

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking,
correcting and training in righteousness."

2 Timothy 3:16

YEAR 3 BOOK 3

Junior 2 Year 3 Book 3

YEAR 3 BOOK 3

JUNIOR 2

Teacher's Guide

Christian Living (3)

G.A. of the True Jesus Church U.S.A.



THEME:

Christian Living (3)

General Assembly of the True Jesus Church

[HTTP://WWW.TJC.ORG](http://WWW.TJC.ORG)

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Examine Your Hearts

Fall Quarter:
March, April, May

YEAR 3 BOOK 3

JUNIOR 2

Teacher's Guide

It's difficult to approach God if you know your heart isn't totally clean before Him. Unconfessed sins are like bricks between us and God. The longer we fail to ask for forgiveness, the more bricks get piled up, until they seem to form a solid wall.

Ask God the following questions:

- 1. Is there anything in my mind that You're not proud of?*
- 2. Have I done or thought anything since the last time I prayed that has dishonored my relationship with You?*

Stand up like a **godly man** or **godly woman** and don't let anything get in the way of you becoming all God wants you to be.



THEME:

Christian Living (3)

Published by the General Assembly of the True Jesus Church

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THEMES

Christian Living (3)

Unit 1: Preparing for College

In this section, students will begin to think about life in college, and how it affects their relationship with God. Through the lessons, they will be reminded of the importance of securing a close relationship with the Lord, and to constantly examine themselves so that they will not fall in their walk of faith.

In addition, they will be reminded of the need to share the gospel of salvation with those around them and the need to continue to shine for the Lord. This is a key component of maintaining their faith.

Unit 2: Communication

The next four lessons deal with the topic of communication—how to communicate well with others and what happens when there is a lack of communication. Students will begin to clearly see the importance of communicating well with the Lord and with others. At this age, J2 students have a tendency to misuse their words, especially towards their parents. They will be prompted to think about how they treat their parents and how to speak wisely.

They will also be prompted to think about the importance of maintaining a close relationship with the Lord and with church members. Often, a lack of communication causes conflicts to arise. Students will learn how to manage conflicts as well as how to avoid them.

Unit 3: Life Issues

The underlying message in all of these lessons is that God is with us no matter what problems or issues we may have in life. Sometimes we may think that we are alone in dealing with our problems, and we try to seek out ways to deal with them ourselves. But the Lord promised us that He is always with us, guiding our every way, if we but only turn to Him.

Students will be asked to take a hard look at their lives, to see if there are any areas that they may be sinning against the Lord. They will be prompted to think about their daily actions and what they can do to serve and glorify the Lord instead. They will be guided towards ways in which they can walk with God on a deeper level and to knit their hearts with Him.

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WELCOME TO THE J2 CURRICULUM

This Teacher's Guide has been designed to help the teachers plan the class and become more effective in the teaching ministry.

Because of the impact of God's word, it is our prayer that we see our students understand and apply the Bible to their lives. Our ultimate goal of this curriculum is to see lives transformed. Here you'll find the materials you will need to teach the unchanging truth of God's word.

This Curriculum

LESSON TITLE

Getting Your Spiritual Life in Shape

LISTED SCRIPTURES

Eph 6:13 – 18; Ex 33:17 – 23;
34:28 – 33; Num 12:6 – 8

LESSON AIM

- 1) To examine the important elements of spiritual growth
- 2) To discover how to win the battle between the spirit and the flesh
- 3) To implement a plan to get the students' spiritual lives in shape by using specific goals

MEMORY VERSE

"That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15) (NKJV)

BIBLE READING FOR THE WEEK

Eph 1-2

Sample

All of these sabbath lessons are built on:

1. (Not listed in the Student Workbook) **BIBLE BACKGROUND**
Extra resource related to the lesson for the students and teachers to know.
2. **WARM UP**
Something to capture their focus to get them started.
3. **BIBLE STUDY**
Lead your students in discovering the timeless truth of God's word through inductive Bible study.
(Student Worksheet is only in outline form)
4. **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**
Find out if the students comprehend the information that is being presented. Teachers can check for understanding in different ways. One way is to ask them questions related to what they've just learned.
5. **LIFE APPLICATION**
Help each student apply God's word to his/her life as the Holy Spirit leads him/her. Encourage students to come up with a plan of action to practice what they've learned. How are they going to implement their plans? When are they going to apply it?
6. **REFLECTION AND PRAYER**
Ask them to share with you what sticks in their mind after the lesson, before the concluding prayer.



A Reminder!

Unit goals and teacher devotional are listed before each unit. Bible reading for the week and the memory verse are listed in each lesson. Be sure to read through each lesson before you plan and teach your class.



It is important to teach teens in order to equip them with a strong foundation of good, solid faith. This generation that we are working with is searching for answers to truth. Although they may have many ups and downs in their lives or lack spiritual depth, they do want to know who makes a real difference in the real world.

Teens live in a time when believing in God is considered ridiculous. They also live in a world that is in constant violation of God's laws. Some of the results of this are health epidemics, environmental devastation and domestic violence. Therefore, they are faced with important decisions each and every day. What they decide can ultimately affect their values, faith, education, choice in friends, occupation, marriage, and church-life. In addition to

these complexities, teens may be struggling with peer pressure, fashion expectations, substance abuse issues, family/relationship problems as well as issues of identity and self-concept. In other words, they are rocked with change, whether spiritual, emotional, social or physical.

Teens need something or someone to rely on, anything that they can look up to as their standard. Our job, then, is to lead our teens to see a powerful God in this ever-changing world. Surprisingly, teens want to be "spiritual," despite all the hype around them. Therefore, they need to hear personal testimonies, Bible truths, how God's love has touched the lives of other people and what kind of hopes we all have despite living in an often senseless world. The question we need to answer as we teach is, "How can we affirm their faith in a God who loves and cares for them like no other?"

1. Love and Acceptance

Teens have a great need for acceptance by their peers, and they care about what others think of them. They are worried about how others perceive them physically (attractiveness: too tall, too short, too fat, too thin, the notion of sex) and mentally (intelligence: being too smart or dumb). They also look to peers, teachers, sports figures and media personalities as role models. Therefore, the way teachers express their faith and belief will be a positive witness for them.

2. Relationship with God/Finding Faith

At this age, teens will no longer come to church simply because their parents tell them to. They should be beginning to develop their own relationships with Jesus Christ. Although their reasoning skills will cause them to question what part God and the Bible play in their lives, it is important for teachers to continue to challenge them to make time for prayer and devotional life outside of the classroom and church so that they will be able to establish their own faith. Their spiritual goal is to find meaning and purpose in their lives through Jesus Christ.

3. Personal Experiences With God

Up till this point in their lives, teens probably have yet to have many personal experiences with God. Their devotional life has likely consisted of attending church services, going to classes and praying before going to bed. While this regularity is good, it is not enough. Now is the time to encourage them to pray consistently so that they may realize the roles God is playing in their lives. Share with them personal testimonies that will touch their hearts. Soon, they will begin to see God as a personal friend, comforter and advisor.



TEENS' DESIRES (2)



4. Purpose in Life/True Fulfillment

Teens want to know who they are. At this crucial age, they are beginning to ask themselves, "What is my purpose in life?" and "What does it all mean?" A teenager needs to see himself as a separate and a worthwhile person in order to attain a successful transition into adulthood. Their drive for independence is strong and they feel a need to prove themselves as capable individuals. Some parents may have a difficult time letting go and end up being over-controlling because they find this "growing up" threatening. As a result, the teenager may end up rebelling. As teachers, we need to show support and encouragement, and provide helpful advice. We also need to affirm their talents and abilities to let them know their self-worth. Teenagers do respect parents and

adults who show consistency and structure. As they make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes, it will allow them to find their own identities and seek out what it is they believe in. When they are able to do so, they can also become faithful to their beliefs and values.

5. Purity and Holiness

Perhaps because of their young age and their lack of experience in the real world, teens often feel they can overcome anything if they try hard enough. "I can handle it," they might think. "It may have happened to them, but it won't happen to me!" In one sense, it is great to have confidence. However, when they are faced with real temptations, they may also be unprepared to deal with the issues with a clear head. While we don't need to bombard them with stories of people who have failed to remain pure and holy, we do need to let them understand the reality and difficulties. Challenge them to think about what is important to them and encourage them to stand firm in what they believe.

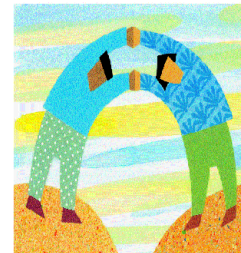
HOW DO I EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH MY STUDENTS?

1. Greet every student at every class session

A friendly and sincere greeting communicates undivided attention. "How's it going?" expresses genuine concern. "It's great to see you" can transform anyone's day. Your greeting may take only 30-40 seconds, but your students will deeply feel that you really care.

2. Send an occasional card/email or pick up the phone to find out how someone is doing

Saying, "I was wondering how you were doing," will make a big difference in someone's life. An investment of four or five minutes and the price of a postage stamp can literally make a teenager's day come alive.



3. Open your home for fellowship or special events

Our greatest memories result from serving the Lord together through fellowship and special services or events. Every fellowship or meeting will provide a new opportunity to "reach out and touch someone."

4. Pray with them

Teens need to know that their teachers are constantly praying for them. Even though they may be very busy with their daily chores, always remind them that praying together at a certain time is the only way to draw wisdom and strength from God.

In this 21st century, 99% of the youth communicate via email every day! With the help of the internet, many people have found a great way to keep in touch with those they normally wouldn't be able to talk to and with those who live far away.

As an RE teacher, using email to reach out to our students is a wonderful way to **build relationships**. Since you



know your students already, send out an email that goes a little deeper than greetings and

praise. Perhaps you could ask your students a thought-provoking question about what goes on in the world, about what he or she believes in, about relationships within their families, or maybe begin with a gentle question about their relationship with God.

The truth is, your students love to find email in their boxes even though you and your students don't really talk frequently. At the very least, consider sending your students an occasional encouraging email or e-card to let them know that they are in

your thoughts or to wish them well on a test or sporting event. You can even make your student's day with a quick note of praise or a written pat on the back.

In order to reach out to your students effectively through email, keep your message brief—two or three short paragraphs is sufficient. And believe it or not, sometimes only a sentence is required. Living in this fast-paced society, not many of us want to scroll through a book-length email. Also, it is very vital to respond to messages within a day or two. Your students look to you for support and guidance. You will easily lose their confidence in you if a week goes by with no feedback.

Last but not least, try to use a gentle tone in your email. Let them know that you are always there, especially when you notice that one of your students is sick or simply feeling low spiritually. Quote Scripture sparingly and use liberal doses of humor. Teens do not respond well to teachers who always condemn. **Be there, and be an example.**

Email is a great door to communicating with your students. May God help us strengthen the faith of our students and nurture understanding with God's word.

HOW CAN I GET THEM MOTIVATED & TO STAY INTERESTED?

You can involve...

1. a game or debate
2. a video clip
3. brainstorming sessions
4. a poster
5. interesting questions and news stories
6. a touching testimony or hymn
7. quiet time for them to reflect
8. arts and crafts



When you deliver your lesson, it can be through...

1. lecture style
2. an in-depth Bible study
3. a skit
4. a meaningful and relevant video

Teachers can check for understanding by...

1. asking the students to share what they have learned
2. asking questions about the Bible study
3. asking the students to come up with a good moral for the lesson
4. asking which one of the characters they would have wanted to be had they been a part of the scene
5. asking the students to apply the Bible study and to make relevant connections to their own lives

MEMORY VERSE CONTEST

Do you know that working on **memory verses** together in class can provide excellent teachable moments about the word of God? Most people think that J2 class students already know many of the verses in the Bible. However, that's not necessarily true. Therefore, we as RE teachers should emphasize this part of the lesson more than others. Why? Because memorizing the Scriptures can help students **resist temptations and build a stronger faith.**

Make sure that it's something that involves the **both** of you. Think about challenging your students to memorize the memory verse with you each week. Maybe you could suggest that both you and the students recite all 13 verses by the end of the quarter. This is a great way to motivate your students. Perhaps you could challenge your students to a contest. Make it a real challenge and see who can memorize the most verses by a certain time. If

everyone wins, take your students out for ice cream or even out to lunch.

Since you need to recite the memory verse from week to week, you can spend more time talking about it with your students. Let the word of God impact them in their daily lives and be a part of their lives too. After a period of time, you will definitely see the lives of your students flourish just as God intended. The key point is that if your students see that you are serious about memorizing Scripture yourself, they will see that it is a **vital way of growing more like Jesus Christ.** May God strengthen our hands as we continue to serve Him.

BIBLE READING FOR THIS QUARTER

1. Daniel 1-3
2. Daniel 4-6
3. Daniel 7-9
4. Daniel 10-12
5. Hosea 1-3
6. Hosea 4-6
7. Hosea 7-9
8. Hosea 10-12
9. Hosea 13-Joel 1
10. Joel 2-Amos 1
11. Amos 2-4
12. Amos 5-7

MEMORY VERSES FOR MARCH APRIL & MAY

1. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom 12:1-2)
2. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Mt 6:33)
3. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)
4. "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Mt 12:36f)
5. "'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" (Eph 6:2-3)
6. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Sons of God." (Mt 5:9)
7. "For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God." (Psalm 38:15)
8. "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." (Mt 5:29)
9. "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way." (Ps 119:37)
10. "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." (Deut 31:6)
11. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." (Phil 4:6)
12. "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 Jn 2:4)

Goals

In this section, students will begin to think about life in college, and how it affects their relationship with God. Through the lessons, they will be reminded of the importance of securing a close relationship with the Lord, and to constantly examine themselves so that they will not fall in their walk of faith.

In addition, they will be reminded of the need to share the gospel of salvation with those around them and the need to continue to shine for the Lord. This is a key component of maintaining their faith.

unit 1

Teacher Devotional

Preparation is a key component of each individual's life, and even more so as a Christian. But, as teachers, how much preparation have we put into our lessons? Do we just read the textbook the night before and hope that we'll remember everything for the lesson? Or do we read the textbook over and over again, along with the required Bible passages, and pray to God for the lesson to go according to His will? Preparation is vital, especially in terms of serving God. We cannot do His work haphazardly. We need to put our whole hearts into it. We need to constantly meditate on the Lord's words, reflect upon them, and act on them.

Worship Him in Spirit and Truth

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
(John 4:24)

Lesson 1

Giving Our Hearts a Check-Up

Listed Scriptures

Rom 12:1-2; Dan 1:1-21; 2:14-49; 6:1-28

Lesson Aim

- 1) To evaluate the students' relationships with God on a spiritual level.
- 2) To create and work towards a specific spiritual goal that will always lead our hearts on God's path.
- 3) To develop a plan to give our hearts a check-up regularly.

Memory Verse

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."
(Rom 12:1-2)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Daniel 1-3

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Our Lord Jesus Christ reminded us to "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). Many of us want to wholeheartedly do what is right in the spirit but we are often too weak and fall into temptation. What is the secret to overcoming our present surroundings and holding fast to our faith? How were the saints in the Bible able to do this?

Despite living in a foreign land and being assimilated into the Babylonian culture, Daniel resolved to remain faithful to the Lord. He refused to integrate himself into the Babylonian way of life, keeping his identity as a child of God instead. He constantly checked in with God by offering his prayers three times a day. His life of

holiness and prayer is an example for all Christians today. Even his sixth-century B.C. contemporary Ezekiel mentioned him as an example of righteousness (Ezek 14:14, 20).

Joseph was another Old Testament saint who managed to hold on to God despite the things going on around him. In the face of temptation, he remembered the Lord and fled (Gen 39:8–13). His ability to resist temptation and his will power not to fall were due to his intimate relationship with God. If Joseph had not known the heart of God, and had not looked to Him during times of difficulty, he would not have been able to stand firm. What would we have done if we were in his shoes? Would we have been able to resist temptation?

W A R M U P



Johnny was a healthy young man who regularly took part in sports. One day, after a long day of training with his running club, he felt some pain in his chest. He ignored it, but the problem persisted over the course of the next few days. Eventually, he decided to see his doctor, who diagnosed him with some minor heart problems. This shocked him, as he had been healthy throughout his life and regularly exercised. How could this be? The doctor advised him to tone down his training and to stick to a healthy diet. He was also told to have regular check-ups. However, Johnny did not want to give up his training. He continued to train hard every day and forgot about his health problems. He even forgot to go for regular check-ups. A few months later, after another intense training session, he collapsed and died.

What do you think? What could Johnny have done to prevent this from happening? What parallels can you draw from Johnny's story and your own spiritual life? Today, we'll look into the importance of checking our spiritual health so that we won't suffer the same fate as Johnny.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Why Check Our Hearts?



A. To Know the State of Our Hearts

We are often told to go for regular medical check-ups in order to see what our health situation is like. Medical check-ups can detect illnesses and can help prevent them from becoming full-blown, if caught early. Likewise, as Christians, we need to constantly check our own hearts to know what they are and where we stand with God. Only through regular check-ups will we know what situation our faith is in and what we can do to improve it. We need to constantly examine whether our faith is increasing or decreasing. Do not fall in our steadfastness, but grow in the grace and love of our Lord (2 Pet 3:17f; 2 Cor 13:5).



B. To Prevent Serious Spiritual Damage

Have we been damaging our lives with worldly music or with the media? How much have we absorbed from the world that it has become a part of our lives, without us even realizing it? Satan is very cunning and will enter our hearts through various means. Sometimes he enters us through the music we listen to, sometimes through the conversations we have; other times, it is through the programs and films we watch, or even through the Internet. Checking ourselves constantly will help prevent any serious damage, and help us see where we have fallen. Do not leave a foothold for Satan. When we realize that we have given way to Satan, we must quickly get rid of it; deal with it immediately. Do not wait until the damage becomes too serious.

In John 14:30 our Lord Jesus stated that "the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me." We need to be able to reach this same conviction that the Lord Jesus had: Satan must have no place in our hearts. We must remain firm on this and eliminate any evil thoughts or desires before they become full-blown (Jas 1:14–16).



C. To Allow Our Hearts to Bring Forth Rivers of Living Water

The Lord Jesus said in John 7:38, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has

said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” Here, the Lord was referring to the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we need the Holy Spirit to dwell within us so that we can walk according to the will of God. By checking our hearts, we will analyze whether we are walking according to the spirit or not (Gal 5:25). The spirit acts as our guide and counselor: we need His presence to direct our paths, so that we will walk and live according to His good will (Rom 8:4f).



