to Judah and remedy the situation. He returned in 444 B.C., the king's twentieth year, and was governor for twelve years (Neh 2:1, 5:14). Whether he was a resident in Jerusalem for the whole duration of his governorship is not known (see Neh 5:14, 13:6). During his governorship, he rebuilt the walls of the city in the face of strong external opposition (Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem) and embarrassing internal difficulties (Neh 1-6). He established a covenant with the people to be more zealous in their religious practices and instituted a number of social reforms, including an increase in the population of Jerusalem and an attempt to deal with the problem of mixed marriages.

2. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

A period of one hundred years is depicted in Ezra-Nehemiah (538 to 432 B.C.) from the first return from the Babylonian Captivity up until the end of the period of Nehemiah's activity.

- * In Susa, Nehemiah hears news concerning the plight of Jerusalem (1:1-4)
- * The prayer of Nehemiah (1:5-11)
- * Nehemiah receives a leave of absence and full power of authority (2:1-10)
- * The beginning of the construction of the walls after Nehemiah's tour of inspection and announcement. The derision and opposition of Sanballat and Tobiah (2:11-20)
- * The list of all those who participated in the building—from high priest to shopkeepers (3:1-32)
- * The derision of Sanballat and Tobiah. A prayer for revenge (4:1-5)
- * The attack of the hostile neighbors is frustrated (4:6-15)
- * The building of the walls while armed and ready to defend themselves against any attack (4:16-23)
- * The uprising of the poor in distress. The canceling of debts (5:1-13)
- * Nehemiah relinquishes his claim to an income as governor (5:14-19)
- * The accusation and attack of Sanballat and Tobiah (6:1-9)
- * The attack by means of hired prophets (6:10-14, 17-19)
- * The building of the walls is completed (6:15, 16)
- * Measures taken for the protection of the city (7:1-3)
- * The increase in population (7:4, 5)
- * The list of returning exiles (7:6-69)
- * The contributions (7:70-73)
- * The list of those who lived in Jerusalem and Judea (11:1-36)
- * The list of priests & Levites (12:1-26)
- * The dedication of the walls (12:27-43)
- * The regulation of the portions for the priests and Levites (12:44-47)
- * The eviction of Tobiah from a chamber in the temple (13:1-9)
- * Abuses in connection with taxes (13:10-14)
- * Desecration of the Sabbath (13:15-22)
- * Abuses in connection with mixed marriages (13:23-29) (All abuses were corrected)
- * Conclusion (13:30, 31)

3. MAIN THEMES

The book of Nehemiah centers on the rebuilding of the holy city and its walls, Nehemiah's exemplary faith and work ethic, and the mobilization of the chosen people to defeat the enemy and do God's will.

A. THE FERVENT NEHEMIAH, WHO LOVES HIS COUNTRY AND THE HOLY TEMPLE, IS MOTIVATED TO REBUILD THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM AND LAUNCH REFORMS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

1. We must be zealous in the service of the Lord (Rom 12:11; Rev 3:19; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14).
2. God seeks people to rebuild the "wall" and repair the breaches (Ezek 22:30; Amos 9:11).

B. THE SEQUENCE OF REBUILDING THE HOLY TEMPLE TYPIFIES THE REBUILDING OF THE EARLY CHURCH IN THE END-TIME (TRUE JESUS CHURCH)

1. Solomon's Temple (ca. 953 B.C.)

Babylonian Captivity (606-536 B.C.)

Zerubbabel's Temple (Ezra's time)

2. The temple was first rebuilt, followed by the reconstruction of the city and the walls (from the center to the circumference; from the internal to the external).

*Several fundamental steps are needed to perfect evangelical and pastoral work:

- a. The church must first have the correct, complete, and effective doctrines of salvation and the truth.
- b. The members must have a solid foundation of faith, love, and spiritual growth.
- c. Every individual believer must repair and maintain the inner temple (the temple of the Spirit) in the heart (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; Prov 4:23; Eph 3:16).

C. THE EXAMPLE SET BY NEHEMIAH

For the nation, for God and for the house of God, Nehemiah willingly sacrificed himself. His actions remind us of how the Lord Jesus came to the world to redeem the world from sin (Neh 2:1-6; cf. Mt 20:28).

1. Nehemiah set a good example in his prayer life (1:4, 2:4, 4:4, 9, 5:19, 6:9, 14, 13:14, 22).
2. He was a man who put his words into action. He gave up his court position and returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and the holy city. Many people were thus motivated (2:18).
3. Nehemiah contributed his own time, effort, and money to the construction (4:21-23, 5:14-19).
4. Nehemiah was valiant and never flinched from threats and danger (6:1-3).
5. He glorified God at the completion of the work (6:16). To perfect our spirituality and gain spiritual wisdom and power, we must pray at all times (Rom 12:13; Col 4:2, 3, Eph 6:18).