D. To Check Whether We are Bearing Fruits

John 15:1-11 reminds us of the importance of bearing fruits. It is our Christian duty to bear fruit. If we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off from the vine. Moreover, not only do we have to bear fruits, we have to also bear the correct type of fruits. We need to bear fruits that glorify our Father’s name (Gal 5:22f). This means that we no longer live in the way of the world: we must walk as children of light and bear the fruits of goodness, righteousness, and truth (Eph 5:1-10).



Part 2

How Do We Check Our Hearts?



A. Giving Our Hearts a Daily Check-Up

We're now going to check up on ourselves to see how much of a God-fearing life we live. Take a few minutes to fill in the columns for the past three days (the chart is on the next page). Be honest. Once the students have filled this out, ask them to summarize their results with the following questions. Then discuss the results with them. Remind them of the importance of daily spiritual cultivation and to arm themselves with the words of God.

Summary:

For the past three days...

1. I prayed ____ times before leaving the house.
2. I read ____ chapters of the Bible.
3. My speech was wholesome ____ times.
4. I acted in a Christian-like manner ____ days.
5. I prayed ____ times before going to bed.

Questions to Think About Daily	Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Yes or No?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Did I pray before leaving the house to ask for the Lord's guidance?						
Did I read at least one chapter of the Bible?						
Were the words which came out of my mouth wholesome?						
Did I act in a Christian-like manner all day?						
Did I pray before going to bed to thank God for guiding the day?						



B. Ways to Check Our Hearts

Here are some ways we can check up on our hearts:

a. Read the Bible

We need to take time to ponder, reflect, and focus on God’s words. Reading and understanding His word will ensure that we familiarize ourselves with His teachings. When we are in a difficult situation, or encounter temptations, the word of God will instruct and guide us on how we should act. It will also enable us to see what state our hearts are in and to help us guard our hearts (Phil 4:7).

b. Pray

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (Jas 4:8). Spending time in prayer with God is important for Christians to stay connected to Him. It allows us to speak to God and for Him to speak to us, guiding our paths. We must make sure that we make a daily appointment with the Lord. Prayer is like breathing. Without it, our spiritual lives will eventually die.

c. Listen to Sermons

Another important aspect is to listen to God’s words through other members. The Lord often uses fellow brothers and sisters to encourage us. Therefore, we should take every opportunity to attend services and to listen to His word.

d. Attend Fellowships

Equally important to our spiritual health is our communal life of worship. God

instituted the church ("a called-out assembly") so that we could worship Him together. The community of faith helps us to support each other, just like the apostolic days (Acts 2:44-47; 1 Jn 1:3)

e. Examine Our Daily Conduct and Our Speech

We need to ask ourselves, "Am I reflecting the image of a true Christian?" We must have a walk worthy of God's calling. How can we call ourselves true Christians when, outside of the church, we act in an un-Christian-like manner? We need to "lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls" (Jas 1:21).

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



- 1** Why is it important to constantly check our hearts?
- 2** What are some of the ways we can check our hearts?

LIFE APPLICATION



Part 1: Testimony of Transformation

There was a brother, who, once he left for college, felt as free as a bird and invested heavily in alcohol and drugs. Before he knew it, he became addicted. Little did he know the detrimental effect this would have on him.

He began to lose his hair, and later on, he became bald. Turning bald in his twenties pained him, so he continued to turn to alcohol to numb the pain. His family begged him to turn from his ways, but at the time he would have nothing to do with it and his heart was hardened. Everyone in his family felt hopeless. Then one day, out of his hopelessness, this brother began to think that he needed to listen to his grandmother's advice and turn to Lord Jesus.

From that moment on, he began to read the Bible and watch the gospel channel. When he wanted to smoke he would hear the TV evangelist preaching against it. When he loitered on the streets, he would hear voices or messages telling him to go home. When he wanted to read or watch pornography, either he could not

reach the magazines under the sofa or the tapes were somehow erased. He often came across Bible verses that urged him not to fall into the traps of the devil. Slowly, he realized that God detested filthy things, so he burned all the pornographic materials he had. He started to pray and asked God to humble him.

Once, his sister was invited to the True Jesus Church where she experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. She came back and asked her brother to go, but he hesitated because of his baldness.

One day a sister called him and persistently invited him to go to church, but he refused. He told her, "Unless God calls me to go, I will not go!" So before she hung up she told him to write down the address of the church: B-a-l-d-w-i-n, Baldwin Park Church. He was stunned when he heard the address. The name struck him—Bald Win? The bald will win? He felt that God wanted him to go to church and that he will overcome his baldness. This brother decided to go and despite the initial fear of embarrassment, he was moved by the sermons and no longer felt uneasy about his appearance. He continued to attend church services and pursue the truth. Eventually he received the Holy Spirit, which has since helped him overcome his desires.

(Adapted version: "In Hopelessness I Met God," *Manna*, Women in the Bible, Issue 38, Oct-Dec 2002)

Questions to think about:

1. Why do you think this brother turned to drugs and alcohol in the first place?
2. If we know someone who is falling into this same fate, what could we do to help him/her? How could we advise him/her?
3. How can we be sure that we do not fall into this trap? What preventative measures could we take?
4. How is the Holy Spirit able to help us overcome our desires?

Part 2: Living A Life of Integrity

Read the following story of Kathy and Janet to the students (or if you prefer, you could put it up on an overhead and ask the students to read it out loud).

I'll never forget the atmosphere at our church youths' end of year gathering.

Among those in attendance that night were two sisters about to head off to large state schools in the fall. Each had demonstrated growth in her faith and the ability to help and support other members. No one was worried that they wouldn't survive, and everyone expected them to thrive in their respective new atmospheres. Not more than nine months later, however, I was surprised to hear that Kathy had virtually abandoned her faith, changed her lifestyle, and cut off almost all ties with Christian friends from home. She was caught up in a life of partying, drinking and drugs. Meanwhile, the other sister, Janet, was doing fine in spite of the same challenges. She was taking steps to grow in her faith, and also began an effective ministry around her.

What happened? What was the difference between Janet and Kathy? They both came from similar backgrounds, were leaders in their church youth group, and were respected as mature believers. What was it that enabled Janet to maintain her faith and continue to grow throughout college while Kathy seemed to abandon everything?

Once you have gathered the students' thoughts on the above questions, say "Although there were probably many factors involved, one key difference was their understanding of lordship." What is lordship? Lordship is inviting the Lord Jesus Christ to be the head of our lives. Two main ideas underlie this: Identity and Purpose. Identity is understanding who we are and living a life which reflects that identity, i.e. God (Gal 2:20). Purpose is understanding the meaning and value of our lives and living a life of integrity (Phil 1:21). Janet understood the purpose of her life, and she knew who was Lord of it. She kept to her faith, constantly checked herself, and made sure she could do everything possible to maintain a heart of worship. Kathy, on the other hand, decided not to keep a check on herself. Instead, she allowed her heart to follow the ways of the world, and forgot to bear good fruit. Ask yourself: Whom do you want to end up like: Kathy or Janet?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 408: Into My Heart.

Being a true Christian requires much discipline and determination on our part. We need to learn to actualize our faith, hope, and love in our daily lives and to constantly keep a daily check on ourselves. Ask the Lord to come into our hearts and to guide us in our journey of faith so that we will always remain faithful to Him (Rom 12:1-2).

Preparing For College

Listed Scriptures

Mt 6:33; Jn 8:32; Jude 20-21

Lesson Aim

- 1) To create a list of priorities important to a successful college life.
- 2) To know what types of struggles we may encounter in college and how to overcome them.
- 3) To have a reality check on what college life is really like.

Memory Verse

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Mt 6:33)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

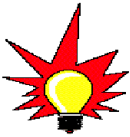
Daniel 4-6

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Matthew 5-7 is known as the Sermon on the Mount. In it we see how the people yearned to see the teachings of the Lord Jesus. They deemed everything the Lord Jesus spoke as precious. If we look at these three chapters closely, we see that none of the multitude was forced to be there. They came on foot to see and listen to the Lord Jesus in the desert. To them, all notions of time and all feelings of hunger and pain were forgotten: they had a heart and a desire to seek God. Consequently, our Lord Jesus gave them spiritual and physical fullness. As Christians today, we need to have this same heart of yearning. If we put the Lord Jesus first, not only will our hearts be satisfied, but He will truly fulfill our needs. That is why our Lord emphasized the importance of first seeking His kingdom and His righteousness and all the others will be given to us.

W A R M U P



Jim was a freshman at college, but he had a problem with one of his classes: it began at 8:00 am three days a week. Jim had a bit more difficulty than the average student getting up in the morning, but he had a strategy to overcome it: he had at least five alarm clocks scattered around his room, all set a few minutes apart, to insure he would get up on time. It never worked though and he ended up in trouble. His professor called him into the office and said that if he continued to miss another class, he would fail for the semester. He had to come up with another plan.

Thankfully, many of the buildings on Jim's campus remained open twenty-four hours a day. So on those nights when he had an 8:00 am class the next day, Jim would curl up for the night in the building that housed his 8:00 am class. As extreme as this may be, it brings up a good question of how we manage our own schedules when we are away from our family. How do we organize and prepare ourselves at college so that we can be sure of leading a successful college life? Today, we'll look into the importance of preparing ourselves mentally, physically, and spiritually so that we can continue to live victoriously for the Lord.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

The Importance of Preparing Ourselves

It seems we are always preparing for something. We prepare for tests, we prepare dinner, we prepare to go to church. Why? What is so important about preparation that everyone needs to do it, especially Christians? Let's look into the importance of preparation in relation to our spiritual lives.



A. To Be Alert

As Christians we need to constantly be aware. Out of the ten virgins recorded in Matthew 25, five lost their awareness of time. They were not spiritually prepared, woke up at the last minute, and realized that they did not have enough oil. They

should have prepared well in advance and not at the last minute. By the time they woke up from their sleep, it was already too late. Their lack of preparation reflected that they did not have a heart of pursuit. The five wise virgins, however, were fully prepared and were thus able to see the Bridegroom. Likewise, if we are to see the Lord, we need to be constantly aware and to be alert to temptation. We need to be spiritually alert and constantly on the watch "for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" (Mt 24:42). If not, we may find that it is too late.



B. To Understand and Do Gods Will

Ofentimes we fail to understand God's will. Genesis 19 records that God was going to destroy Sodom, and that Lot failed to understand and be aware of this. Even when he was finally aware of the destruction of the city, his preparation was last-minute. Genesis 19:16 records how he lingered on and how the angels had to drag him and his family out of the city. If Lot had understood the Lord's will, he would have acted on it immediately. As sojourners in this world, we need to have a heart which understands God's timing. If we are spiritually prepared, we will be very watchful and will constantly prepare ourselves. Let us ask the Lord to help us understand His good will.



C. To Be Diligent

Proverbs 6:6–8 reminds us to observe and learn from the ant. The ant is the most diligent creation of the Lord. We need to be as diligent as the ant and not be lazy. As students, we often like to procrastinate, which, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means "to defer action, especially without good reason." Procrastination is a sign of laziness. It is not a characteristic that Christians should possess. As the elder James reminds us, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (Jas 4:13f). Instead, we should follow the advice of King Solomon: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecc 9:10).



Part 2

The Results of a Lack of Preparation



A. Living Life on the Edge

As a student, we think we can have a lot of fun during weekends until mid-terms come. However, if we fulfill our duty, we will do better and will not leave things until the last minute. If we plan ahead, we will not have to cram for our exams or pull all-nighters, just so that we can get everything done in time. Spiritually, if we do things last minute, we will barely make it. According to 1 Peter 4:18, "The righteous one is scarcely saved." If this is the case, then we must all the more live a life of full preparation, and not one that will barely make it.



B. Feeling Regret

Luke 24:1–3 records how some women wanted to embalm the body of Christ, but were too late. They tried to do this at the last minute and thus lost the opportunity. If we have a tendency to do things at the last minute we will feel pressure and anxiety. If we had to prepare a presentation for our class at the last minute, we would perspire when presenting because we would know that we were not prepared. We would keep on reading our notes and would not look up. Our audience and our professor would know that we were unprepared. In the end, we are the one who lose out. Don't live a life of regret. Instead, live out a fulfilling, meaningful and vibrant life.



C. Losing Salvation

The rich man recorded in Luke 16 did not show any love towards Lazarus while he was on earth. He lost his opportunity and consequently lost his salvation (Lk 16:25). When we have the opportunity to do good, do not withhold it (Prov 3:27f). Likewise, if we continuously procrastinate with our spiritual lives, putting off our spiritual preparation until tomorrow, we could end up losing our salvation too. Do not let this happen. Seize the day!



Part 3

The Secrets to Being Prepared



A. Prioritize

Time is unique. We are all given twenty-four hours a day to use as we wish. However, if we know how to prioritize our time and use it wisely, we will prevent ourselves from doing things at the last minute. According to Romans 5:3–4, the tribulations we encounter will produce certain characteristics. Sometimes our character comes from nature. We are genetically predisposed to certain characteristics, but sometimes our character comes from our habits. If we accumulate habits, it will gradually become our character. Being ill-prepared or procrastinating suggests that we allow ourselves to manage things at the last minute. Consequently, it becomes part of our character. We need to persuade ourselves to do things in advance and to gradually change ourselves to overcome procrastination. If we prioritize our time correctly, putting God as our focus, then everything else will fall nicely into place (Mt 6:33).



B. Plan Wisely

In today's fast-paced society, we emphasize the importance of saving time, introducing such things as fast food and drive-through. But, in our effort to save time, how do we actually use it? Having fellowship with our brothers and sisters is a good way to get to know each other and to help each other out. However, sometimes we just use the time talking for hours on end, without a spiritual focus. In addition, we may spend a lot of time sleeping and this results in doing things last minute. We also spend a lot of time and energy on entertainment, which is supposed to relax us, but we have gradually turned it into the goal of our lives. Psalm 90 reminds us to treasure time, to ask the Lord to "teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." We need to have the right concept in managing time. "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Ecc 3:1). There is a time for everything. God is a planner. He planned salvation for us. We need to learn to cherish the time the Lord has given to us and to use it fruitfully and wisely. Ask the Lord to give us wisdom to be able to plan wisely and to set up a schedule and follow it.



C. Use Every Minute Meaningfully

Since time is precious we need to use every minute in a most meaningful way. If we use time wisely, we will reap 10 times in return. Abraham Lincoln was very poor in his upbringing. Once, he went to the bookstore and asked the owner how much a certain book was, but it was expensive. He looked around and around but came back to the book. Then he asked the owner again how much the book was. The owner raised the price. Lincoln asked him why, to which the owner replied: "You're wasting my time. If you ask me again, I'll raise the price again." This little anecdote highlights the importance we place upon time, and how we should use every minute meaningfully. We need to make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil (Eph 5:15f). We often waste a lot of precious time because we use it in a meaningless way. We need to make the most use of our time and treasure the time that the Lord has given to us.

The Lord reminds us to be faithful to Him in all things. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Lk 16:10). Being faithful also applies to having the right concept of time. If we are able to use our time wisely, we will be entrusted with more responsibility. If we cannot manage our time well, then how are we supposed to manage our lives?



Part 4

How Do We Prepare?

Teaching Tips

Ask your students to write down a list of things they need to prepare beforehand, both mentally and spiritually, before going to college. Once they have finished, go through the list with them, adding any others that they may not have mentioned.



A. Mental Preparation

The following is a brief list of things students should mentally prepare for before setting foot on a college campus.

a. Define Your Plans

Make sure you have a set of well-structured plans before you head off to college. Ask yourself, "What do I want to do/develop/be in college?" Then, ask yourself how you are going to accomplish this. Make sure you think this through and make sure you have it written down somewhere! (Prov 16:3)

b. Be Prepared to be Homesick

Homesickness isn't just something that happens to little kids at camp. It's a natural reaction for anyone leaving familiar people and places they love. Instead of focusing on how much you miss your friends and family, think of how God has blessed your life through the people who love you. Write and tell the people you miss how much they mean to you. Homesickness is a sign that you've been given deep, lasting relationships in your life, and they are a precious gift from God.

c. Prepare to Study

College is different from high school. Be prepared to take notes in lectures and be prepared to work hard. Do your work well in advance: don't procrastinate!

d. Learn to Live with Others

College is usually the first time when we have to live with other people for a long period of time who are not part of our family. That means that we will encounter people whose habits may annoy us. We need to learn to be able to deal with such situations: learn to adapt, to talk things through, to share, and to love (2 Cor 2:14f).

e. Handle Your Freedom Responsibly

No matter how shy or outgoing you are, college presents one challenge every new student faces: dealing with newfound independence. When you're in high school, the freedom of college life—making your own schedule, choosing your own friends, and coming and going when you please—sounds awfully appealing. But with that new independence comes a lot of responsibility. When you're in charge of yourself, everything from laundry to choosing a major becomes your job. Independence, however, also means making choices that will affect the rest of your life. Once you're on your own, it's tempting to do the things you may have said no to in high school. But the consequences of these decisions can result in a loss of your spiritual life. There are, however, things you can do before going to college that can prepare you for independence. For example, if you don't already have your own bank account,

ask your parents to help you set one up. Then, see how you can manage your own money for the next few months before you head off to college. Also, help to do the laundry at home. This will prepare you well for doing your own laundry! And learn to cook too. You don't want to starve yourself through college!



B. Spiritual Preparation

The following is a brief list of things students should spiritually prepare for before setting foot on the college campus.

a. Let God Guide the Journey

Focusing right away in college on what we want for ourselves is important, but more important is discovering the path that God has in store for us. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). God wants us to succeed and wants us to be happy. He wants us to have an abundant life. In order for this to happen we need to put all of our trust in God. We don't need to worry because He is in control. Matthew 6:30–34 tells us to trust our Lord Jesus Christ completely, even when we feel that nothing could possibly help us through our situation in life. We have to recognize that He is our almighty and all-loving Father, and He is always ready and willing to carry us through whatever comes our way.

b. Get Ready to Grow in Our Faith

Attending college is the beginning of newfound independence. It is also the beginning of our own independent faith with our Lord. No longer do we have our parents telling us to go to church anymore. It's up to us. We need to be prepared to go to college with the aim of increasing our faith, not of destroying it. Be prepared to be challenged in faith and be prepared to discuss life as a Christian. When we do, our understanding of God grows and our faith becomes stronger. In fact, our faith really begins to become more and more our own—not just an extension of what our parents or friends believe. As apostle Paul said, we need to continue to reach ahead "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12–14). Let college be the beginning of a beautiful, strong relationship with our Heavenly Father.

c. Prepare Our Heart, Soul, and Mind

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in

the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 20–21). It is important to build ourselves up, particularly before we are left on our own. As Christians living in this world we are constantly bombarded with temptations and tests. Our faith must be strong enough to stand through such tests. In our daily lives, it is vital that we study the word of God more so that we can stand firm. Building up our faith with the Lord's word is to read it, internalize it, and to live it out. It is particularly important that we prepare our hearts well before we head off to college, because we need to understand our belief so that we will be able to stand firm when we encounter different trials and tests (1 Pet 1:6f). An important part of building ourselves up is to cast off our old selves and put on the new man (Col 3:9f). Renewal comes through knowledge of the image of God. The more we renew ourselves and build ourselves up in faith, the more it becomes a lifeguard to us. If our faith is not built up we will easily fall into temptation and will be unable to stand firm. Ephesians 6:10–17 reminds us to put on the armor of God to "stand against the wiles of the devil." Note how apostle Paul does not tell us to put on only one part of the armor, but the "whole armor." We need to be fully protected and well equipped in order to fight this spiritual battle, shielding our faith "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."

d. Look for the Mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 21)

Without the mercy of the Lord, it is virtually impossible for us to keep our faith. If it were not for the mercy of the Lord we would not be able to live even for a day. God's mercy is vital to the survival of our faith. We need to look for His mercy until the very day we depart from the world. Hebrews 12:1–3 encourages us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." This means that since the Lord started our race for us, He will also help us to finish it. We need to hold on to that promise and continue running on this heavenly journey. Do not let our environment, our problems, our friends, our family, or our weaknesses weigh us down. Instead, ask the Lord to fill us with His spirit so that we have the strength and the energy to carry on. We need to continually look to the Lord, the giver of life, for hope, especially as we begin our college years.

Most importantly, we need to keep our spiritual life strong. Develop habits for prayer and Bible study we can take with us to college. And ask family and friends to pray for us as we take this next step in life.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



- 1 Why is it important to be prepared?
- 2 What are the drawbacks of a lack of preparation? In your opinion, what do you foresee as the most dangerous result of a lack of preparation? Why?
- 3 How would you use every minute meaningfully?

LIFE APPLICATION



Part A: Making God a 7-Day Thing

The worst time of the school year must be exam time, when tension fills the hallways and elevators. It's the time of year when the library seems to turn itself into the local shopping mall during the holidays: the hours are extended, the crowd triples, and finding a place to sit is almost impossible if you're not one of the first hundred to enter.

In college, I dreaded finals week and found myself nearly becoming a different person when it came around. I would unhook the phone and store up a week's supply of canned and preprocessed foods. Outfitted with my study cap and ear plugs, I was set to move into the library. The stress would bring out the worst in me, while everything else in life seemed to be put on hold for a week or two.

I had a friend, however, who was always so calm and cheerful during finals. I figured she was well-disciplined with her work during the school year and did not need to cram during finals. But then I couldn't understand how that could be since she was very involved with church.

On one occasion I asked her how she handled the pressure. She replied by asking me how my time with God was. "Fine," I said to myself. "I keep the Ten Commandments and attend Sabbath service every week. I spend time with God when I'm in church, I say a one-minute bedtime prayer each day, and I do some occasional Bible reading." At the time I thought my faith had a pretty good direction, since at least I kept the Sabbath. "What more can you ask of a college student?" I thought.

The problem with this attitude, I realize in retrospect, was that I took God for granted and really neglected my spiritual life. At the time, I went on with life the way I thought it should go and stressed and worried about the unknown tomorrow. I tried everything I could to make that unknown tomorrow more manageable without much success. But God knows my weakness and wanted to help me overcome it.

During my junior year in college, I became roommates with another sister-in-Christ, Terry. My old roommate had graduated and moved out; Terry was moving out of the dorms and looking for a place. Both of us were seriously considering the option of living with non-Christian friends. Although we went to church together every week and met in our campus fellowship once a week, our friendship remained only at that level. We did not know each other beyond the cordial sisterly friendship we shared, so I was somewhat skeptical about becoming roommates. Thank God, however, that someone who had greater conviction than either of us encouraged us to grasp the opportunity. Little did I know how having a roommate of the same faith would help me deal with the stress of school and life's other surprises.

After Terry moved in, we went grocery shopping together, took turns cooking, and went to church together. Above all, though, we decided to set a prayer time. Every night at eleven, I'd hear, "Hey, Trace. Ready?"

"Yeah," I would reply, shut my textbook, and go over to Terry.

We would kneel before an old brown vinyl couch and first share the joys and troubles we had experienced that day. Then we would set an alarm clock and hide it under the couch so that its ring fifteen minutes later would not startle us. After praying, we would chat some more about our prayers or concerns before turning in.

Prior to that time, I did not really have a consistent prayer habit. Sure, I would say a short prayer before turning in, and I had tried on numerous occasions to set a more consistent prayer schedule, but I could not maintain a five-minute prayer routine for more than a few days. Paul described this spiritual struggle in Romans 7:18–19: "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it."

It had been so easy to just thank God quickly for a smooth day and fall into bed, or just feel too tired to pray. Because I would give in to this battle between flesh and spirit without a fight, God had been a part of my life only in situations directly concerned with him. That is, for me school had been school and church had been church—two separate worlds. I did not even realize that I was living in two different worlds until my life at school and my life as a Christian began to merge.

With more consistent time devoted to God, He gradually became a part of my everyday life. When I rushed from class to class, I'd stop to take a deep breath and thank God for a beautiful day. When I bumped into a friend on the street, I'd thank God for such wonderful friends. When I walked home, I'd find myself humming hymns. And when exams came, I wasn't as stressed about getting good grades because I had something far better. All I had to do was my part, study, and not worry about the result. I felt God's "goodness and mercy" (Psalm 23:6) every day; I began to feel what it means to say to God in prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." Feeling God's grace upon me, I naturally praised and gave glory to His name.

Moreover, keeping the Sabbath became more enjoyable. I wanted to listen to sermons and attend senior class because I was learning so much about God. I then realized that this was what my calm, Christian friend tried to tell me when I asked her how she so gracefully handled stress and pressure. The key was spending time with God consistently!

These changes did not come easily, even with a Christian roommate. We really had to make an effort in the beginning. We tried praying in the morning, but with different schedules, we woke up at different times. We tried praying individually, but without the accountability it was hard for us to keep meaningful prayers each day. After trying different times we decided that 11pm was the most feasible.

At first using the alarm clock seemed silly. But we wanted to make sure that we prayed at least the length of time we set for ourselves, so that we spent at least fifteen uninterrupted minutes with God. Sometimes it was hard for me to do; when my mind wandered, I would force myself to kneel there until the alarm rang. After a while, however, meaningful and regular prayer became easier. This was how I began to experience God outside of church.

Don't get me wrong—prayer never comes easy. Even now I often struggle to put aside my work and kneel down. After I kneel down to pray, I still struggle to focus my wandering thoughts and communicate with God. I always tell myself, however, that time belongs to God, and no matter how hard it is, I have to try to devote it to Him. Just as Exodus 23:19 tells us to offer up the first fruits to God, we must offer up our best time to God and cultivate a daily relationship with Him.

A consistent communion with God will help us bring God out of the church service setting and into our everyday lives. We have to keep trying to maintain it until we develop the habit of talking to God regularly, then daily, then with increasing dura-

tion. We want to keep this relationship because we need it. It brings joy to living in this world. It helps us bounce back from low points in life. It helps us withstand the temptations from Satan, who encircles us. It helps us be more sensitive to the instruction of the Holy Spirit and the will of God. Finally, we will experience what it means for the "God of hope to fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit [we] may abound in hope" (Rom 15:13).

(Higher Ground, Fall 1997, True Jesus Church, U.S.A.)

Questions to think about:

1. What do you think was the key in helping this sister establish her relationship with God? (Consistent time in prayer, Christian roommate)
2. "Don't get me wrong—prayer never comes easy. Even now I often struggle to put aside my work and kneel down." Do you come across this same struggle? How can you overcome it?
3. It is not always feasible for us to be able to have a Christian roommate. What other methods could we employ to help guard our faith? (Keep in close contact with brothers and sisters from church, have a prayer buddy, set up a prayer network with other youths in church, fellowship)

Part B: Making God a Part of Our Life

The following are excerpts from brothers and sisters talking about their faith experiences while in college. (Their names have been changed.)

Case 1: Ashley

I believe I received many blessings from God during the four years of college. The greatest blessing of all was to grow and to be rooted in faith during those years. I was also wonderfully blessed with brothers and sisters from whom I learned a great deal and through whom I saw the kindness, gentleness, acceptance and love of God. I will just tell you a few examples of how my four years of college were not wasted away.

Before going to college, I had heard of the many attractions and temptations that may draw someone away from God. At the time my faith was simple. I fasted and prayed at the NYTS about it. God's blessing was truly wonderful.

Another blessing is honoring the Sabbath. I had the simple belief that I would not do work on the Sabbath, regardless of how much work had to be done. If a friend requested to meet on the Sabbath, I would decline. If there were a club activity, I

would request for an alternate day, even though I was usually quite accommodating and seldom spoke up to request for personal convenience. God had truly blessed me beyond my expectations. Even though I gave up opportunities for activities that may strengthen my resume, God blessed me so that those opportunities eventually became inconsequential.

I believe many of us who have gone through those years have all come to the same conclusion—that is, to have faith in God and entrust our worries to Him. From our experience we have come to know God as a faithful God. He will lead His children on the right path as long as they follow Him and listen. We also know from experience that although difficult the times may be, there are always lessons to learn from each struggle. God wants us to be perfect like He is. He will not let us down.

Finally, having spiritual friends and a strong fellowship allowed me to experience the sweetness in the word of God. I can never forget the joy of sitting around the small coffee table simply speaking about the grace of God and the word of God. The wonderful thing is, even though we all had very dissimilar backgrounds, we were able to come together, share a common belief and rejoice in the pure word of God, simply because we have the spiritual brotherhood as our common bond. This experience has not only helped my faith, it has also helped keep me rooted and allowed me to continue growing even after college, simply by remembering those times of joy.

Case 2: Kelly

Well, college was really where my spirituality started to grow. My parents were no longer always there and when I realized that they were gone, I also realized how dependent I was. I mean, no longer could I look in the mirror and be that arrogant girl who thought she knew so much. I was scared and that's really why I started to pray and read the Bible. In a foreign place, God was the only one really familiar and I saw that He was the one who could calm my fears. It began little by little ... praying 15 minutes a day developed into 20 and so forth. I think God helps us along when we start trying. You sort of realize, hey, 15 minutes isn't bad. In fact, sometimes it's too soon. Let's try 20. Here are some other ways I kept my faith going.

Singing hymns—always having one in my head and singing them while I walked to school. It made me feel God walking next to me and once, I literally felt Him walking me home from class!

Keeping verses in your head—memorizing them at night and reciting them when you go to sleep. Then, when you wake up, it's still there and it's as if you've woken up in the arms of God!

Brothers and sisters—what would I have done without them?

But keeping God always permeated throughout my day was tough. Once the honeymoon stage was gone, it was hard work trying to keep the desire for God strong.

Case 3: Fred

Problems I have encountered mostly deal with self-control. I remember freshman year I got really carried away with video games and the high-speed internet ... sometimes staying up until 6am even though it was so empty. I guess slowly it occurred to me that a lot of things that I indulged in do not satisfy at all ... most just leave me more and more empty. It seems so obvious now, but truly Jesus is the only one who can satisfy.

I remember my freshman year. I do not think I was very prepared for college. Even though I was a counselor at the SSC just before, when exposed to the environment, mostly your lusts take over, especially without parents to keep you in check.

I think the hardest thing for me was prayer my freshman year. I had a stranger for a roommate, I was ashamed of the Holy Spirit, and prayed secretly and quietly, as if I was doing something wrong. So my habits I had established my senior year in high school for spiritual cultivation slowly crumbled, and I was often feeling very hypocritical.

My routine today is a culmination of learning things the hard way. Nowadays, after I brush my teeth, the first thing I do is to kneel down and pray. I feel it is important to pray long enough to really feel God's spirit moving, or the whole day will go awry. At night I also calm my heart, read a chapter of the Bible, and pray an extended time. This is usually right before I sleep, like 12am or 1am. I am also currently feeling the necessity to pray in the afternoons after classes, because so many things, so many temptations can grab you in a couple of hours of time. So I am starting to pray three times a day now.

I think the most important thing in college is to be grounded in Bible reading and prayer. This especially helps when you have a roommate of the same faith. It is also important to have a good support group like a campus fellowship where we

can meet and share our experiences and struggles. Truly, Christians will have the BEST Bible studies in college. Everyone is close to each other, knows each other, knows where each other comes from, because age is such a powerful commonality.

Questions to think about:

1. What were the common struggles that Ashley, Kelly and Fred encountered? Do you think these are the common struggles that Christians face in college? (Maintaining one's faith, praying, reading the Bible, keeping one's integrity.)
2. Make a list of areas that you think may cause you problems in college. For each one, write down a solution on how you could overcome it. What do you foresee to be your biggest struggle?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



*Sing hymn 358: Breathe on Me.
Preparing our hearts before we go to college is vital if we want to lead a successful student life. Knowing our goals, our values and our vision will enable us to lead a life of integrity. We need to open our hearts so that our Lord can come in and dwell in it, filling us with His wonderful spirit and taking full control.*

Lesson 3

Witnessing in College

Listed Scriptures

Mt 4:20-25; Mt 28:18ff; Mk 16:15-20; Acts 1

Lesson Aim

- 1) To be equipped with specific steps to keeping one's faith in college.
- 2) To be doers of the faith and shine forth God's light.
- 3) To be prayer warriors and have prayer partners in college.

Memory Verse

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Daniel 7-9

BIBLE BACKGROUND



Prior to His ascension, the Lord Jesus gave His disciples an important commission. When the Holy Spirit comes, they shall be His witnesses to the end of the world. They are to propagate the good tidings to the entire human race, so all will come to believe in Him and receive the salvation of God (Acts 1:1-11).

Our Lord Jesus Himself took on this great task. When He came to this world, He knew His mission and worked unceasingly towards attaining that goal. He even told His disciples that He "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). From the outset, He knew that He had come to save mankind and His goal was to serve. This strong sense of responsibility was

evident through the great works He carried out. He knew that He had come to do the will of the Father (Jn 6:38). Moreover, He told His disciples that His food “is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work” (Jn 4:34).

The Lord Jesus came to earth to fulfill and accomplish the work of God (Jn 17:4). Even though He felt the cup was too bitter and He wanted it to pass, ultimately, He gave up His own will and surrendered to the good will of God (Mt 26:39). While on earth, He went about all cities and villages preaching the gospel of the kingdom, loving the unloved, touching the untouchable (Mt 9:13; Mk 1:40–42). In order to save more souls, He worked diligently and tirelessly, often going without food and sleep (Mt 8:19f; 21:18f). He walked before His sheep and laid down His life for them (Jn 10:4, 11–15). Moreover, He sacrificed His own life and suffered on the cross to save the souls of the world. His spirit of sacrifice and unconditional love is something we need to emulate as Christians today.

In addition, before and immediately after performing miracles and other great acts, the Lord Jesus would always spend time in prayer (Mt 14:22–25; Mk 1:35). He would always go to a solitary place to pray, to renew His strength and to ask for the Father’s guidance.

The Lord set a perfect example for us to follow. He demonstrated what it truly means to love others—to grant eternal life. Are we willing to share this precious gospel with those around us so that they too will receive the gift of life?

W A R M U P



Give out candy or other treats to every single one of your students. Then ask them:

- How do you feel about receiving a treat?
- If I decided to be selfish and keep these treats to myself, or perhaps only share it with one or two of you, how would the rest of you feel?
- How is this like sharing the gospel to others?

Since you were all quite happy to receive these treats, think how joyful people would be if they were to receive the gospel of life! Today, we’ll be looking into the importance of sharing our faith with other people.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Sharing Our Faith

Evangelism is the act of sharing the Lord Jesus with people who don’t know Him. It is spreading the gospel—the good news of life.

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn.” (Isaiah 61:1–2)

When the Lord Jesus first came out to preach the gospel, He went to His home synagogue to proclaim the gospel of salvation. In Isaiah 61:1–2 He briefly explained the purpose of His mission and the message of His salvation.



A. To Carry Out the Commission of our Lord Jesus

The Lord Jesus gave us two great commissions. The first is to go out to preach the gospel (Mk 16:15–18) and the second is to pastor His sheep (Jn 21:15–18). From the outset, the Lord Jesus knew that He had come to save mankind, and His goal was to serve. He passed on this great commission to us, commanding us to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19f). Apostle Paul also reminds us of the importance of preaching the gospel and that we have nothing to boast of when we do it (1 Cor 9:16f). It is therefore our Christian duty to go and pass on this good news to the nations.



B. To Be Freed From the Bondage of Sin

The Lord Jesus came into this world to release us from our own bondage. What is this bondage? It is the invisible state of being a prisoner. That is, we are imprisoned by our own sorrow, heresy, and other false beliefs. Through our bad habits or wish to enjoy popularity and a sense of accomplishment, we find that we have been entrapped, without even realizing it. The Lord Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:32). If a person knows the truth of Jesus he shall be set free from his own desires, greediness, bad habits, and also from the heresies of others. The gospel of Jesus Christ will first give us the ability to overcome ourselves and be released from the bondage of our own physical desires. However, it is not that easy to be released from this bondage. It requires an external force—the power of Jesus Christ.

There is a story about a child who fell into water and was about to drown. After this child fell into the water many people had different reactions. Some said, "Whose pitiful child is this? His parents will surely be broken hearted." But they did not go and help. Others told the child to move his arms, kick his legs and keep his nose above water. How much assistance was this to the child? None. Likewise, in this world there are a lot of people like that. They say, "This world is so pitiful and sinful." Yet their words are not helping the world change. This is just like teaching the drowning child how to swim. It doesn't help. Finally, a person jumped into the water and pulled him out. This was helpful and saved the child. Today, we are like the drowning child. We do not have the ability to save ourselves. Other people and philosophies do not help us at all. What we need is the Lord Jesus who came from heaven and jumped into the sea to rescue us. That is the only way that we can be rescued from this sea of desires.