Our faith must be expressed through actions (Jas 2:17-26, 1:22; Lk 11:28; Mt 7:21-23).

*We must do our best in the Lord’s work: be abundant, fruitful, and productive (1 Cor 15:58; Mt 25:14-23; Jn 5:17, 9:4, 4:34; Phil 1:5).

*Contribute liberally and generously to God (2 Cor 9:6-8, 10-12, 8:1-5; Lk 21:1-4).

*We are Christian soldiers (2 Tim 2:3), called and commissioned by God to fight a spiritual battle against the devil (Eph 6:12) and for the gospel (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 10:4, 5).

D. THE WAY TO SUBDUE THE ENEMY

In spiritual battle, no Christian soldier can afford to lose the war because it means eternal destruction. Only the victorious can receive the fruit of the tree of life (Rev 2:7), put on the white garment symbolizing holiness, purity, and glory (Rev 3:5), be written in the Book of Life (Rev 3:5), and bear the name of the city of God and the Name of God (Rev 3:12).

1. Nehemiah and the Jews had to defeat the saboteurs and the enemy in order to complete the work of the Lord.
2. The characteristics of the enemy were: anger, jealousy, mockery, contempt, attack, sabotage (4:1, 4, 8), ambush, murder (6:2, 10), and false prophecy/annunciation (6:12).
3. It is of interest to note that:
 - a. Sanballat, whose origin is related to Samaria, stands for those who compromise with the world (4:12; Jas 4:4);
 - b. Tobiah, an Ammonite, typifies calamity (4:3; Gal 5:19-21);
 - c. Geshem the Arab is of the flesh (Gal 4:29), a worldly religion;
 - d) Ashdod (4:7) is the idolater (1 Cor 6:9-10; Rev 21:8).
4. The way to vanquish the enemy is recorded in 4:16-18, 21-23.
 - a. Be fully armored (Eph 6:11-17).
 - b. Blow the bugles: proclaim the grace and power of the Lord Jesus and His gospel (2 Cor 6:2; 2 Tim 4:2; Acts 18:10).
 - c. Stand on guard (Mt 25:3, 4, 24:42-44; 1 Pet 5:8; 1 Thess 5:6-8). By faith, we will overcome the world (2:19; 1 Jn 5:4).

E. NEHEMIAH’S RELIGIOUS REFORMS

At the completion of the temple and city walls, Nehemiah undertook several vital reforms that were right in the sight of God:

1. A holy convocation (like our present-day spiritual and Bible convocations) was held so that every Jew listened to the word of God (8:1-18)
 - a. We must feed on the word of God in order to live (Deut 8:3) and be blessed (Deut 28:1-6, 30:15-20).
2. The holy temple was cleansed (13:4-7).

The mixed multitudes were expelled (cf. Ex 12:38; Num 11:4, the stumbling blocks in the church).

- b. The Ammonites were excluded from the temple: all the lusts of the flesh were eliminated from the house of the Lord and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:18-19; Gal 5:16, 24; 1 Cor 6:7; Jas 1:21).
3. Giving of tithes was enforced (13:10, 12; Mt 23:23; Mal 3:8-





1 & 2 Samuel

N O T E S

1. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL (1 SAM 1-7)

BIRTH OF SAMUEL; SAMUEL CHOSEN TO BECOME A PROPHET; HOUSE OF ELI FORSAKEN (1 SAM 1-3)

1. Birth of Samuel (ch. 1-2)
 - a. Hannah's sorrow and the blessings (1:1-20)
 - b. Love alone could not resolve the problem (1:5-8)
 - c. Sought after God (1:9-16)
 - d. Gave birth through God's grace (1:17-20)
 - e. Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving (1:21-2:10)
 - f. Made a vow and fulfilled it (1:21-28)
 - g. Came to know God deeply (2:1-10)
 - h. Greater blessings (2:21)
2. Called to become a prophet (2:18-3, 7)
 - a. Wore an ephod and ministered to the Lord (2:18, 3:1)
 - b. Loved by God and men (2:26)
 - c. God's calling and revelation (3:4-10)
 - d. God's abidance (3:19)
 - e. Established as a prophet (3:20)
 - f. Discouraged idol worship (7:2-4)
 - g. Saved the Israelites from the enemies (7:10)
 - h. Served as a judge (7:15-17)
3. Eli forsaken by God (ch. 4)
 - a. Eli's two evil sons sinned against God (2:12-25)
 - i. Did not know God (12)
 - ii. Greedy (16)
 - iii. Lustful (23)
 - iv. Disobedient toward the father (25)
 - v. Ark of the covenant captured; entire family perished (4:1-22)



2. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE PROPHET (1 SAM 8-12)

A. THE PEOPLE'S REQUEST FOR A KING AND GOD'S REPLY (CH. 8)

1. Samuel did not have a successor (8:1-3)
2. God consented, but warned of the consequences (8:9-18)

B. SAUL ANOINTED TO BE KING (9:1-10:16)

1. Saul met Samuel (9:9-27)
2. Saul was anointed as king in secret (10:1-16)
 - a. Moved by the Spirit of God (10:5-6)
 - b. A new heart, a new man (10:6-9)

C. SAUL CHOSEN AS KING BY CASTING LOTS (10:17-27)

1. Saul hid among the equipment (10:22)
2. The people despised Saul (10:27, 11, 12)

D. VICTORY IN BATTLE PROVED THE SELECTION CORRECT (11:1-13)

1. Chosen people despised by enemy (11:1-5)
2. Victorious with a heart of unity (11:6-11)
3. Established in Gilgal to be the king (11:14)

E. SAMUEL'S FAREWELL MESSAGE (12:1-25)

1. Samuel's discipline (12:1-5)
2. The mistake of establishing a king (12:6-18)
 - a. Suffered because they departed from God (12:6-11)
 - b. The mistake of establishing a king (12:12, 13)
 - c. Fear God to receive blessings (12:14, 15)
 - d. God showed His power as evidence (12:16-19)
 - e. Samuel's encouragement and exhortation (12:20-25)
 - i. Responsibility of the chosen people (12:20-22)
 - ii. Responsibility of the prophet (12:23)
 - iii. Those who are evil shall perish (12:24, 25)



3. THE FAILURE OF SAUL'S KINGDOM

A. SAUL'S UNAUTHORIZED SACRIFICE (13:1-15)

1. The people respected Saul (13:1-7)
2. Saul did not respect God (13:8-15)
 - a. Did not respect the instruction of the prophet (13:13, 14, 10:8)
 - b. Offered sacrifice without the authority to do so (13:9)
3. God removed him from his throne and chose someone to replace him (13:14)

B. SAUL'S FOOLISH COMMAND (13:9-14:46)

1. Jonathan defeated the Philistines (13:19-14:23)
 - a. People of Israel lacked weapons (13:19-23)
 - b. Jonathan trusted in the Lord, united to gain victory (14:1-23)
2. Jonathan disobeyed his father (14:24-46)
 - a. Ate honey to gain strength (14:27)





5. *PROSPERITY AND GLORY OF DAVID'S KINGDOM*

N O T E S

2 SAM 5:6-9:12

A. DAVID REIGNED OVER JERUSALEM, GREATLY DEFEATED THE PHILISTINES (5:6-25)

- 1. With God's abidance, David became prosperous and was strengthened (5:10)
- 2. God allowed David to defeat the Philistines (5:17-25)

B. DAVID BROUGHT THE ARK TO JERUSALEM (CH. 6)

- 1. Concern for the ark (6:1-5)
- 2. Misfortune and blessings (6:7-11)
- 3. Joy of David (6:13-23)

C. GOD'S PROMISE THAT DAVID'S KINGDOM SHALL ENDURE FOREVER (7:1-39)

- 1. David's determination to build the Lord's temple (7:1-17)
- 2. David's prayer (7:18-39)

D. EXPANSION OF DAVID'S KINGDOM (CH. 8)

- 1. God allowed David to be victorious (8:1-14)
- 2. David administered judgment and justice (8:15-18)

E. DAVID KEPT HIS COVENANT WITH JONATHAN (9:1-13)

- 1. Showed grace to Mephibosheth during his entire life



6. *WEAKNESS AND FAILURE OF DAVID'S KINGDOM (2 SAM 10-20)*

A. DAVID COMMITTED ADULTERY (CH. 10-12)

- 1. David's army was strong and fortified (10)
- 2. David's spirituality was weak (10:11-12)
 - a. Lived an indulgent lifestyle (11:1, 2)
 - b. Killed with the hands of others (11:3-25)
 - c. Committed adultery (11:26, 27)
- 3. Nathan came to see David (ch. 12)
 - a. Recounted his own sins (12:1-9)
 - b. Trouble and affliction would not depart from his house (12:10-15)
- 4. Death of David's son (12:16-23)