C. To Be Released from Sorrow

Living in this world, we have many sorrows which weigh us down. Imparting the words of life to others will enable them to be released from their sorrow. There was one sister who had wanted to end her life before she received Christ. She had lost two sons in an accident, and was injured herself. She didn't want to be a burden on her oldest son. However, since she came to know the truth, she has a joy and peace that she never knew before. Moreover, she no longer needed a cane to help her walk and her sorrows vanished.

We need to impart the gospel of life to people so that the Lord Jesus will release them from their sorrow. Only the Lord Jesus can fill their hearts with peace and joy

(Jn 15:11; Phil 4:7). The Lord Jesus said in Luke 4:18 that He has been anointed "to preach the gospel to the poor." The word "poor" does not necessarily refer to the physical sense, but the emotional state of mind. The Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to release us from our emotional entanglements.



D. To Establish a Correct Concept of Life

We have to preach in order to recover the sight of the blind (Lk 4:18). This is the wisdom of truth. The gospel must be preached to establish a correct concept of life, so that in the midst of this endless pursuit of vanity, we can clearly show others what is the real value of life. Wealth, status, marriage—these are what the world pursues today. But the Lord allows those who believe in Him to see differently. The world teaches us to condemn those who have wronged against us. Yet the Lord Jesus gives us the strength to forgive and love those who have harmed us. How can we have this same vision as the Lord? We need to empty ourselves, be humble and be ready to see the Lord Jesus. Let us truly be free and be able to overcome pressures from the environment. Let us go out and recover the sight of the blind so that they too will be able to have the same vision as our Heavenly Father.



E. To Be Renewed by the Holy Spirit

The gospel of Jesus Christ is given to proclaim the Lord's merciful grace. In the New Testament era, everything starts off anew. How wonderful is this news? Many times we wish we could start fresh again. But we know it is impossible to go back in time. However, the message of Jesus Christ will make this possible, for in Christ Jesus all things are new. The old has passed and Jesus Christ has given us another chance to be renewed (2 Cor 5:17). Our mission is to pass on the wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus so that all nations will be renewed through His Holy Spirit.



F. To Grow in Faith

When we share the wonderful words of God with other people, we grow in faith too. By sharing, we learn more about the gospel, bringing us to a deeper understanding of His will and a closer relationship with Him. There is a famous saying which states that when you spread love to others, you can't help but get a little on yourself. Likewise, when we spread the gospel to others, not only are we bringing life to them, but we are also bringing benefit to our own spiritual life. Let us continue to go forth and tell of the wonderful things He's done: "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works" (Ps 9:1).



Part 2

Secrets to Evangelism

Many people often ask what the secrets to evangelism are. What must we do to be able to preach? The only secret way to evangelism is to pray and share the word of God. For it is only in sharing that people hear, and it is only in hearing that they will be able to partake of salvation. Below is a 5-step way to evangelism.

a. **Cast Our Nets (Lk 5:4f; Mt 4:18)**

Casting out our nets is to evangelize. The more we cast out our nets, the more fish we will get. Whether or not we are victorious, we must preach the gospel. There is a testimony of how a pastor decided to preach to the person next to him on the plane. At first, the pastor was hesitant in talking to that person, but he felt that it was his duty to share the wonderful gospel with anyone who would listen. Consequently, the person to whom this pastor preached ended up bringing 250 people in two years to the truth. Praise God! If the pastor never opened his mouth to preach, that person would not have been able to hear the truth, nor bring others to believe.

b. **Mend Our Nets (Mt 4:21)**

Mending our nets is to have spiritual cultivation. The nets refer to our deeds and our faith. The word of God is complete. We are imperfect but preach the perfect gospel. We need to, therefore, fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit so that we will exhibit Christ-like behavior. We need to display the good and perfect image of Jesus Christ so that all those who see us will want to come to know the Lord.

c. **Wash Our Nets (Lk 5:2; Eph 5:26; Ps 119:105)**

Washing our nets signifies the need to cleanse and purify our hearts and souls with the word of God. While living in this world, our minds and thoughts will often be tainted. We need to renew our minds daily through meditating on God's word. Our inner being needs to be transformed so that we are clean and pure to be able to present ourselves to the world. We must resort to winning others with our conduct, which is the character and conduct of Jesus Christ.

d. **Sun-dry Our Nets (Ez 26:5)**

Drying our nets out in the sun shows that we need to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so that we can shine the light of God. We need to allow God's spirit to live and work in us so that other people can see the glory and power of God. We are the light of the world. We need to let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Mt 5:14–16; 6:22f).

e. **Pull Our Nets (Lk 5:6f)**

When they caught a great number of fish, the disciples had to signal to their partners in the other boat to help them as they were unable to pull the nets themselves. In the same manner, we need help from others to save souls. We need the strength to pull together so that we can win more souls. Unity, after all, is strength (Eph 4:1–3; Ps 133:1).



Part 3

Evangelism: Just Do It!

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things'" (Romans 10:14–15).

In order for the church to grow, we need to do our part and spread the good news. As the above verses suggest, people will not be able to receive the grace of God unless they have heard the good news. We need to totally dedicate ourselves to this important work. We need to equip ourselves and be motivated. Ask the Lord to fill us with love so that we will have compassion on those around us.

Can you think of some practical ways to evangelize? Discuss with a partner some effective ways that you and the church could implement to spread the gospel. Write them down and share them with the class.

1. Ways to evangelize
2. How am I going to carry this out?

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



- 1 Out of the 5 steps (Secrets to Evangelism), is there one which you think is the most important? Why?
- 2 Which part of the above 5-step plan to evangelism do you need to work on the most? Why?

LIFE APPLICATION



Part A: Testimonies of Evangelism

Here are some testimonies of how some believers shared the gospel with those around them.

Case 1: God's Love

"When we have the love of God in us, we must know to pass it on" (1 Jn 4:16). During her internship, one sister saw a Bible on her director's desk and asked him to attend a Bible study. The director thought he had nothing to lose by coming. At the end of the Bible study, when they knelt down to pray, the director was afraid and vowed never to come back again. However, the sister prayed for him and the next week, the director couldn't wait to attend Bible study and church services. He felt that God was in their midst and he started to pray sincerely every night. Not long after, this director received the Holy Spirit and was later baptized into the church. He has now dedicated his life to serving God.

Case 2: God's Timing

God works in miraculous ways. Sometimes, it may not be the right time. But if we entrust everything to the Lord, He will bring His sheep to Him according to His own timing. One sister tried to preach to a classmate during her freshman year in college. However, this classmate didn't want anything to do with religion, so this sister decided not to pursue it. A few years later, after graduation, this sister met up with this classmate again. The classmate had been going through a difficult period, and was encountering a lot of personal problems. During the summer, she stayed with this sister who counseled her every day. Eventually, this classmate was touched by the love of this sister and started to attend Bible study. The Lord moved this classmate and she later became a member of our church. Praise God!

Case 3: God's Providence

It is sometimes through the interactions we have with others that give us the opportunity to bring them to Christ. God always provides for His people, as the following testimony shows. A brother was introduced to his classmate's friend during his first year in college. They sat together in the same math class that first quarter and soon became friends. However, after that first quarter, they did not have a class together. It was not until the end of their second year that they met up again. The brother needed a roommate for next year, and the friend also thought he might need accommodation, since his original plans had fallen through. They exchanged numbers and went their separate ways. Late in August, this brother called the friend, saying that he was going to live with another brother and needed a third roommate. This friend decided to move in with them. It was hard for this friend to avoid the topic of God or church as weekly campus fellowships were held in their apartment. He began to learn about God, salvation, and the Holy Spirit. Every week, he learned a little more about God and through the help of the brothers and sisters, he went from doubt to praying fervently for the Holy Spirit. This friend was eventually baptized and is now a fervent worker of God.

Questions to think about:

1. Can you think of any other testimonies of evangelism? Share them with the class.
2. Write your own testimony of evangelism and be prepared to share it with the rest of the class.

Part B: "Behold, Now is the Accepted Time..."

You and a partner have just finished working on a class presentation, and you think about how nice it would be if he could come to church. You suddenly remember that there's an evangelical service at church this weekend. What do you do? A million thoughts run through your head—most of them a series of "what if's." What if he thinks I'm weird? What if he's already a Christian? What if this puts a strain on our "working relationship"? What if people at church think he's my boyfriend? What if he's scared by the way we pray? Within seconds, the train of doubt-ridden questions gives way to more definite assumptions. He's probably not interested anyway. He's probably an atheist, and he's probably busy, too—it is Friday night after all. Do you:

- a) Silently pack up your books as you internally lament the tragedy of the situation, tell your classmate you'll see him in class next week, and head back to your dorm; or
- b) Swallow your nervousness, nonchalantly ask your classmate what his plans

are for the weekend, and prepare to turn the conversation into an invitation to Bible study?

For many of us, it's probably less of a hassle to pick a).

WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

When I was little, I would occasionally read those choose-your-own-adventure books where you could pick to read from a number of different scenarios. Depending upon your choices, you could wind up with a completely different story and ending than someone else who read the same book. Admittedly, I always cheated whenever I read those books. If it seemed like the story was heading in a bad direction, I would go back and carefully re-read as many different choices as I could until I ended on a brighter note.

When it comes to spreading the gospel, we don't always have the luxury of being able to sit back and debate the pros and cons of a certain situation, or the ins and outs of how to go about preaching. A lot of times, we need to make decisions on the spot, which we, more often than not, have no way of reversing.

Of course, we can try to comfort ourselves after missed preaching opportunities with the thought that there's always the possibility of a second chance. For instance, you might run into an acquaintance you weren't able to preach to before and whom you never thought you would see again.

However, instead of consoling ourselves for bygones, it's better to remind ourselves that we must make the most of our present opportunities. So if hesitation is preventing us from spreading the precious gospel, we should try to think in terms of what we are going to do in the here and now. As 2 Corinthians 6:2 states, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

If we dwell in the past while neglecting the urgency of the present—if only I had done this, tomorrow I'm going to do that—no action occurs. We must also be honest with ourselves, since excuses often unconsciously masquerade as legitimate reasons. For example, we could and should try to use judgment and discretion when it comes to finding an opportune time to share the gospel.

But we must also be careful that the desire to come across a better moment isn't just an excuse not to preach. If we keep waiting for the "ideal" preaching conditions, odds are we'll end up waiting forever. Distinguishing between reason and excuse takes a hearty amount of self-reflection and the spiritual wisdom that comes from none other than God.

GO FOR IT WITH GOD'S SPIRIT

It there's one thing I've learned over the years in terms of trying to preach to classmates, it's that no matter how hard I try, I can never predict God.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord" (Isa 55:8). Knowing God's sovereignty, it seems almost shockingly irreverent that one would dare to predict or second-guess the thoughts and plans of the Creator of the entire universe.

Yet, we do it all the time. Oftentimes, before we've even spoken a word of God's grace and salvation aloud, we've already said something in our hearts like, "Oh, she'd never accept the truth" or "Why bother, no one ever believes anyway." Such defeating assumptions not only place doubt on God's power to make possible the impossible, but also place human logic above God's. Whether we mean to or not, we are sending God the message: I know better than You do.

Once, in my freshman year of college, I was eating in the dining hall with two other classmates, and they started talking about their plans for the coming weekend. Since it was the beginning of the school year, none of us knew each other very well, and I wasn't sure what they thought of Christianity, let alone whether they'd be interested in coming to church with me. I mentioned how I was planning to go to Bible study and church that Friday and Saturday. I hesitated for a split-second before I went on, and then I decided just to go for it.

"You're both more than welcome to come with me," I continued. Then, I gave a brief spiel about how our services are usually run. Neither of them was scared off by my proposal, but they didn't seem particularly interested either. Oh well, I thought, maybe some other time—at least I tried. To my surprise though, as we were leaving the cafeteria, one of my classmates suddenly turned to me and asked, "Hey, can I come with you to Bible study this weekend?"

FOLLOW HIS LEAD

Preaching about God to others helped me to learn more about Him myself. The more I tried to invite my friends and classmates to church, the more I realized that God indeed works in mysterious ways and often in ways that are contrary to what human reasoning would prescribe.

For instance, last semester, a church worker from out of town was scheduled to give a sermon during one of our Sabbath services. Hoping to use this "special" occasion as a means to plug our church, I decided to email some of my classmates with

an invite. However, there were a few people on my email list I wasn't sure about. Two of the girls had been unable to come to Bible study several times, and eventually I assumed that their busyness was a polite way of saying, thanks, but no thanks. Another potential prospect was a classmate whose email address I so happened to have, but whom I had just recently met.

As I was debating about whether or not I should include them as part of the informal list I had drawn up, it occurred to me that maybe I should kneel down and pray. My first thought, though, was whether I should bother praying about something so seemingly trivial as sending out a few emails. Why not just boldly shoot those invites out across the waves of the internet and not look back? Right away though, I realized that I should put my trust in Him even with the "little" things, since anything we do for God is never really trivial to begin with. Freshly humbled, I knelt down and prayed for God to let His spirit work in the hearts of those who had not yet received the true gospel. I also prayed that I could remember my own role—as an unworthy vessel merely planting the seeds of the gospel. Without God, those seeds could never grow.

Interestingly enough, the only ones who were able to make it to service were the ones I had been most unsure of. What's more, the classmate I had been almost positive wouldn't be interested actually brought a friend with her as well!

BE BOLD

Just as much as we need God to help us overcome our timidity, we also need God when we are feeling bold. Being a person who's usually not too afraid of coming across as "different" in the eyes of my peers doesn't make me any less in need of God's assistance. As Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans, "So as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believe" (Rom 1:15–16).

Paul was obviously an apostle who preached the gospel without fear or shame, yet he was careful to recognize that spreading the news of salvation was possible not because of his own courage but because of the power and mercy of God. Furthermore, I've learned that regardless of the outcome and whether or not any friends or classmates ended up visiting or joining our church, I should still continue to do my part.

If there are times when I feel discouraged and it seems like no one is interested in the gospel, I think of Daniel's three friends before they were thrown into the fiery

furnace. They were able to proclaim that they could accept whatever fate God had in store for them. Regardless of whether this meant their deliverance or their death, their faith never wavered. How much more, then, should we be relentless to proclaim the truth no matter what the possible return or lack thereof!

TELL OF THE WONDERFUL THINGS HE'S DONE

When we're under potentially nerve-racking or pressure-inducing circumstances, clinging onto our own logic often gives us a momentary, if not false, sense of safety amidst confusion. Yet, God wants us to do just the opposite. He wants us to take that leap into the unknown, so long as we don't forget another crucial step – trusting in and asking for His guidance along the way. In other words, we must have faith. Although easier said than done, preaching shouldn't be a high-anxiety experience. Just as with other types of holy work, sharing God's words with others should be a natural and pleasant extension of our genuine desire to repay His love. Just as with serving God and others, spreading the gospel should not feel like something we do because we have to, but something we do because we want to.

What's usually our first instinct after, say, hearing something interesting on the news? Witnessing something during the day that was absolutely hysterical? Experiencing a random and unusual act of kindness? Most of us would probably go and tell someone. Awe, laughter, thanksgiving, and other forms of joy are often best when they are shared. In the words of Jesus, who lights a lamp to put it under a basket? Doesn't it make more sense to put it on a lampstand so all can benefit from its light?

Let's say a complete stranger saved you from an awful death by pushing you out of the way of a moving train but, in doing so, lost her own life. I'm sure we would not only feel indebted to this individual for the rest of our lives, but we would also be singing her praises to anyone within earshot.

COMPELLED AND CONVICTED

Now consider the gospel, which literally means "good news" and is actually the greatest news in the world: that we have been saved from the most horrible of deaths—eternal suffering in hell. Shouldn't we not only feel grateful but also compelled to proclaim the news of Jesus Christ our Savior to anyone and everyone?

I must admit, there have been times when an opportunity to share God's message has come up and I didn't act, not out of fear but because I was spiritually weak. Worse yet is talking about God while feeling low in spirit and in heart. Each word sounds more and more hollow as the minutes drag by, and you think, this must be

what God hears when we pray to Him half-heartedly. On the flip side, there are the times when I reflect upon all the blessings in my life, when I feel that closeness to Him in prayer, when I experience the joy of fellowship, and I cannot help but wish that others could taste that same sweetness.

This must be what David felt when he wrote Psalm 9:1, "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works." Not only is testifying of God's grace a way of preaching, but it is also a way of praising Him.

We need many things when we preach the words of God, from a sound understanding of the truth and the knowledge that we are merely God's instruments to the boldness to speak out. However, all these qualities are useless if we do not also speak with true conviction. As Paul states in 1 Thessalonians 1:5, "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance."

We can have all the biblical knowledge in the world, and maybe insults harmlessly roll off our backs like water, but if we do not possess that full assurance of what Jesus has done and will continue to do in our lives, our words may have about as much impact as silence. Spreading the gospel is not an easy task, as even the most seasoned of evangelists will attest. And no matter how hard we may try to find one, there is no exact formula we can use to ensure the best results. Yet, it can be made a less stressful and more pleasant experience when we try to reflect upon not only how we preach but also why we preach. Surely, the sound of such heartfelt testaments of God's grace must be music to His ears.

(Manna, "The Lord's Teachings," Issue 44 Apr-Jun 2004)

Questions to think about:

1. Have you ever struggled to preach the gospel? What were the reasons behind those struggles? Did you manage to overcome them? How?
2. The author relates to us how she knelt down to pray for God's spirit to work, before she sent out her email invitations. Have you ever prayed for a particular friend so that the Lord will open his/her heart? Relate your experiences to the class.
3. What do you see as your biggest obstacle to preaching the gospel? How do you think you can overcome this?

Part C: Be a Prayer Warrior!

Prayer is an integral part of serving God. We cannot live without it, nor can we serve our Heavenly Father without seeking out His will. Apostle Paul was a praying apostle. He would constantly pray for others and would ask others to remember him and the work of evangelism in their prayers (Col 4:3f; 2 Thess 3:1; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Cor 12:8f).

One sister testified of how during one NYTS, she went through the names of all the members in her campus fellowship and asked God to help them in some way or another. When she went through her list again, she decided to thank God for that particular individual. When she started to pray in this way, she noticed that her tongue changed and she literally entered into a deeper level of prayer. From this incident, she learned that God not only wants us to pray for our members, but also to give thanks for them.

Let's become prayer warriors, developing a life of prayer and thanksgiving while at college. Choose a brother or sister whom you would like to be paired with as your prayer partner. Your task is to pray for each other every day this week, and to contact each other either by phone, email, or in person sometime this week to ask how your prayer lives are going. Encourage each other. Ask each other what he/she would like you to pray for. If possible, try to get together to pray sometime during the week. If not, set up a time when you'll be able to pray at the same time. You'll notice a difference!

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 422: *Pass It On*.

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom 10:15). To preach the gospel we must have the incarnation of the gospel. We have to absorb the words of God and live them out. We must have good behavior and knowledge and ask the spirit of the Lord to work within us continuously. Let us ask our Heavenly Father to open our eyes and our hearts so that we will see the needs of the people and will be willing to share the gospel with them. May the Lord continue to guide our footsteps.

Goals

The next four lessons deal with the topic of communication—how to communicate well with others and what happens when there is a lack of communication. Students will begin to clearly see the importance of communicating well with the Lord and with others. At this age, 12 students have a tendency to misuse their words, especially towards their parents. They will be prompted to think about how they treat their parents and how to speak wisely.

They will also be prompted to think about the importance of maintaining a close relationship with the Lord and with church members. Often, a lack of communication causes conflicts to arise. Students will learn how to manage conflicts as well as how to avoid them.

unit 2

Teacher Devotional

Communication is the secret to getting to know people. We often emphasize to our students the importance of communicating with their parents and with the Lord, but do we put this into practice ourselves? How often do we commune with the Lord? What do we commune with Him about? Do we simply ask Him to guide our lesson? Or do we go deeper in our walk with Him and ask Him to show us His will? In addition, we claim to know our students, but how often do we talk with them on a personal level? Can we claim to truly know them? We need to make it our goal to personally know our Savior on a more intimate level and also to know our students as individuals. So, stretch out your hand and reach out to the Lord and to your students!

Establish a Personal Relationship with the Lord

"Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ." (2 Thess 3:5)

Lesson 4

Communication

Listed Scriptures

Mt 12:31–37; 15:11; Jas 3; Prov 17:23f, 27–30; 21:23; 25:11; 26:20; 29:11; 29:22

Lesson Aim

- 1) To know what good communication between family members, friends, church members entails.
- 2) To be watchful, honest, and sincere with our words.
- 3) To determine to speak wisely.

Memory Verse

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Mt 12:36f)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Daniel 10–12

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D

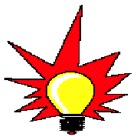


The scriptures offer plenty of advice regarding our speech. In James 3, the author reminds us how the tongue, even though it is a little member, can boast great things (3:5). Indeed, whatever comes out of our mouth defiles us (Mt 12:36f) and portrays our inner-most thoughts.

Often we bless God with our mouths, but not long after, we use our mouths to curse others. Should this be so? "Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?" (Jas 2:9–12). Of course, this should not be the case. We need to learn to use our lips to glorify our Lord only: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col 3:17).

The book of Proverbs also has many wise sayings regarding our speech. It teaches us that “the heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips” (Prov 16:23). If we have the Lord’s wisdom, we will know how to speak with wisdom. If not, our mouths will become our destruction (Prov 18:7). Indeed, what comes out of our mouths can either destroy or benefit us. We need to be watchful with our words, because by our words we will be justified, and by our words we will be condemned (Mt 12:37).

W A R M U P



Make sure everyone has a partner. Give each pair a plain sheet of paper. Then have one of the pairs fold and tear the paper, giving instructions to his/her partner to repeat his/her actions. Let the partner know that he/she may not ask any questions during this activity. As the first person folds and tears the paper, the partner will do his/her best to copy the instructions. After numerous instructions, have the two unfold their papers and compare them. They’ll probably look like snowflakes! Ask them to note any differences in the unfolded papers.

Once the activity is over, ask: What made this activity difficult? How does it illustrate the importance of communication? (Because they were unable to ask questions, they didn’t know what each was doing. When you don’t talk, you can’t understand what’s going on; people who don’t talk get wrong messages; communication is a two-way street.) From this activity we see that without two-way communication, people often get wrong messages—just as we ended up with different papers in the activity. Both parties benefit only when they talk openly.



Part 1

Careful or Careless Communication?

“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” (Jas 3:5). Our speech is vitally important in our relationships with both God and people. What comes out of our mouths can either bring benefit to ourselves and others, or it can have the adverse effect and destroy ourselves and others. Let’s look into the importance of being vigilant with our words.



A. Careful Communication

Why is good communication important? What are the elements of good communication? The tongue is indeed very powerful. Proverbs 10:19 tells us “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.” If a person speaks too much, he cannot avoid offending someone with his words or exhibiting his own foolishness. That is why people say that you can never trust speech. Therefore, we should always guard our speech, lest we unwittingly offend through our lips.

a. Words Can Act as Medicine for the Sick (Prov 12:18; 12:25; 16:24)

Appropriate words at the appropriate time can comfort, support and cheer the needy. When Hannah was praying earnestly to the Lord, she received the encouragement of the priest Eli and returned home comforted and full of joy (1 Sam 1:17f). Likewise, the power of our Lord Jesus’ words were evident when He affirmed, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you” (Mt 9:2).

b. The Pronouncement of Life or Death is by the Tongue (Prov 18:21)

Some people can commit murder by their words. That is why in Proverbs 15:4 it tells us that “a wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.” Nabal, for example cursed David and mis-treated him. Eventually, he was struck down by God and died (1 Sam 25:10–38). We can thus see the effect and power our words can have on others.

c. A Word Can Make or Break a Nation

There is a saying that a word can bring something good, but a word can also turn something bad. In the Bible, it records how Rehoboam caused the division of the kingdom of Judah through his foolish words (2 Chron 10:13), and Queen Esther was able to deliver the Jews of all the regions of the Persian Kingdom because of the words that she spoke at the appropriate time (Es 7:3–10). Our words can therefore have great impact on those around us.



B. Careless Communication

We have looked into the importance of communication and how it can have adverse effects on others. Let’s now look into what is regarded as careless communication and its effect on others. “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps

his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).

a. Idle Talk and Gossip (Prov 14:23)

Idle talk or gossip is what is said behind someone's back. In any social body where there are a number of people, there will be instances where some members talk about other members. This kind of talk will often lead to misunderstanding, bad feelings, and people getting hurt (2 Thess 3:11). As it says in Proverbs 14:23, "idle chatter leads only to poverty." We should therefore not waste our time in this, but spend our time more meaningfully in doing more of what pleases the Lord. Idle talk, gossip and rumors exist because of the unbridled tongue. Where they exist, friendship is being torn apart, innocent hearts are being hurt, and trust and confidence are being replaced by suspicion and apprehension. Ephesians 4:29 reminds us to "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth." We need to speak the truth with love and sincerity. If we are in a conversation that turns to gossip, change the subject. Otherwise, excuse yourself from participating in something that could be hurtful to another person—and to you.

b. Falsehood and Lies (Prov 30:8)

Ananias and Sapphira lied and tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. Consequently, they died (Acts 5:1–10). Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, lied because he wanted to own the riches which were presented to his master. As a result, he and his family were afflicted with leprosy (2 Kgs 5:27). The Bible specifically tells us that a lying tongue is an abomination to the Lord (Prov 6:17, 19). We must therefore remove all falsehood and lies from us. In addition, we are told that the devil is the father of lies (Jn 8:34). Thus, those who love to tell lies will not be able to enter the heavenly kingdom.

c. Angry Words (Tit 3:9; Mt 5:22)

When the Israelites were in the wilderness they complained angrily to Moses. They demanded meat to eat and so offended God that He sent a plague to destroy the people (Num 11:1). Angry words will not solve anything. There is no point in getting angry with God, blaming Him and losing faith in Him. When we encounter difficulties, we must learn to continue to trust and believe in Him and know that it is His will. Then, certainly, God will open a way for us. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4:26 to "be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."

d. Boasting (Jas 4:16)

King Nebuchadnezzar was walking on his rooftop one day surveying his

land. He began to boast about all that he had achieved. Eventually, he was cursed by being turned into a wild creature and living as one of them. It was only after he learned how to be humble and to render praises to God, that he was restored (Dan 4:30–37). Often it is all too easy to feel proud and boastful when things go well and everything is going according to plan. This error occurs because we forget to give all glory to God. As a result, our words have become our own stumbling block (Prov 16:18; 18:12).

e. Cursing and Slandering (Eph 4:31)

Miriam was cursed by God to become leprous because she slandered Moses her brother (Num 12:1–10). Elder James tells us that using the same tongue to praise God as well as to curse others is not right (Jas 3:9–10). Even when the archangel Michael was contending with the devil over the body of Moses, he did not dare to say a reviling word against Satan, so he merely said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9). Thus we need to be careful not to allow slanderous words or curses to come from our mouths.

f. Obscene Language (Eph 5:4)

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 5:4 that we should not take part in foolish talking, nor coarse jesting. Instead, we should let thanksgiving and praises come forth from our lips. Living in this world today, it is not easy because our friends may be swearing or using obscene language all the time. Even on the television, we often hear a lot of unwholesome language. We need to ask the Lord to help us, to wash our minds and hearts of all filthiness so that we will not have a tendency to speak such foul language.



Part 2

The Art of Careful Communication

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold, in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). Having looked into careful communication, let us now look into when and how we should communicate.

a. Speak in the Right Setting and at the Right Time (Prov 15:23)

The right word at the right time may reap good results. It could prevent someone from a bad ending or even change the course of events. For example, when we see our fellow believers straying from the correct path, then it may be the time for us to say something to try to stop them. We will not be trying

to offend them because our purpose is to help and encourage them.

b. Say Good Words to Edify Others (Prov 16:24)

False praise is hollow but a sincere word of encouragement can have a resounding effect on the hearer. Words of exhortation can bring good things to the hearer whilst words of praise and thanksgiving to God can recall the great love of God. As Ephesians 4:29 reminds us, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." In order to be able to edify and encourage others through our words, we must base our speech on the scriptures. The words of our Lord God helped Jesus Christ overcome the snares of the devil. Likewise, we should let the words of God dwell abundantly within us. We should always meditate on them and receive His spiritual wisdom. Understand the will of God, and through our words be a mutual help and encouragement to each other in the Lord.

c. Speak Words to Preach the Gospel (Tit 2:7–15)

Due to the words of a little maidservant, the commander Naaman was able to go to Israel and find a cure for his leprosy. Not only that, he also had a chance to know the Lord God (2 Kgs 5). Through the words of Philip, Nathanael came to believe in the Lord Jesus and became one of His disciples (Jn 1:48–51). Thus, we can see that if we tell about the grace of our God and bear testimony for Him, we can preach to others (Rom 10:14). As long as we are willing and God works with us, the effect of what we do will be revealed, and we can lead others to Christ (1 Cor 9:16–18).

d. Speak with Care and Sincerity (Jas 3:6–8)

The Lord reminds us in Matthew 5:37 to "let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one." We need to be sincere with our words, allowing our speech to always be with grace and seasoned with salt (Col 4:6). As Christians, we should carefully guard our minds and speech. It is easier for us to sin in speech than in behavior. We must, therefore, not become stumbling blocks and offend God.



Part 3

Do Not Gossip

The book of Proverbs offers several verses on the subject of gossiping. Proverbs 11:13 says, "A talebearer reveals secrets" and "separates close friends" (16:28).

Proverbs 18:8 also says, "The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body." When we say mean things about others, we're inflicting emotional pain on them. As Christians, we're supposed to honor God in all areas of our lives. Talking negatively about friends or strangers does not show Christ's unconditional love. So what should we do when we encounter gossip? Here are three suggestions.

Teaching Tips

Ask students for their opinions before providing the following answers.



A. Pssst...Did you know...?

a. Speak Out

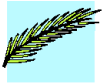
Kindly but firmly tell your friends gossip is hurtful and that no one benefits from it. Speak to them out of truth and love (Eph 4:15; 2 Cor 1:18f), not as if you are telling them off, but admonish them with the words of God. You will be pleasantly surprised by their reaction!

b. Be Positive

Turn the conversation around by saying something nice about the person being talked about. Or perhaps you could say, "Well, we don't know if this is true. Let's not talk about it because it's unfair to that person." Then change the subject completely. Your positive outlook and wise words will have a positive impact on those who are speaking negatively.

c. Walk Away

Don't be part of the problem by sticking around to listen. If they are unwilling to change the subject after you have gently reminded them, then walk away from it. Don't be involved in non-edifying conversations. Remember the Lord's command, "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people" (Lev 19:16) and "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles" (Prov 21:23; 6:16–19; 20:19).



B. Can You Keep a Secret?

What happens when a friend tells you something and you are just dying to share it with others? What should you do then?

a. Resist the Urge

Your friend confided in you, not the entire church congregation. Don't break his/her trust, even if it's for something as apparently good as a prayer request. Remember, "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov 10:19). Also, "A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter" (Prov 11:13).

b. Pray

Get on your knees and do as your friend asked—talk to God. Tell Him the situation. Then let God deal with it: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil 4:6).

c. Talk to Your Friend

Ask your friend if he/she would like you to share his/her prayer concern with anyone else, and if so, who? Talk to him/her before you disclose any personal information. He/She will greatly appreciate it. Moreover, if he/she gave you the go-ahead to share it with others, you will feel more comfortable about sharing it.



C. When You've Been Hurt

Unfortunately, we've all been guilty of gossip at one time or another—intentional or not. And we've all been victims of it too. But how should we react when we discover that someone, whether a trusted friend or not, has been saying mean things about us? Yes, it hurts, but have hope. There are several things we can do.

a. Go to God

Talk, cry, scream—whatever it takes to resolve your hurt. Just hand it over to Him. Let God know how you feel, how much you're hurting. He understands and He listens (Ps 56:8). Entrust everything to Him, and He will bring it to pass according to His will and time (Prov 20:22).

b. Forgive

This is not easy to do, but it is vital that you do it. You can only do this by the grace of God (Mt 6:14–15). First, forgive in your hearts whoever has hurt you. If you find this hard to do, ask God to instill in you a heart of forgiveness. Then ask God for guidance and healing.

c. Confront

When your emotions are under control, tell the person or people who hurt you how their words made you feel. If necessary, rehearse what you'd like to say beforehand. If you think you might lose your cool, express your feelings in a note or e-mail. Then tell them you forgive them. Hopefully, this will help you move on with your friendship. But remember not to be harsh with your words. Be gentle as a dove. And don't forget to pray before you approach them!

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



1

What are the benefits of careful communication?

2

Out of the six points under "Careless Communication," is there one which you think is the most harmful? Why or why not?

3

Why do we need to speak good words to others?

4

How do we learn to speak with care and sincerity?

LIFE APPLICATION



Part A: When Words Hurt

The following are some case studies of how members have been hurt because of people's words. Read each case carefully and then answer the questions that follow. Give advice to the people involved.

Case 1:

Kylie was a warm, friendly and sociable youth. She was actively involved in church work, including teaching religious education classes. Very sadly, some-

thing unpleasant happened in her private life which involved a few church members as well. Soon after, she began to complain that gossip about her was going around in church. Even long after the event, she continued to think others were still talking about it. One day, she decided that enough was enough. She no longer comes to church. It has been more than three years.

Questions to think about:

1. Why do you think that Kylie thinks that members were gossiping about her?
2. What do you think would be the best methods to counsel Kylie?

Case 2

Although Terry and Adam were never the best of friends, they had never had any serious arguments with each other after many years together in church. On one occasion, Terry said something, intending it as a joke. Adam, however, did not see it as a joke. A great misunderstanding ensued. Later, they talked the matter over and reconciled. However, their relationship became strained. Both felt they had better talk less to one another for fear of any future misunderstanding.

Questions to think about:

1. Do you think that they had both truly forgiven one another?
2. How could their relationship be repaired?
3. What advice would you give to both of them?

Case 3

Amanda was among a group of church friends whom she had not seen for almost a year. They were all gathered together at Lucy's house to eat, chat, and have fellowship. As they chatted, Amanda noticed that the conversation was beginning to turn into gossiping. Lucy started to talk about one sister in church who, she had heard, was dating a gentile. Amanda was feeling very uncomfortable and wasn't sure how to react.

Questions to think about:

1. What could Amanda do in this situation?
2. How could she tell Lucy not to spread rumors?

Case 4

Jeannette was quite upset! She felt that her mother wasn't encouraging at all. Each time she phoned home from college, her mother never had anything encouraging to say at all. She would always scold her, or tell her to watch how much she's spending. Even if she didn't think she was doing anything wrong, her

mother always seemed to manage to belittle her. Jeannette felt both sad and angry. She feels that because of her mom's attitude she can't share anything with her.

Questions to think about:

1. What advice would you offer to Jeannette to help improve her relationship with her mother?
2. What advice would you offer to Jeannette's mother?

Part B: Wise Words

Under what circumstances and in what situations might you tend to be rather abrupt with your speech? Write down the circumstance or situation, think of some concrete ways you could tackle it, and provide some Bible verses to help act as a reminder. An example has been given. Be prepared to share your thoughts with the class.

Situations when I may be hasty with my words	Ways to overcome	Bible verse(s)
When I am angry	Count to ten before saying anything. This will give me time to reflect on the situation and think clearly, before I speak.	"Be angry, and do not sin..." (Eph 4:26; Prov 29:22)
Other Examples		
Other Examples		

Part C: Words of Advice

We have looked into how the Scriptures offer great words of wisdom regarding how we should communicate. In the Bible study section, we looked in detail as to how we can avoid gossiping or what we should do when we become the victim of gossips. Now it's your turn!