B. INTERNAL TROUBLES IN DAVID'S FAMILY (CH. 13-20)

- 1. His daughter was put to shame (13:1-22)
- 2. His son was killed (13:23-33)
- 3. Absalom fled (13:34-14:33)
- 4. Absalom rebelled against him (15:1-16:23)
 - a. David fled (15:13-37)
 - b. David was put to shame (16:1-14)
- 5. Hushai defeated the plan of Ahithophel (17:1-29)
- 6. Absalom's failure (18:1-19:10)



- C. David's warriors (23:8-39)
- D. David's numbering of the people (24:1-25)
- E. Solomon succeeded the throne (1 Kgs 1)
- F. Final words of David (1 Kgs 2)

C. CONCLUSION OF DAVID'S KINGDOM (2 SAM 21-24)



QUESTIONS

- 1A. How was the birth of Samuel unusual?
- 1B. Why was God displeased with Eli's two sons?
- 1C. What were Samuel's merits as a servant of God?
- 1D. What were Saul's merits and mistakes?
- 1E. What were David's merits and mistakes?
- 2A. From the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, name those who pleased God and describe how God helped them.
- 2B. From the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, name those who displeased God and describe how God punished them.
- 2C. In the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, God chose several people to accomplish His work. Explain why some of these chosen people were later forsaken by God.



GROUP DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE...

Objective: To demonstrate the students' understanding of the characters found in the Book of 1 Samuel by placing themselves in their shoes and facing their struggles.

1. Divide the class into five groups.
2. Each group is to take up one of the characters below and answer the questions related to each character. While answering the questions, put yourself in place of the character and think of how YOU would respond.
3. Discuss among the members of your group and write down the different responses for each question. Explain why you would respond in these ways.
4. After everyone is finished, have one representative come up to the front of the class and present the group response.
5. Conclude and pray.

Characters to be assigned:

1. **Hannah**
 - a) when you see other people's children running around while you remain barren for many years.
 - b) when your husband's second wife provokes you because she

has children.

- c) when you have prayed thousands of times for a child but God still has not answered you.

2. Eli

- a) when you hear the bad reports about your sons and they do not listen to your warning.
- b) when you see that God has chosen the little Samuel instead of your sons to be His prophet.
- c) when you learn about what God will do to your family.

3. Samuel

- a) when you can see your mother only once a year and have to serve the old Eli.
- b) when your sons do not follow the way of God as you do.
- c) when the people ask for a king and you know it's something that would displease God.

4. Saul

- a) when you see everyone favoring David instead of you.
- b) when you see your own son siding with David.
- c) when David spares your life for the second time.

5. David

- a) when you hear all the people praising you more highly than the king.
- b) when you have the chance to kill Saul, your persecutor.
- c) when you first saw Bathsheba from the roof of the palace.



N O T E S

N O T E S

Serving One True God

N O T E S



1. REASONS TO SERVE THE LORD

A. TO REPAY THE LOVE OF GOD (PS 116:12, 13)

1. The love of Jesus Christ compels us because He died for us (2 Cor 5:14, 15).
2. We belong to the Lord Jesus (Rom 14:7, 8).
3. Jesus Christ lives in us (Gal 2:20).

B. TO HAVE A SENSE OF COMMISSION (LK 2:42-49)

1. It is a necessity laid upon us (1 Cor 9:16, 17).
2. Repay what God has given us (Mt 25:14-30).

C. LOVE FOR OTHERS' SOULS

1. Have the willingness to save others (2 Kgs 5:3; Rom 9:1-4).
2. Share with others the grace we have received from God (Mt 10:8; Mk 5:19; Acts 4:20).





2. TYPES OF HOLY WORK

A. EVANGELISM

1. It is a command from Jesus (Mk 16:15).
2. It is our duty (1 Cor 16:9).

B. LITERARY EVANGELISM

The word of God can be preached to a wider audience and have a more lasting effect.

C. PASTORING

1. It is a command from Jesus (Jn 21:15-17).
2. Must know the flock intimately (Prov 27:23).
3. Lead the flock and provide them with spiritual food (Ps 23:1, 2).
4. Bring back the lost and those gone astray (Ezek 34:16; Jas 5:19, 20).
5. To care for and teach the young (Mt 18:1; Prov 22:6, 4:10, 11).

D. OFFERING

1. For the construction of chapels, supporting the holy work, and helping the needy.
2. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7; Lk 21:1-4).
3. Do not rob the things that belong to God (Mal 3:8).