The book of Proverbs has many great wise sayings. Your task is to prepare some advice (1–2 minutes) to share with the class. With a partner, choose a topic regarding speech and offer some solid biblical advice from the book of Proverbs. An example is given below:

Topic: Do Not Argue

"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts" (Prov 17:14). We know that we need to be watchful with our words. But often, when opinions differ, we find ourselves getting into a heated debate. King Solomon offered us some sound advice when he stated that we need to stop contention before a quarrel starts. Once strife starts, it is like releasing water – it will flow out unceasingly. In addition, if we stop ourselves before contention starts, it is an honorable act "since any fool can start a quarrel" (Prov 20:3). Let us be wise Christians and prevent arguments before they start. If we do this, it is commendable before the Lord.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



*Sing hymn 400: More Like Jesus Would I Be.
We need to be imitators of Christ in all aspects of our lives. We need to ask Him to dwell in us, so that we will be more like Him everyday, in deed and word. May the Lord help us to understand the importance of our speech and learn to use it wisely, so that all those who love God can be greatly benefited through our words. Let our words always be seasoned with salt so that they can move and encourage others and give glory to our heavenly Father.*

Lesson 5

Honor and Obey

Listed Scriptures

Ex 20:1–17; Eph 6:1–3; Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16, 33; 1 Tim 5:4; Prov 23:22–24

Lesson Aim

- 1) To know that honoring our parents is the commandment with promise.
- 2) To learn how to honor and obey our parents through examples set by biblical characters.
- 3) To brainstorm specific ways to honor our parents.

Memory Verse

"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" (Eph 6:2–3)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Hosea 1–3

BIBLE BACKGROUND



Out of the Ten Commandments, eight start with "You shall not" or "You shall have no." These are all statements forbidding us to carry out a certain act. If we do not follow these commandments, we will be punished. However, two of the Ten Commandments do not start with "You shall not." The first one, recorded in Exodus 20:8 states "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." This commandment begins with "Remember..." and even tells us why and how we should go about observing it. It is a commandment with blessing because the blessings are there for us. The Sabbath is a holy day, filled with God's abundant grace. The other is recorded in Exodus 20:12 and it says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." This is a promise. A promise means that we have not physically received anything yet, but if we do it, or if we follow the commandments, we will receive blessings.

Exodus 21 also records some detailed regulations. In verse 12 it states, "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death." Quite clearly we can see that our lives are required of us if we kill another. In verse 15 it says, "And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." If we attack an ordinary person, we have to beat him to death before we repay his death with our life. But if we strike or attack our mother and father, we shall be put to death. Exodus 21:16-17 furthermore says, "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." These are deeds of dishonoring our parents. Even before we seriously injure or harm our parents, we will be put to death.

Thus, if we honor our mother and father, we will live long in the land. But if we don't, it is not a matter of whether we'll live a shorter life, but rather of being put to death. This is a very strict commandment indeed, which requires our obedience in following it through. Honoring our parents is not only our basic duty, but it is also a call for us to act and obey. Only then will we be blessed.

W A R M U P



Did you know that there are three people involved in bringing you to this world? They are your mother, father, and God. Did you also know that honoring your parents has a direct relationship with honoring God? Yes, they are interlinked. We cannot say that we love God, yet fail to love or respect our parents. If we love God, then surely His love will be instilled within us so that we will be able to love our parents in the same manner. Let's look into this important commandment and how we can learn to show more love to our parents and to our heavenly Father.

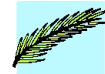
B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

First Commandment with a Promise

Ephesians 6:1-3 tells us that honoring our father and mother is the first commandment with a promise. Have you ever wondered why is this so? Why is it right for us to obey our parents? Let us look into this.



A. To Repay Their Love for Us

It is a blessing that our parents have raised us ever since we were in the womb. By raising us, they have bestowed grace on us. Our life is given to us by God, through our parents. We must, therefore, remember their love and labor for us. As it says in Proverbs 23:22, "Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old." To honor them is to repay their love (1 Tim 5:4).



B. To Obey the Lord's Commandment (Eph 6:1-3)

The Lord commands us to obey our parents in all things (Col 4:20) and to revere them (Lev 19:3). Since the Lord has made it a commandment, we need to take heed and obey. It is something we should learn in order to show piety at home, as it is our religious duty. By obeying the Lord's command, we are demonstrating our love to Him and to our parents.



C. To Be Blessed (Eph 6:1-3; Deut 5:16)

In order to be blessed by the Lord, we need to first take action and obey our parents. This simple commandment includes a grand promise. Obeying our parents pleases the Lord and leads to a good long life. This is, in fact, not only the first commandment with a promise, but also the first commandment concerning human relationships (Ex 20:12). The promise mentioned in Ephesians 6:3 is that it may be well with the children and that they may live long on the earth. The first part of the promise is related to prosperity in material blessing; it also refers to living in a peaceful situation. The second part is to have longevity. According to this commandment, prosperity and longevity are God's blessings in this life to those who honor their parents.



Part 2

Learning to Show Piety

"But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God" (1 Tim 5:4). Have you ever actually thought about how we honor our parents? What does it mean to show filial piety? In this section we will be looking at the fundamentals of learning to show filial piety.

According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, “to honor” means “to regard or treat with respect,” or “to live up to or fulfill the terms of.” How many of us have completely lived up to or fulfilled the terms of our role as children? We often think that honoring our parents means to simply obey them, but if we truly want to treat them with respect it requires a deeper devotion.



A. To Take Care of Our Parents (Mk 7:10-13)

This is the true meaning of honoring our parents. Honoring them is to repay their love and to take care of them. Matthew 15:4–11 records how the Pharisees felt they had already offered money to their parents, so they did not need to look after them. This was not according to the truth of the Bible. The scriptures specifically command us to honor them, which includes taking care of their needs, not just in monetary terms.

The Lord Jesus showed us a perfect example by asking His beloved disciple John to look after His mother (Jn 19:25–27). It was only after He had taken care of this that He said, “It is finished.” From this, we can see the emphasis the Lord Jesus placed on making sure His mother was taken care of. We must, therefore, learn to practice care and love towards our parents.

As our parents age they need us more than ever. We have a great obligation to fulfill our role in serving them and seeing to their needs. We need to love them unconditionally and show it by sacrificing whatever is needed in order to make the latter part of their lives as comfortable physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually as we can. We can never fully repay our parents for giving us the gift of life, but we can show our gratitude through our actions.



B. To Obey Our Parents

To be filial to our parents includes both honoring and obeying them. When Jesus Christ was 12 years old, He went to the temple with His parents. When His parents realized He wasn’t with them, they came looking for Him. Even though He knew He should be in the temple of God, He obeyed them and went home with them. He listened to His parents so that He could fulfill His responsibility and show His respect to them (Lk 2:41–50). Likewise, to obey our parents in the Lord is to obey them in the truth. True respect for our parents includes asking them to do

good, according to the Lord’s command. Honoring is different from obeying. Obedience refers to an action, whereas honor denotes an attitude. It is possible for children to obey their parents without honoring them. In order to honor their parents, children need a certain attitude, a certain spirit. We therefore need to learn to obey our parents with honor.



C. To Allow Our Parents to Share in Our Accomplishments

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify you” (Jn 17:1). When Jesus Christ was on earth, He fulfilled the glory of God. In the same token, as children we must let our parents share in our glory. Filial piety includes respect, taking care of our parents, and letting them share in our glory (Prov 23:24f).

We often boast that our accomplishments are from ourselves. We have very vivid experiences of our success. Yet we often neglect the fact that our accomplishments are through our parents as well. Let’s learn to give thanks to the Lord for our parents, and to let them know how much we appreciate them. Moreover, living a righteous life is an important aspect of honoring parents. We can bring them great pleasure as we strive to live lives of integrity and service as we work diligently to be all that we can be.



D. To Bring Our Parents to the Lord

If we view our gospel as the best, but we do not know how to give the very best to our parents, how can we say we are honoring them? Many will say it is difficult to bring our parents to the Lord, but 1 Timothy 5:4 reminds us to “first learn to show piety at home and to repay [our] parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.” Since we have received the best from our parents, we must also offer them the very best that life has to offer—the gift of eternal life.

Ruth has left us a great example of obedience and filial piety. She wanted to cling to her mother-in-law Naomi because she acknowledged God in Naomi’s life. She insisted on being with her wherever she went, and for Naomi’s God to become her personal God too: “Entreat me not to leave you, Or turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die,

and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me" (Ruth 1:16–17).

The foundation of honoring our parents is to have the same God, to be in one accord in faith, and to have the same spiritual life. Ruth understood this and insisted on honoring her mother-in-law to the very end of her life. Let us learn from her example. If our parents are not yet in Christ, let us strive to bring them this great gift. This is one of the foundations of honoring our parents.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



1 Why do we need to obey our parents?

2 How can we demonstrate filial piety?

LIFE APPLICATION



Part A: A Step Closer to Honoring Our Parents

With a partner, brainstorm some specific ways you could honor your parents. How might you go about doing this? Be prepared to share with the rest of the class.

1. How I Can Better Honor My Parents
2. Ways I Am Going To Do This

Remember: When you're away at college, make sure you telephone your parents at least once a week, just to let them know how you're doing—they'll appreciate it!

Part B: Growing Together With My Parents—How College Improved Our Relationship

A strange thing happened to me after I left home and went to college—I started getting along better with my parents.

Not to say that I had a horrible relationship with them to begin with, but over the course of my college years, I definitely noticed a change in both the quality and the content of our interactions.

Even funnier still, I found that the freedom I had once fought so hard for in high school was no longer the hard-earned result of parent-child warfare. Rather, by the time I graduated from college, my wish to be treated as a mature adult gradually and naturally came true as I learned to behave like one.

What brought about these differences in the way I treated my parents and the way my parents treated me? A number of reasons can be identified, but most noticeable among them is the fact that, as my relationship with God improved, so too did my relationship with my parents, especially with my mother.

SOMEWHERE FAR FROM HOME

During my adolescence, I used to assume that beneath my parents' setting of rules and limits and behind their demands to know my every whereabouts was their actual intention to demonstrate control.

Never one who liked being told what to do, and never one to give up without a fight, you might guess that arguing with my parents was not an uncommon occurrence throughout my adolescent years.

Regardless of whether or to what extent they were trying to make clear their authority over me, I was known for firing back full force with a "you can't tell me what to do" attitude.

Thank God that halfway into my junior year of high school I received the Holy Spirit during a student spiritual convocation. But by that time, I still had not developed a consistent or lengthy prayer habit.

Yet with God's Spirit living in me, I was able to receive the strength to gradually tone down my behavior, which, truth be told, had long ago crossed over the border of proper Christian living into rebellion and sin.

As my senior year of high school and the prospect of college neared, I formed several ideas of what I was looking for in a university: somewhere near a True Jesus Church, somewhere near a city, and somewhere far from home.

While I was definitely drawn toward the thought of a fast-paced, crowded city life, I recognized that I was also pushed toward that direction by what I saw as my oppressive home environment.

After I had been accepted into a couple of schools and debated over which one to attend, thankfully, God helped me to realize that choosing the school closest to my home would be best for me because it would allow me to attend the youth Bible study nearby.

While that university also met my requirement of being located near a large city, my dream of moving far from home turned into the reality of a fifty-minute commute from my parents' home.

PROVIDING FOR ONE ANOTHER

While away at school, my parents would call me every few days to see how I was doing. Since they usually worried if we hadn't spoken for over a week, I was obligated to call and check in with them as well.

Because my dad isn't much of a phone person, my mom and I usually did most of the talking. While my father and I were by far not the best of friends, putting my mom and I in the same room could be the most deadly of combinations.

Throughout my teenage years, my mother and I fought often, and we fought hard. Shouting matches that resulted in tears and slamming doors were a painful but common occurrence.

Needless to say, I hardly ever spoke to my parents about personal problems. Therefore, topics such as feelings and frustrations, faith and friends, were strictly off limits.

Regardless, the phone calls to and from home continued. At first, the conversations between my mom and I consisted mostly of what we had done that day, but they eventually evolved into discussions of how we had been feeling that particular day.

After a while, I found that I missed our talks if we hadn't had the chance to speak to each other. After a few semesters of living in the dorms, I realized with some shock that my mother and I had begun to communicate with and depend on each other as (gasp) friends.

My faith during this time was slowly building up with the help of attending the youth Bible studies and my own spiritual cultivation. It dawned on me that the fledgling friendship between my mother and I was also helping to strengthen my faith.

What's more, my mom's spirituality was improving as well. While we weren't nec-

essarily always discussing specific Bible passages as such, we did start to speak openly about our own problems.

For the first time, my mother shared with me the many struggles and trials she encountered in marriage, church, and work life. No longer was she just filling the role of my mother; I came to see her as a person, complete with human needs, weaknesses, and emotions.

As we began to discuss our problems openly, we also began to address these problems through prayer. Oftentimes we would end our long-distance talks by praying together afterwards.

On some mornings or before I would go to bed, I would make a quick call home and ask my mom to pray with me, and she often did the same.

Curiously enough, it often wound up that when my faith was weak, my mother's was strong, and vice versa. Consequently, there would be weeks when my mother would be the one lifting up my spirits, and the next month, I would find myself trying to encourage her.

In this manner, God miraculously provided a way for each of us to receive spiritual support by having us provide for each other.

Our prayers and makeshift testimonies helped me not only to see my mother as an individual, but also as a fellow sister-in-Christ. As stated in James 5:16, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

Helping to bear one another's burdens through sharing and prayer strengthened our relationship with each other and our individual relationships with God.

ACCEPTING DISCIPLINE

Of course, my parents and I still engage in the occasional argument. After all, perfect endings and perfect people are only the works of fiction, and I was reminded of this sobering truth on many weekends or school breaks spent at home.

During those not-so-pleasant instances, the makings of an argument usually went something like this:

Scenario One: Parent asks daughter in a stern tone of voice to do something.

Interpreting this as an attack on her newfound adulthood and independence, daughter responds back with an irritated tone of voice. Fight ensues.

Scenario Two: Daughter makes known her frustration with parent's seeming ineptitude. Taking this as an assault on parental authority and ability, parent responds back in frustration. Fight ensues.

The possibilities are endless.

Usually, what sets off an argument is not so much what is said but the way it is said. King Solomon was right on the mark when he wrote in Proverbs 15:1 that "a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Yes, sometimes our parents may be wrong, but many times, they are in the right. And when our emotions get the better of us in an argument, it's hard for us to tell who's right and who's wrong.

What's more, no matter what the situation, we still should not act disrespectfully towards our parents. If we cannot even treat our earthly parents properly, how can we expect to please our heavenly Father? As written in Hebrews 12:9, "Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?"

The same chapter of Hebrews also teaches us that God disciplines those He loves. Verses 6 and 7 read, "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?"

God sometimes trains us in painful ways. Likewise, we may think that parental discipline is too strict at times, but it is usually for our own benefit.

And if parental efforts seem less than perfect to us, we need to remember that our parents are, after all, only human. They are not God, but they are trying. Therefore, we must also try our best to repay their efforts with obedience and respect. Patience helps, too. Finally, we need to examine the reasons why we're so offended by our parents' comments in the first place.

Most people don't like being told what to do, and most people dislike criticism even more. Unfortunately for them, our parents are the ones stuck with the job of having to dole out the bulk of these hard-to-give and hard-to-receive comments.

When we do hear these types of remarks, we must ask ourselves if our desire to retaliate against our parents is actually a result of wounded pride. Proverbs 13:1 tells us that, "A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke."

Let us not be foolish, but wise children.

ALWAYS A CHILD IN THEIR EYES

Despite the fact that I'm now a college graduate and supposedly all grown up, I've realized that I'll always be a child in my parents' eyes.

No matter how old we are, whether we're working or starting families of our own, our parents will always be our parents. As a result, regardless of age or abilities, we will always be their children.

In Paul's epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians concerning how to treat parents, he addressed the believers as "children." For example, in Ephesians 6:1, Paul writes, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

While Paul's letters apply to believers of all ages, he probably wasn't directing this message solely toward toddlers and teenagers. As the apostle who guided them into God's truth and the one who nurtured their spiritual growth, these believers would always be Paul's spiritual children.

In the same way, God gave our parents their status as caregivers and guardians. And according to His will and the measure of love He has put in our hearts, we must strive to honor our parents throughout our lives. This is also how we are to honor God.

Four years of living on campus also showed me that the longer I lived away from home, the more I looked forward to going home. Yes, absence does make the heart grow fonder, and I've found truth in the saying that we often don't appreciate what we have until it's gone.

However, the fact that I no longer minded but enjoyed going back home was also because my home was no longer the same as it was when I had left it. My lifestyle

has calmed down considerably since my high school days, and I did some necessary maturing in terms of my behavior, my emotions, and my faith.

My parents saw these changes and did some adjusting of their own. Ironically, my parents actually encourage me to get out of the house more, whereas in high school, they seemed to be doing everything in their power to keep me at home.

During these four years, you might say that we all grew up together. Now that I've graduated and am living at home again, I really thank God for the changes that He has made in my life and in my relationship with my parents.

At the same time, my parents definitely still do treat me like a child in some ways, but I've learned that that's not necessarily a bad thing. While parents sometimes do need to ease their grip a bit, we shouldn't expect them to completely let go, either.

Sometimes, it feels good to be held onto.

(Manna. "The End Times," Issue 41 Jul-Sept 2003)

Questions to think about:

1. "As my relationship with God improved, so too did my relationship with my parents..." How can our relationship with God help our relationship with our parents? Have you had any experiences of this? Share them with the class.
2. This sister would often call home every few days to check in with her family. Consequently, her phone conversations resulted in a closer and deeper emotional and spiritual link with her mother. What ways do you think you could devise in order to have closer ties with your parents?
3. "Despite the fact that I'm now a college graduate and supposedly all grown up, I've realized that I'll always be a child in my parents' eyes." It often seems that the older you get, the harder it is to honor your parents. How do you think you can continue to honor your parents as you grow older?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 409: Make Me a Blessing.

Let's ask the Lord to help make us a blessing to the people around us, especially to our family members. Let us also ask Him to continue to guide us as we learn how to show true filial piety to our parents. May His spirit of love continue to be aglow within us and to make us a blessing to our family.

Lesson 6

Conflict Management

Listed Scriptures

1 Sam 1; Mt 5:9; Lk 23:1-12; Mk 14:32-51; Gen 26:12-31; Jas 3:16-18

Lesson Aim

- 1) To discuss the conflicts that can arise.
- 2) To understand how God wants us to deal with conflicts.
- 3) To brainstorm specific steps that can be taken to manage conflicts.

Memory Verse

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Sons of God."
(Mt 5:9)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Hosea 4-6

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The Bible records many conflicts between people. What is important, however, is how they are dealt with. A godly attitude, response and prayer can make a huge difference in how the process unfolds. Gideon had a remarkable gift for defusing conflicts. In Judges 8:1-3, the Ephraimites accused and criticized Gideon sharply. His response was truthful, gentle and complimentary. This caused their resentment and anger towards him to subside, proving that "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

In Mark 14:32-51, the Lord Jesus demonstrated His gentle but firm nature in dealing with conflict. He did not shout at or fight with those who came for His life, but rather offered them peace and mercy. In the same manner in Luke 23:1-12 and John 18:19-24, the Lord Jesus did not rebuke those who were mocking or striking Him. Under persecution, our Lord did not strike back, but endured it all patiently.

and willingly, for He knew that it was the Lord's will.

Isaac also demonstrated gentleness and peacefulness when he was persecuted for his wells (Gen 26:12-31). Never once did he argue with the Philistines. Instead, he would quietly give way to them and move on. He trusted in the Lord whom He knew would bring it to pass. When we encounter conflicts, are we also able to entrust everything to the Lord and believe that He will bring it to pass?

W A R M U P



In the cafeteria at school, you return to your plate to find that someone has poured milk on your sandwich. There are at least two other students nearby. What do you do?

Ask students for their responses. Then say, "There are many different ways to react to this situation. You could be very angry, throw a fit and walk off. Or you could calmly ask them if they were involved and why they did it. Or you could ignore it."

Conflict is inevitable whenever you have a group of people together. This is true at home, at work, at school, and even at church. We must learn to manage it in a true Christian way so that we can give glory to our Lord and benefit others in the process.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Conflict

As human beings we like to argue. We argue from young to old and we argue with many different people. We even argue with God, questioning Him why certain things may be. A sister once testified how she held a grudge against the Lord for an entire year, during which she didn't go to church. Later she returned to the Lord. Inevitably as humans, we will always end up in conflicting situations. But the way we deal with it or our outlook on it could be the difference in whether we are successful or not.



A. What are the causes of conflict?

Learning about the causes of conflict will help us be more aware of them and will enable us not to fall into conflicts with others.

a. Discontent (Acts 6:1; Judg 8:1)

A great conflict arose at the church in the apostolic days because the Hellenists thought that their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Discontent is often the root cause of conflicts. We become very unhappy with certain situations and we begin to grumble. Instead of going to someone for help, we start to murmur to other people. In the end, things get blown way out of proportion and strife ensues. When we are unhappy about certain situations, do something about it, rather than grumble.

b. Doubt and Fear (Acts 15:39)

In the book of Acts, it records how Barnabas and Paul had a great argument over whether to take Mark along with them on their missionary trip. Barnabas was determined to take Mark, but Paul insisted that they should not take him with them because he was afraid Mark might leave them again, like he did on their previous trip. In Genesis 12:12 it also records how Abram told his wife Sarai to say that she was his sister because he was afraid that he would be killed because of her. Conflicts can thus arise because of doubt and fear within ourselves.

c. Sin (Rom 7:10-17)

In this passage, Paul states that it is the sin within him which makes him do what he hates. When we encounter confrontational situations, it is sometimes due to the sinful nature within us. We need to subdue our nature and rely on the Lord for help.



B. What type of person do we want to be?

a. Those Who Are Defeated by Strife

Such people fail in their arguments, not because they did not win the argument itself, but because they have a pessimistic outlook on life. Their hearts are full of bitterness, and they cannot see any good in anybody. They see people around them as hypocrites, they are very unfriendly to people, and they always complain against others and God. They start to live in their own world and live a very defeatist life.

b. Those Who Overcome Strife

Although this type of person will also inevitably face some kind of argument, their outlook on life is more positive. They feel that people are wonderful, that everyone is nice and that God is good. They feel happy and optimistic. Consequently, such people have overcome strife and do not let strife overcome them.



Part 2

Who are the Culprits of Conflict?



A. Those Who Are Quick Tempered (Prov 29:22; 30:33)

Here it tells us that all those who are easily angered will stir up strife. We all meet such people in our lives, whether at school, at work, in our family, or at church, even in ourselves! Proverbs 14:29 tells us that if we are not that easily angered, we have a good understanding, but if we have a hot temper, it shows that we don't have that much wisdom. Sometimes we have a split personality. People tell us to do things and we always agree. But when our family instructs us to do something, we always say no. Colossians 3:8 reminds us that once we become a Christian, we must put away all this anger, wrath, and malice. This is not just a matter of putting it away in public or at church, but also at home. Only through the power of God are we able to do this. Let's ask God's power to work within us so that we can get rid of our bad temper in order to avoid causing strife.



B. Those Who Have a Contentious Heart (Prov 26:21)

What is a contentious person? It is someone who likes to compare or compete with others. There are two kinds of comparisons in this world. The first is a good comparison where the individual imitates and learns from the good qualities of others. Such people look at the Bible and see how they should act. The second is a bad comparison. In James 3:14–16 it states, "But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth." Such things can cause people to be in conflict with one another. In addition, some people like to compete out of envy and self-seeking. For example, some youths like to compare themselves with other youths on their performance at school to the way they dress. Such comparisons come from inappropriate and ungodly feelings of being jealous, self-seeking, and overly ambitious.



C. Those Who Have a Proud Heart (Prov 22:10)

Sometimes we don't even know that we are proud, but when we constantly insist on our own way, this is inner or hidden pride. When King Saul sinned against the Lord and was unrepentant, Samuel questioned him, "Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?" (1 Sam 15:19). By insisting on his own way, Saul caused unnecessary trouble.

Once, a brother and sister were fighting over a tricycle. The dad came and said to the brother, "Let your sister play." The brother said no, so the father turned to the sister and said, "Let your brother play," but she said no too. The father was upset, so he sawed the tricycle in half. When children disobey their parents it is a manifestation of pride. Those who disobey their parents disobey God; He will bring it to judgment one day. We must obey our parents in the Lord, and not seek our own will.



D. Those Who Gossip (Prov 16:28; 26:20)

Gossipers are different from informers. Informers will say what they have to say to the right person. In Jeremiah 40:13–16, Gedaliah failed to discern a gossip from an informer. Don't be a gossip. Be careful of what you say. Don't be one who starts strife. (See also Lesson 4: Communication III. Do Not Gossip)



Part 3

How Do We Overcome Strife?

"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins" (Prov 10:12). Even if we try to avoid conflicts, they can still arise. What should we do? In the book of 1 Samuel it records how Hannah was barren and how Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, would constantly provoke her. Peninnah was jealous of Hannah because Elkanah gave her a double portion. Hannah cried and refused to eat. If somebody were to abuse us like that, how would we react? Hannah could have reacted by fighting back, yet she didn't. Let's look into what Hannah did and learn how we too can overcome strife.



A. To Have a Gentle and Quiet Spirit (1 Sam 1:7)

Hannah reacted by not eating. This is a demonstration of her inner gentleness and her quiet spirit. Likewise, when we are in the middle of a conflict, we must be gentle (1 Pet 3:4f). Our gentleness will calm the storm and bring peace. In Romans 12:17–21, it tells us to “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. ‘Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”



B. To Believe in the Lord and to Inquire Help from Him (1 Sam 1:9–12)

When Hannah was provoked, she went to God. She was wise and made the right choice. When we are in a conflict, pray to God about the problem. People may criticize us or spread gossip about us. Just pray. God is just, and those who obey Him will experience perfect justice in due time. God may seem silent, but His silence is not condoning sin, nor is He indifferent to it. He is withholding deserved punishment, giving time for His people to repent (Rom 12:19). Our Heavenly Father understands every problem and sees every tear. He will act in due time.

We need to go before God until we get His perspective on the conflict. Do not act or speak out of rashness, anger or a sense of injustice. Moses had to learn this. His loss of temper in conflict situations cost him 40 years in the wilderness on one occasion, and the loss of entry to the Promised Land on another. However, when he did get God’s perspective on situations, he was able to intercede with power and resolve even the most difficult of situations.

Prayer is essential. We must pray that our attitude will be loving and that God will provide us with His wisdom and insight to work through the issue. Paul exhorts us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17) and to “let all that [you] do be done with love” (1 Cor 16:14).



C. To Entrust Everything to God (1 Sam 1:13–18)

Hannah solved her problems by entrusting all to God. It is not easy to entrust all to God, but she knew the secret of surrendering herself to Him. Eli didn’t even know the situation and quite simply told her to “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him” (1 Sam 1:17). Hannah obeyed, went home and entrusted all to God. This is not easy to do. We may pray about our problems, but how often do we completely entrust everything to Him?

Matthew 11:28–30 records the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ to us. The more we pray, the more we will receive the peace from God. We need to be anxious for nothing, but let our requests be made known to God (Phil 4:6f).

There was a preacher who became nervous each time he preached on the pulpit, which resulted in a sore stomach. One day he had a dream. In his dream, he was carrying a big heavy sack walking along the road. He saw an empty car pass by, allowed it to pass and continued to walk with his heavy sack. What was the Lord trying to tell him? Why didn’t he use that empty car? The Lord was reminding him that he had to entrust everything to Him. Likewise, when we work for God we need to entrust all to Him. If not, we will end up continuing to carry our heavy burdens. It is our choice whether to grasp the opportunity to solve the problem. When we truly know the will of God, we will naturally entrust everything to Him, just like Hannah.

In 1 Samuel 1:24–28 it records how, not long after Hannah entrusted everything to God, He was able to solve all her problems: she conceived and bore a son. When her problem was solved, she gave thanks to the Lord and gave back to Him what He gave her (1 Sam 2:21). Consequently, God blessed her abundantly. Let us learn from Hannah’s good example and entrust all to the Lord. By doing so, we will reap great benefits in the end.



Part 4

How Do We Manage Conflicts?

Often, conflicts arise because of a lack of or bad communication. Thus, apart from the biblical principles outlined above, let’s look into some practical effective remedies to handle conflict:



A. Talk it Out

Being able to talk it out usually leads to a win-win situation, but how something is worded is vitally important (Prov 25:11–13). Whatever we say should be clear, kind, true and appropriate. There is a right time and a right way to say things. Don't get emotional, nor be harsh or absolute (Prov 15:1). Gently but firmly confront them (Prov 17:14). Unless people are confronted with their wrong behaviors they most likely will not change. But do remember that people are more likely to learn from a gentle reminder than a dogmatic approach.



B. Seek Help (Mt 18:15-17)

Only involve others when we think they need to be involved. Matthew 18:15–17 provides us with a wise three-step approach when dealing with conflicts:

- i. Go and tell the person his/her fault
- ii. If he/she will not listen, take two or three people with us to remind him/her
- iii. If he/she refuses to hear them, tell it to the church

This three-step approach provides us with a direct way to approach conflict. Getting help is usually the best choice when handling a conflict. However, it also depends whom we get help from. We need to seek help from someone who is spiritual so that they can help support us in prayer and offer us words of advice and encouragement from the Scriptures. Use wisdom to judge whom we should seek help from.



C. Ignore It

There are times when ignoring the situation is the best remedy for a conflict. Sometimes it takes strength and wisdom just to walk away from a situation. A brother testified of how, before his conversion, he would always end up getting into fights with people because of the anger he had within him. Once, there was an entire group of people who came to him looking for a fight. He thanked God for giving him the wisdom to run away from the situation. As the wise King Solomon says, "A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back" (Prov 29:11). We need to learn to hold our tongues and walk away from conflict.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



1

Looking at the causes of conflict, which one do you think causes people to encounter conflict the most?

2

What are the four kinds of people who cause conflict?

3

Is there a category which you think you would be most susceptible to? How could you deal with it?

4

What are the three ways of overcoming strife? Which one is the most difficult for you to do? Why?

5

What is the three-step approach recorded in Matthew when dealing with conflicts?

6

In your opinion, which of the three effective remedies to dealing with conflict would you have a tendency to use? Why?

LIFE APPLICATION



Part A: Resolving Conflicts

Please read the following case studies carefully and provide a solution for each one. Try to back up your solutions with some

Bible verses.

Case A

A group of youths like to have their fellowship service on Friday night, but some adult members have commented negatively about it since it dramatically reduces the number of people attending the regular service.

1. What advice/solution would you give to these youths?

Case B

Rose and Tracy are roommates. Rose is our church sister, but Tracy isn't. Rose is a very organized and clean individual. Tracy is the opposite. Whereas Rose would put her dirty laundry into the laundry basket, Tracy would spread hers in little piles

all over the room. Tracy hardly ever takes out the garbage, let alone deals with the boxed remains of five-day old pizza! Because of their different ideas about what cleanliness means, it led to a fair share of arguments and conflicts. Rose is unsure of how to deal with this situation. How can you help her?

1. What advice/tips can you offer to Rose in order to improve the state of her dorm room and to improve relations with her roommate?
2. How should she approach Tracy about this?

Case C

James is rather hesitant and feels uncomfortable about doing cleaning work around the church. He thinks that the church can afford to hire professionals to do a much better job than he can. He'd rather serve the Lord in other areas. Because of his reluctance and unwillingness to do this work, his relationship with certain church members has become strained.

1. What advice would you offer James?

Case D

Mary doesn't like the idea that her daughter is dating a brother. She thinks that at 19, she's too young to be dating. Her daughter refuses to listen to her.

1. How would you advise Mary and her daughter?

Case E

Jake and Phil live in the same neighborhood and go to the same local church. They spend much of their free time together. However, all that changed after Jake returned the DVD player he had borrowed from Phil. The DVD player was damaged! Furious, Phil called Jake who confessed he had dropped it accidentally. Phil asked Jake to get him a new one, but he refused. They had a heated argument and they refused to talk to each other. Eventually Jake came around and bought a new DVD player for Phil. Phil, however, simply snatched the DVD player from Jake's hand and said, "It's about time!" They do not talk to each other anymore.

1. What problems do you see in this case?
2. How would you advise both Jake and Phil?

(Adapted version from *A New Life in Christ, A Workbook for New Believers*, 9: Repentance, True Jesus Church, 2000)

Part B: Conflicting Situations

There are many types of conflict that can arise among family members, friends, co-workers, and church brothers and sisters. For each category, think of a conflict that may arise and think of specific steps that can be taken to manage them.

CATEGORY	CONFLICT	RESOLUTION
Family		
Friends		
Co-workers in church		
Brothers and sisters in Christ		

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 230: *Blest Is He Who Never Consents*.
"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'" (1 Pet 4:8). When dealing with conflict, the only way to come out strong is if we love those who have wronged us with the love of God. Only with His love will we be able to overlook the situation and learn to live harmoniously among our family members, our friends, and our church brethren. Let us always be filled with the Holy Spirit and be able to have a heart of love and forgiveness.

Suicide

Listed Scriptures

1 Kgs 17-19; Acts 16:23-40; Num 11; Jon 4; 1 Pet 5:7; Jn 14:18; Is 41:10

Lesson Aim

- 1) To identify the reasons why people ask for death.
- 2) To understand that we are all made in God's image and that our lives are in His hands.
- 3) To focus on God's blessings and learn to give thanks.
- 4) To be determined to do God's work and lead meaningful and productive lives.

Memory Verse

"For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God." (Psalm 38:15)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Hosea 7-9

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



There is no Bible Background for this lesson.

W A R M U P



Sing hymn 336: Does Jesus Care?

Have you ever felt really down? What went through your mind at those times? Who did you turn to? Has there been a time when you felt so low that you felt there was no way out? What did you do? (Give students time to reflect and answer)

Did you know that we live in a death-fascinated society? There are "How To" books being written on suicide and an ever increasing number of songs that pound home lyrics that advocate suicide. In the past decade, there has been a 400% increase in teenage suicides. It is now the second leading cause of death among teenagers and college students. Leaving familiar community and family support systems and adjusting to the demands and responsibilities of a new environment is stressful, especially for freshmen. This is one reason why college students are at high risk.

Here are some myths about suicide. (Put up the following myths on the board or overhead for your students to see.) Discuss them with a partner, saying whether you agree or disagree and why. (After you have given your students time to discuss, give them the facts.)

Myth: People who talk about suicide don't commit suicide.

Fact: Eight out of 10 people who have killed themselves have verbalized their intent beforehand.

Myth: Only certain types of people commit suicide.

Fact: All types of people commit suicide—male and female, young and old, rich and poor, country people and city people. It happens in every racial, ethnic and religious group.

Myth: When a suicidal person begins to feel better, the danger is over.

Fact: Most suicides occur within 90 days following improvement in the person's mental-emotional status.

Myth: People who attempt suicide are merely looking for attention.

Fact: People who threaten or attempt suicide are really reaching out for help. Calling this manipulative in no way diminishes the potential lethality of their actions.

Today, we will be looking into the reasons why people contemplate suicide and how we can overcome this with the help of the Lord.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

What Does the Bible Teach About Suicide?



A. It Breaks the Sixth Commandment

Exodus 20:13 states "You shall not murder." Note that this commandment does not say, "You shall not murder someone," but rather, "You shall not murder," which includes our own life. Human life is sacred. We must cherish it. The Bible records how, on a few occasions, some people did commit suicide. Interestingly enough though, those who did commit suicide were not good men. Every biblical account of suicide reveals an individual whose lifestyle was not honoring God. All were living outside the sphere of the standards of God. These were:

- a. King Saul and his armor bearer. They killed themselves by falling on their swords because they refused to be killed by their enemies (1 Sam 31:3–5). Saul had walked in his own ways, and was forsaken by the Lord when he turned to witchcraft.
- b. Ahithophel had devised a plan for Absalom to kill King David. But they did not follow his counsel. Consequently, he went home and hung himself (2 Sam 17:1–4, 23).
- c. Zimri, military commander of half the chariots in the army of Israel, conspired against the king, struck him and killed him and declared himself king. He killed all the household of Basha, not leaving him any heirs. When the people found out what had happened, they appointed Omri, military commander, as king. The army marched on and besieged Tirzah and defeated the soldiers loyal to Zimri. When Zimri saw that the city was taken he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house down upon himself with fire (1 Kgs 16:8–20).
- d. Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord, hung himself by thrusting himself on a pointed beam causing his insides to gush out (Mt 27:3–5; Acts 1:18).

From these four examples, it is quite evident that those who walk in the paths of sin find themselves at a dead end. Therefore, in order for us not to break the sixth commandment, we need to learn to keep our paths in the way of the Lord.



B. It Deprives Us of the Opportunity to Live for the Lord

When we walk outside the boundaries of God's grace and mercy, we have no hope (Eph 2:12). However, when we trust in the Lord Jesus and walk in His way, we will find purpose and direction in our lives: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 20:31). We need to "trust in the Lord with all [our] heart, and lean not on [our] own understanding; In all [our] ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct [our] paths" (Prov 3:3–5.) We need to entrust our lives to the Lord for He will see us through our trials (1 Cor 10:13). We must remember that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and that our body is not our own, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:19f).