E. OTHER HOLY WORK

We ought to find out what we can do according to the best of our abilities (Rom 12:3-8).

F. PRAYING FOR GOD'S HOLY WORK

Any kind of holy work requires the support of prayers (Ex 17:8-12).



3. CORRECT ATTITUDES

A. WITH LOVE FOR GOD AND MAN (1 COR 13:1-3, 16:14; 2 COR 5:14, 15; GAL 2:20)

B. WITH HOLINESS

1. Prepare oneself for God to use (2 Tim 2:21).
2. Remove the lustful desire (Mt 5:28; 1 Tim 5:1, 2).
3. Have a clear conscience (Acts 20:33, 34; 1 Sam 12:3-5).

C. WITH HUMILITY

1. Our own zeal is not enough (Ex 2:11, 12).
2. God uses humble workers (Num 12:3; 2 Tim 2:24, 25; Rom 12:16; Phil 2:3).
3. God opposes the proud (Prov 3:34; 1 Pet 5:5).

D. WITH FAITHFULNESS

1. As servants of Christ and stewards of God (1 Cor 4:1-4; Gal 1:10; Heb 3:1, 2)
2. Over small or great matters (Mt 25:2)

E. WITH A WILLING HEART, NOT WITH COMPULSION BUT WITH WHATEVER WE CAN OFFER (2 COR 8:12, 9:6, 7)





4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A. ACCORDING TO ONE'S GIFTS

1. Gifts come from God (1 Cor 12:4-11).
2. Holy works are not merely titles (1 Pet 4:10, 11).
3. Show no favoritism.
4. Pray for spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14:1, 2).

B. NEED TO CONSTANTLY INCREASE IN SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND KEEP OUR SPIRITUAL FERVOR

1. Pursue personal spiritual cultivation
2. Attend church training/seminars

C. MAKE PLANS

1. To facilitate the spreading of the gospel
2. To better utilize available resources

D. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

1. To save time and energy
2. To reach more people



QUESTIONS

- 1A. Why should we work for the Lord Jesus?
- 1B. What are the different kinds of work in evangelism?
- 1C. List the different kinds of work involved in pastoring.
- 1D. Why does a church need contributions from its members?
- 1E. What other types of work can you do in addition to evangelism and pastoring?
- 1F. Which two types of work did Jesus command His disciples to do?

- 2A. What kind of work can your age group do for God?
- 2B. What are some of the works you have already performed in your church? Which kind of work do you enjoy the most?
- 2C. What other types of work do you hope to take part of in the future?

- 3A. What are the gifts God has given that you can use to help the church?
- 3B. What other gifts would you like to pray for so that you can help the church more?
- 3C. In your opinion, what are some of the areas that our church needs the most help in? What can you do to improve them?



N O T E S



Called to Serve

N O T E S

1. GOD CALLS US

God calls us to belong to Him, to follow Him, to serve Him, and to glorify Him (Rev 7:15; Mt 4:10, 6:24).

A. THE ISRAELITES WERE DELIVERED OUT OF EGYPT SO THAT THEY COULD SERVE GOD (ACTS 7:7)

- 1. God established His laws and the ways to serve Him (Ex 25-31).
- 2. Moses established the tabernacle as a place to serve God (Ex 40; 1 Pet 2:4, 5).
- 3. The Levites were chosen to serve God in the tabernacle (Lev 8).

*The glory of God filled the tabernacle, and the Israelites were under the guidance and blessing of God in serving Him (Ex 40:34-38).

B. JESUS CHOSE THE DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM, TO SERVE HIM, AND TO PREACH THE KINGDOM OF GOD (MK 3:13-19)

- 1. The 12 disciples all had different backgrounds.
- 2. Jesus Christ has the same demand for all His disciples (Mt 20:28; Lk 22:24-30).
- 3. Jesus Christ has the same promise for all His disciples (Mk 1:17).

*We are the true Israelites and the true disciples.





2. HOW TO SERVE

- A. LEVITES (REV 1:5, 6, 5:10; 1 SAM 13:8-14)
 - 1. Burn incense (Ex 30:7, 8; Rev 5:8; Ps 141:7).
 - 2. Offer sacrifices (Ex 20:38, 39; Heb 10:1-10):
 - a. Contrition (Ps 51:17); prayer (Ps 141:2)
 - b. Thanksgiving and praise (Heb 13:15; Ps 50:14, 107:22)
 - c. Life of obedience (Rom 12:1)
 - d. Practical ministry to the needy (Heb 13:16)
 - 3. Make the lamp burn continuously (Ex 27:20, 21; Mt 5:14-16; Phil 2:15, 16; 1 Thess 2:4, 5).
 - 4. Convey the word of God (Mal 2:7; 1 Sam 3:18-21).
- B. PROPHETESS ANNA SERVED THE LORD BY PRAYING (LK 2:37; ACTS 13:2)
- C. PAUL SERVED GOD WHEN HE PREACHED THE GOSPEL AND ESTABLISHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD (1 TIM 1:12; ROM 1:9; 2 TIM 4:7)



3. PREREQUISITES FOR ONE TO SERVE THE LORD

- A. KNOW GOD (HOS 6:3)
 - 1. Paul
 - a. Zealously served God but did not know Christ (Acts 22:7; Rom 10:2)
 - b. Two questions Paul asked upon his conversion (Acts 22:8-10):
 - “Who are you?”—know God
 - “What can I do for you?”—serve God
 - c. Know the love of God after conversion; Paul served the Lord till death (2 Cor 5:14, 15; Rom 8:35-39)
 - 2. Disciples
 - a. Followed Jesus Christ but did not know Him (Jn 6:66-68)
 - b. Departed from the Lord Jesus upon their first encounter with difficulty and tribulation (Lk 18:34, 22:54-62)
 - *Know that the essence and the plan of God are the basis of serving the Lord
- B. FOLLOW THE LORD (JN 12:26)
 - 1. Deny oneself (Mt 16:24)
 - 2. Bear the cross (Mt 16:24)
 - 3. Remain loyal (Num 12:7; Heb 3:2, 5; Lk 19:17)
 - *Experiences of Peter
- C. OBEY THE LORD (PHIL 2:5-8; JN 2:5)
 - 1. Jesus Christ obeyed God unto death (Mt 26:36-39).
 - 2. Paul obeyed God and counted his own life worthless (Acts 20:22-24).
 - 3. King Saul lost his royal authority through his disobedience (1 Sam 15:22, 23).
 - 4. Joshua obeyed Moses (Deut 34:9).



*Only in total submission and obedience to the Lord can one serve Him.

D. RELY ON AND TRUST GOD (1 PET 4:10, 11)

1. Wisdom in serving (1 Cor 2:1-6)
2. Experience in serving (Lk 5:4-8; Jn 21:3-7)
3. Capability in serving (Act 7:21-30; Zech 4:6)
4. Background in serving (Heb 11:24-27; Phil 3:5-8)
5. Wealth in serving (Acts 3:5)

*Only when one trusts the Lord with all his heart and does not lean on himself, can he serve the Lord with success.

E. GLORIFY GOD (1 PET 4:10, 11)

1. The purpose of God’s creation (Isa 43:7)
2. Realize that we are unworthy servants (Lk 17:10)
3. Retreat after accomplishment (Jn 6:15)

*To glorify God is the noblest motivation in serving the Lord.



4. REWARDS FOR SERVING THE LORD

A. RESPECT FROM GOD (JN 12:26)

B. GOD WILL BE PLEASED (ROM 14:18)

C. BLESSINGS IN THIS LIFE AND THE LIFE TO COME (MK 10:28-30)

We should do our best to serve the Lord, to build up the body of Christ, and to spread the gospel so that the name of Jesus may be glorified and the kingdom of God may be established.



QUESTIONS

- 1A. What is the purpose of God calling us?
- 1B. What did Jesus Christ expect His disciples to do after He called them?
- 1C. What were the duties of the Levites?
- 1D. What does God require from those whom He has called to serve Him?
- 1E. How does God reward those who serve Him?
- 2A. Name at least four faithful servants whom God called in the Old Testament. Please specify the work God commanded them to do.
- 2B. Explain the difference between Paul’s service to God before and after Jesus called him.
- 2C. What does it mean to “follow the Lord”?
- 2D. Why is it imperative that we rely on and trust God when we serve Him?
- 2E. What happens when we do not give glory to God in the work we do?
- 3A. How can knowing who we are affect our service to the Lord?





The Mission of the True Jesus Church

N O T E S

1. MISSION OF THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH

In the last days, God shall revive His church to preach the gospel and lead men to salvation. As we observe the steady emergence of the True Jesus Church, we can firmly believe that this is the true church, which is the revival of the apostolic church. Today, we have been blessed to be chosen as part of the true church. We should hold onto this blessing and understand the mission that Jesus has entrusted us with so that we may prepare ourselves well to serve the Lord diligently in the future, and to bear the responsibility together in fulfilling His commission.

A. TO WORK TOWARD A COMPLETE CHURCH

The first purpose for the coming of the Lord on the last day is to receive the bride who is fully adorned—the complete church. The descent of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit is for the revival of the true church, and the church must be fully established, like a bride fully prepared, waiting for the coming of the Lord. The complete church must fulfill the following conditions:

1. Preach the truth that is consistent with the truth of the apostolic church (Col 1:25; Mt 28:20; Eph 2:19, 20).
2. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, having the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the power to perform miracles and signs (Eph 1:13, 14; Heb 2:4; 1 Cor 12:4-11).
3. Believers must be holy and pure, possess love, and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The whole church must be adorned like the new bride (Rev 19:7, 8, 21:2; 1 Cor 13:13, 14:1).



B. TO PROPAGATE THE GOSPEL AND GIVE WARNING DURING THE LAST DAYS

“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Mt 24:14). We are now in the period of “the last days and the times of stress” (2 Tim 3:1). Men are heavily sinking in sin; the world is continuously affected by natural disasters; the days of destruction are near; and the coming of the Lord is at the door (Ezek 7:5, 9, 25; Jas 5:9). Many people are still not aware of the coming judgment and are not sober. Thus, we must preach the warning of the last days.

1. The true church is the “Noah of the last days” (Mt 24:37).
 During the ancient time of Noah, the wickedness of men was great, the thoughts of men were evil, and there was violence everywhere. As a consequence, God instructed Noah to build an ark and to warn the people before He destroyed the earth (Gen 6:1-14). The world today is also filled with evil, wickedness, and violence, worse than the time of Noah. Therefore, the True Jesus Church has the responsibility to spread the warning and lead people to turn to God.
2. The true church is the “Elijah of the last days” (Mal 4:5).
 During prophet Elijah’s time, the king and the people disobeyed God and worshiped idols. As a result, there was no rain for three and a half years. Elijah went to Mount Carmel and prayed for fire from heaven to burn the offering so that the people would know God and their faith would be revived. As a result, rain from heaven fell to the earth once more (1 Kgs 18). As the prophet Malachi prophesied, the true church shall be revived before the second coming of the Lord. The church shall also have the power and the mission of Elijah to preach the truth and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that more people will turn to the heavenly Father and be delivered (Mal 4:5, 6).
3. The true church is the messenger who must give warning to Babylon (Rev 18:4). Before Babylon was destroyed, God sent prophets to give warning and asked the elect ones to leave the city (Jer 1:6-9; Isa 62:11). The sins of the people of the world today are similar to the sins of the people before the fall of the great Babylon. The true church is the messenger who must warn the people to repent of their sins and be saved (Rev 18:1-4, 19:1-6, 21:2; Heb 12:22).

C. TO CALL THE LORD’S SHEEP TO RETURN

1. The ancient prophets prophesied that the Lord’s sheep (believers) were wrongly led by wicked shepherds and were scattered all over the earth like lost sheep. In the last days the Lord shall look for those sheep so that they may return to the fold (Jer 22:3, 4, 50:6; Ezek 34:2-6, 11:16).
2. As the end is near, it is the great mission of the True Church to find the lost sheep. We must bear witness for the Lord—to look for other lost sheep and bring them to this fold as true believers (Isa 43:5-9; Jn 10:16).

D. TO REAP THE HARVEST OF THE LATTER DAYS

The work of salvation for mankind is also likened to a “harvest.” As the end of the world draws nearer, and the latter rain (Holy Spirit) continues to descend, it is time to reap the harvest of men’s souls, which is ripe (Jas 5:7, 8; Jn 4:35). The true church is the messenger sent to reap the harvest. The Lord promises that we are to reap that for which we have not labored, to enjoy the labor of others (Jn 4:35-38). The harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few, so every



true believer must do his best to work hard to preach the gospel of salvation and to sow seeds so that he may reap for the Lord in great joy (Ps 126:5, 6).



2. SELF-AWARENESS

We understand that the True Jesus Church is established by God. It is the “ark” of the last days led by the Holy Spirit and it has the responsibility to establish the complete church as well as to preach the truth to all the world in order to save all mankind. It is a blessing to be able to take part in God’s great plan of saving mankind. As God has called us and given us the gospel, we must be concerned for the rise of His church, and be prepared to labor for the Lord in order to fulfill what God has intended for us to do so that the name of the Lord may be glorified.

A. TO KNOW OURSELVES

Because of the great love of our Lord Jesus, who sacrificed His life on the cross for us, our past sins are forgiven (Gal 2:20). Through His sacrifice we are able to be called His children. He has also given us the Holy Spirit so that we may enter the heavenly kingdom. Let us not fall short of God’s grace. Since we have become a member of God’s household, we must have concern for all the affairs of the church. We must learn and see what we can do in the holy work for the good of the church.

B. TO HAVE HIGH AIMS FOR THE LORD

People of the world care for high position, wealth, benefits, lust, and enjoyment. They have gone to great lengths to satisfy their desires and purposes and all these pursuits lead to corruption. Wickedness is on the increase every day. We are citizens in the household of God. If we have hope only for this life, we are more pitiful than the unbelievers. So we must not be content with worldly wisdom, but live for the Lord in every aspect of our lives so that we may be blessed by Him.

1. Moses had a great future ahead of him. He received the finest education in Egypt, but he preferred to suffer with God’s people than enjoy the pleasures of sin because he hoped for a better life in the Lord (Acts 7:22; Heb 11:24-26).
2. Paul also received the finest education. However, when he was called by the Lord, he regarded Christ as his most precious possession and was willing to forego everything for Christ’s sake. Though he suffered much, he was not disheartened, for he had seen the reward in heaven that had been prepared for him.

C. TO BECOME A VALUABLE VESSEL FOR THE LORD

In the house of God, there are many vessels of value. If we are holy and depart from sin, we will be a valuable vessel, suitable for God’s use and will be prepared to do all good things for God (2 Tim 2:20, 21). In this wicked world, we face many temptations, which all lead to sin. We must not indulge in youthful lusts but strive for a more holy life.



In his old age, King Solomon advised: "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes, but know that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment" (Eccl 11:9).

We should imitate Daniel and his three friends who, though stranded in a foreign land and faced with all kinds of temptations, were able to stand firm and keep themselves pure and holy. They were greatly blessed by God, who gave them wisdom. They were raised and honored before the king and used by God. Daniel later became one of the greatest prophets who foretold many of the mysteries of God (Dan 1:8, 17, 20, 10:11).

In order to become valuable vessels for God and to be well-prepared for the Lord's use, youths must learn how to discipline themselves, control their bodies, and preserve themselves from all evil by relying on God. They should emulate the courage of the prophet Isaiah who answered the call of the Lord by saying, "Lord, here am I, please send me!"

As God's elect, we must know the commission He has given us. We should be fully aware of how to carry out the Lord's work and know that laboring for the Lord will not be in vain. We shall reap the harvest of salvation for the Lord with great joy.

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of horizontal lines extending across the right side of the page.



QUESTIONS

- 1A. What are the four aspects of the mission of the True Jesus Church?
- 1B. What is considered a "complete church"?
- 1C. What are the three things the true church is compared to?
- 1D. As a youth in the True Jesus Church, what should you be aware of in the last days?
- 2A. How is the true church like "Elijah of the last days"?
- 2B. Why is it necessary for us to carry out this mission?
- 2C. Both Moses and Paul were highly educated. What can you learn from their attitude towards education after God called them?
- 3A. What can you do to help make the church more complete?
- 3B. What message would Noah have told the people of his time? What message would you share with your school friends if you knew Jesus would come again next week?
- 3C. Most of Jesus' disciples were uneducated men, yet God worked with them mightily. Therefore, as youths in the last days, should you give up everything, especially school and family, and concentrate on God's business only? Why or why not?
- 3D. What can you do now to prepare yourself in becoming a useful vessel for the Lord?



For numbers 5-8, discuss with your group members before writing down your answers. Answer numbers 9-11 individually.

Each of these four missions may sound too difficult for me, a youth who is _____ years old, but I believe that with God's help, I can do something to help accomplish these missions.

First, let's break each of the missions down into simpler tasks that youths my age can handle.

For Mission #1: _____

5. To accomplish this mission, my group members can help by:

For Mission #2: _____

6. To accomplish this mission, my group members can help by:

For Mission #3: _____

7. To accomplish this mission, my group members can help by:

For Mission #4: _____

8. To accomplish this mission, my group members can help by:

9. Of all the tasks mentioned above, I would like to work on (choose one task from #5-8):

10. I think God has given me the following gift(s) to perform this task:

11. I may have some gifts, but I think I need to pray to God for the following gift(s) so that I can perform this task better:

N O T E S



*"No one can serve two masters;
for either he will hate the one and
love the other,
or else he will be loyal to the
one and despise the other.
You cannot serve God and mammon."*

Matthew 6:24



*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom
which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we
may serve God acceptably
with reverence and godly fear.”*

Hebrews 12:28

Printed December, 2008

General Assembly of True Jesus Church

314 S. Brookhurst St #104,

Anaheim, CA

92804

U.S.A.