C. It is Selfish

The root of suicide is self-centeredness. When we take away our own lives, we are not only depriving ourselves of the opportunity to live for Christ, but also for Christ to live in and through us. We are basically taking away what is the Lord's. Moreover, suicide allows us to cater to our own desires and our own will and ignores the effects it has on others—our parents, our siblings, our teachers, our church brethren, our friends, our roommates. Apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians 2:3, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."



D. It is Rebellion Against God

When we take our own life, we are saying that we don't care about God's purpose and plan for our life. We are rebelling against Him, and in a way denying His sovereign power and authority. We are making a decision in the place of God. Instead, we must remember that the Lord is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph 3:20). Let us therefore "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Eph 4:1).



E. It is Playing into Satans Hands

Satan's purpose is to kill and destroy (John 10:10). He wants people to join him in hell. Therefore he deceives us into believing that there is no way out (Rev 12:9; 20:7f). Don't be deceived and fall into his trap.



Part 2

Why Do People Ask for Death?

In the majority of cases, people attempt suicide because they feel a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, despair and loneliness. These feelings are real to the individual but many times he/she may not be without hope or help. The problem is that the individual has lost perspective. They view life as meaningless and empty and are trying to find a permanent solution for their temporary problems. Let us look into some of the common reasons behind suicide.



A. No Hope

Acts 16:25–31 records how the keeper of the prison wanted to kill himself. As keeper of the prison, his duty was to make sure that everyone was locked up safely. When he saw that the prison doors were open, he thought that all the prisoners had fled. This would mean that his life was on the line, as he did not keep charge of the prisoners. He lost hope and felt that his life would not be worth living anymore.

Many people live in a state of hopelessness. Some believers believe that they are so deep in sin that God could never forgive them. But the Lord promised us in 1 John 1:9 that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We must remember that our hope is in the Lord (Ps 39:7).

Hopelessness often derives from depression. In fact, half of all suicides are due to depression and the inability to deal with life's challenges and problems. As Christians, we must continue to look to the Lord for help and hope. Indeed, this world does not offer us hope, but in the Lord, there is hope! (Ps 43:5).



B. Satans Trap (2 Cor 2:11; 1 Tim 3:7)

The devil is indeed very cunning. He deceives us into thinking that there's no hope. Moreover, not only does he give us the idea that suicide may be the only way out, but once we start to fall into his hands, we are trapped. He creates doubt in our hearts, just like he did to Eve (Gen 3:1–5).

There is a testimony of how a sister committed suicide. It was indeed a very sad occasion. After the funeral service, the pastor, his wife and some brethren went to this sister's house to see what they could do to help the family. When they got there, they saw the noose hanging from the ceiling, which the sister had used to kill herself. Curious, the pastor's wife went up to the noose and stuck her head in. She couldn't understand how this noose could actually take someone's life away. It seemed impossible, as it wasn't that high up. However, as soon as she stuck her head in, the noose began to tighten and her legs dangled. She was screaming and choking. The pastor and the other brethren ran up to her and shouted, "Hallelujah!" It was only at this moment that the noose loosened and the pastor's wife was set free. From this incident we can clearly see that if we leave a foothold for Satan, he will use it and act on it immediately. Even though it seemed impossible that this noose could tragically take away the sister's life, because she had the thought of committing suicide, Satan allowed it to happen and accomplished the goal for her. Therefore, we must be very careful not to fall into Satan's trap, or be blinded by him. Let us be wise and not give place to the devil (Eph 4:27).



C. Frustrated (Num 11)

As a result of the work that the Lord had assigned Moses to do, he suffered physically, mentally and spiritually. The responsibility of leading the Israelites through the wilderness to the promised land was weighing heavily on his shoulders. He was displeased because of the constant moaning and groaning of the Israelites and he was also displeased with the Lord. Moses had continuously endured the burden of the Israelites since they left Egypt. He felt it was too much of a responsibility. He had given them what they wanted. He felt that he was alone in bearing this burden. There was no one there to help him. What he needed was a co-worker with whom he could share this burden. Moses had finally come to the end of the rope: he felt that his only outlet was death. He could not deal with such a big burden any longer.

Sometimes we feel that we have too much work on our plates and the responsibility is too heavy to carry. We feel frustrated that we have done a lot but cannot fulfill our duty. But if we look at Numbers 11:16–20, we see that God addressed Moses' problem from the fundamental point of view—He chose 70 elders to whom He gave His spirit so they would be strong enough to carry the burden with Moses. Sometimes in church, we carry too many burdens and this causes frustration. If we do holy work in a collective and unified way, we will feel less frustrated.

Elijah was led into the desert. The desert signifies pain and living without direction.

It is a place where many get lost. Elijah being led into the desert signifies that he was lost in faith. He lost his purpose, his goal, his spiritual life. Everything seemed nebulous. He was lost because of his own glory and his frustration.

Elijah first became lost on Mount Carmel when everyone was praising him. He spent so much effort reviving their faith and could not understand why he was their target for death. When we work, for whom do we labor? Are we working for our own glory or for the Lord? We may come to a stage where we feel that only we are working. We may think that we are doing everything. We see holy work as a burden rather than a joy. We feel that there is no encouragement, only discouragement. Moreover, like Elijah, we may also have fear within us. When we fear, we will feel lost. Perhaps we are afraid of not living up to the standard of the job. Therefore, we have to constantly check ourselves so that we are not working for our own glory or triumph but are instead working for the Lord. Do not let ourselves lose focus, but "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:1f).



D. Overburdened and Lonely

In the past, Elijah very bravely worked for God, yet after the victory on Mount Carmel he became weak. This is perhaps due to the fact that he felt that all his previous work was due to himself: it was he who resurrected the widow's son, he who boldly spoke to King Ahab, and he who defeated the false prophets. He felt that it was he alone who was left as a prophet of God (1 Kgs 18:22; 19:10,14). Thus, he felt that after having done all this work himself, no one appreciated it but rather wanted to kill him. He became afraid. Even though he had been through worse situations, he still could not seem to get through this one. He had been in the situation where he was by the brook waiting for the ravens to feed him (1 Kgs 17:1–7), in Zarephath surviving on a little flour and oil (1 Kgs 17:8–16), witnessing the resurrection of a child (1 Kgs 17:17–24), witnessing the almighty power of the Lord on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:19–40) and seeing how the skies opened up after 3 years of drought (1 Kgs 18:41–46). Yet all this was overshadowed by Jezebel's death threat.

As human beings we often change our emotions according to the environment. Our faith, however, should not be dependent on others. We should not let people's criticisms or slandering cause us to become weak. We need to realize that it is not because of us that the church is prospering, but rather the work of the Lord. Moreover, we need to eliminate our self-centeredness and rely completely on and entrust everything to the Lord. Constantly remind ourselves that it is the Lord who

works in us, and not we ourselves.

In addition, Elijah felt very lonely. He had no co-workers so he hid in the cave. What did God do to correct Elijah's spiritual status? God asked him to stand in the entrance of the cave and He showed him His mighty power. After Elijah witnessed this he still hid in the cave. Therefore God asked him again what he was doing there. Then the Lord reminded him of two things. First, he had anointed a successor for him. Second, He had reserved seven thousand people for Himself (1 Kgs 19:16–18). Elijah was not aware of this. He thought he was alone. Alone to accomplish the work of God.

Likewise, we may think that only we are able to do God's work. Only we are pure and righteous. But, do we realize that for the purpose of God, He has already prepared others? The affairs of the church are the affairs of the Lord. We are only a vessel, instruments of God. Never think that we are in this alone. "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh 1:9).



E. Mindset

God wanted Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh. But Jonah had his own personal idea. He did not want to see the people in Nineveh repent. Perhaps it was out of patriotism that he would rather see his enemies be destroyed by God. He had his own will, which is why he ran away from God (Jon 4:1–4). But God was merciful to Jonah and to the city of Nineveh. If God did not have mercy for Jonah, He would have destroyed him at the beginning when he tried to run away. Before God executes His justice, He exercises His mercy. God arranged many miraculous ways to remind Jonah. God tried to teach Jonah to be more merciful (Jon 4:10) and not to solely emphasize on justice. If he could be more merciful, he would not be so frustrated. Jonah's problem was his mindset: he wanted justice rather than mercy. His heart was unforgiving and vindictive. Sometimes, people attempt suicide because of their own mindset. They are set in their own ways and are unwilling to change. Don't be a Jonah. Look mercifully on others.



F. Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Alcohol and drug abuse account for a quarter of all suicides. They are deadly weapons in the devil's hands. People usually turn to alcohol and drugs in an attempt to fill the void in their lives. But these things do not satisfy. Instead, they will destroy our bodies and souls.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's" (1 Cor 6:19f). Remember: our bodies belong to Christ. We must not abuse them.



Part 3

What Should We Do If We Have Suicidal Thoughts?



A. Tell it to the Lord

When we feel we have reached the end of the rope and we feel weariness in our souls, we can tell the Lord that we want to quit, just like Elijah (1 Kgs 19:4–5). However, after we have told the Lord, fast and pray and see what He says. It is inevitable that we will face difficulties in our journey of faith. We can bravely tell the Lord that we have had enough.

It is important that we tell the Lord how we feel because He is our Master. However, do not tell other people that we have had enough. Not even the person closest to us. Elijah didn't even tell his servant. Instead, he left him behind (1 Kgs 19:3). After Elijah heard that Jezebel wanted to kill him he ran for his life and quit. He left his servant behind because he did not want to drag him down. Likewise, if we are tired of this spiritual journey and feel that people are talking about us or slandering us, be like Elijah. Do not bring or drag others down with us. We need to ponder on the word of God, listening and meditating. Pray and be filled with the Holy Spirit. By doing so, we will be able to revive our spiritual strength so we can run again and be close to God.



B. Entrust it to the Lord

During a time of hopelessness, the Lord restored hope to the keeper of the prison by granting him salvation (Acts 16:25–31). In times of despair, we will often feel that there is no hope for us. Everything around us will seem dark and dismal and we may feel that the only way out is death. But through this keeper's experience, we know that when there is no way out, God will always open a way. When we think that death is the only solution, the Lord will provide us with an answer. God will resolve our problems.

Once Moses turned to the Lord for help, the Lord appointed 70 elders to help him. Moses did not believe this, but the Lord told Moses He would help him (Num 11:23). We only need to entrust everything to the Lord and just do our part. We need not worry. God has His own timing and His own spirit to move people's hearts.

It is interesting to see how Moses turned to the Lord for help. In every situation when he was in need, Moses unfailingly turned to the Lord. This shows his intimate relationship with the Lord. He understood that the Lord would deliver him out of his most difficult times. This is something that we need to learn: in our times of need, we need to entrust everything to the Lord.

In the same manner, Elijah was able to fall fast asleep because he had told the Lord what he wanted (1 Kgs 19:4f). He relied on the Lord, entrusting everything to him, laying all his burdens aside. If we were in the same situation, would we have been able to fall fast asleep after asking for death? Surely we would be tossing and turning all night. But Elijah's experience reminds us that as long as we entrust all to the Lord, He will take care of it. The Lord will then give us the strength to continue on this spiritual journey.



C. Allow the Power of the Spirit to Strengthen Us

Since our strength is limited there is also a limit to how far we can run; thus Elijah could only go a day's journey. After that he had to sit down and rest under a broom tree. Likewise, in our spiritual lives, our strength and endurance are limited. It is only the power of the spirit dwelling in us which can help sustain us on this spiritual journey.

1 Kings 19:5–8 records how an angel brought bread and water for Elijah to eat. This showed the love of God. This bread was baked on coals, just like what the Lord Jesus did for the apostles when they were weak and returned to their own profession (Jn 21:9). God gave Elijah strength through the word of the Lord and through water—His spirit. When we do holy work, God will provide us with bread to eat and water to drink. When we feel we are weak and need help to continue on this spiritual journey, the Lord will satisfy us and nourish us with His tender love.

Elijah, the jailer and Moses all asked for death in times of despair. However, they did not turn to those around them for help. Instead, they confided in the Lord. Because they turned to the Lord in times of need, the Lord delivered them, opened a way and gave them the strength to carry on. We need to learn from this and

know that in our times of need, it is the Lord alone who can carry us through. When we feel that the road ahead is dark and lonely and there seems to be no way out, turn to the Lord. He will make a way.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1

How does committing suicide break the sixth commandment?

2

What are the main reasons why people commit suicide?

3

How is committing suicide a trap from Satan?

4

What should we do if we have suicidal thoughts?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Part A: "Casting All Your Cares Upon Him, For He Cares For You" (1 Pet 5: 7)

In the Bible study section we looked into different biblical characters who asked for death. Many of their reasons were similar: hopelessness, feeling unloved, weariness, Satan's deception, being over-burdened. Satan's trap is to deceive people into thinking that there is no hope, that no one loves them. This results in people becoming withdrawn and feeling hopeless. But the Lord promised us that He will constantly take care of us as long as we look to Him for help.

Here are the lyrics to a much-loved hymn entitled "God Will Make a Way":

Teaching Tips

If you have a copy of this song, play it to your students while they read the lyrics. It is more effective that way, as they will feel the power of the words and the emotions behind them.

"God will make a way where there seems to be no way,
He works in ways we cannot see,
He will make a way for me,
He will be my guide, hold me closely to His side,

With love and strength for each new day,
He will make a way, He will make a way."

Think about the lyrics. Have there been times in your life where you felt there was no way out? How did you manage to cope with the demands of school, family and church? How has the Lord provided a way for you? Share your thoughts with the class. Please also share some Bible verses which helped you in your darkest moments and that you think would help others too. (The following are some verses, but students can come up with their own.)

- a. "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (Jn 14:18)
- b. "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Is 41:10)
- c. "My soul melts from heaviness; Strengthen me according to Your word." (Ps 119:28)
- d. "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber...The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." (Ps 121:1–8)

Part B: Case Studies

Below are some real life stories of young Christians who have contemplated suicide. Read them and discuss them with the rest of the class. Try to identify the reasons why the person wants to attempt suicide, and think of ways you could encourage him or her.

Case 1: I feel like God has abandoned me and I don't know why!

I believe in God. Yes, I pray and I ask for His guidance. I remember that not long after my conversion, I truly felt God's presence in my life. I felt He was guiding my every step and answered all my questions. But now, I feel that God doesn't seem to be listening to me anymore. My questions are unanswered. I pray to Him, to ask Him to help me, but I feel He has abandoned me. I haven't committed any great sin or anything. Just perhaps the usual ... a white lie here and there. Nothing mortal though. So why do I feel God is not with me? Why do I feel all alone? I just want to quit this world now.

Case 2: I am a Christian, but suicidal too

Where is God? I feel really down. Things aren't going great at home. Since dad passed away, mom's been shutting herself indoors all the time. She doesn't communicate much with us. I miss dad! There's no one really to talk to here. I don't seem to have the energy or the stamina to do anything anymore. Even attending R.E. classes has become a struggle for me. I know my teachers care, but I just don't want to face people. I'd rather stay in and be on my own. I don't even feel like going out with my friends anymore. I just feel there's no meaning to anything. Sometimes I just want to ask God to take away my life so I can be with dad. I really miss him!

Case 3: I can't bear it anymore!

Everything seems to be going wrong. I studied hard to go to college, yet did not get the grades I needed. At church everyone is giving me all the church work to do—teach choir, lead Bible studies, play the piano, teach R.E. I feel overburdened and overwhelmed. Why doesn't someone help me? At home, family life seems unbearable. My sister doesn't come to church anymore. She's hanging out with a bad crowd. Nothing I say or do seems to change her. Mom is worried and dad's no help either. I feel no joy at school, church or home. Where is God? Where is the joy I'm supposed to feel as a Christian? Wouldn't it be better to leave all this behind and go to heaven? Why all this suffering? It's just not worth it!

Case 4: Help!

I started getting involved with a bad crowd a few months back. I experimented with many things. Yes, even alcohol and drugs. I was lucky to be able to get out of it though. No, it wasn't luck. It was definitely God's guidance and I am really thankful to Him for that. But I still feel so sinful. I feel so unworthy to be called His child anymore. I don't know. The sins I committed in the past—I just don't think God would forgive me. I'm so unworthy to be His child. There's just no hope anymore.

Part C: Look to the Cross!

Teaching Tips

You need to have internet access to be able to view this flash. It is a very moving flash which shows the Lord Jesus giving the little boy a cross to hold until He comes back. You are advised to view it first before you allow your students to view it. If you are unable to have access to this, you can tell the students the story and tell them to view it for themselves at home. It is preferable, however, that you view it as a class and then discuss it as it is very powerful!

<http://www.donghaeng.net/english/duty.htm>

This is a story of how the Lord Jesus gives the little boy a cross to hold until He comes back again. The boy agrees and holds this cross. He waits and waits, but the Lord Jesus still hasn't returned. The boy begins to get very tired and weary. It begins to rain, then storms come and the rain becomes heavier. The boy becomes weak and is unable to bear this cross anymore. Eventually the cross becomes too heavy. The environment seems to be against him too. He falls down and gives up. But then, at that moment, he remembers the promise that he had made to Lord Jesus: he will carry the cross for Him until the Lord returns. On remembering this, the boy gets up and picks up the cross again. No matter how hard it is he continues to hold the cross because the Lord promised He would return. In the end, the Lord comes back and the boy is rewarded. The boy is extremely joyful and he forgets all the pain he endured. The storms and the rain cease and in their place is sunshine!

After you have viewed this flash with your students, discuss it with them.
(<http://www.donghaeng.net/english/duty.htm>)

Questions to think about:

1. Why do you think this boy was able to hold the cross for so long?
2. What do you think were the reasons behind his fall? Why was he unable to bear the cross anymore? What parallels can you draw between his reasons and your own reasons?
3. In the end, what helped him get back on his feet and bear the cross again? How can this help you?

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Sing hymn 523: What a Day That Will Be.

This is a hymn of hope and encouragement. It provides us with great joy and hope for the future. Nothing is as bleak as it seems, for "the Lord will wipe all tears from their eyes" (Rev 21:4). In times of desperation, in times of hopelessness, in times of distress, in times of need, we need to turn to the Lord. Only He can provide us with the strength we need to carry on. Only He can save us, comfort us, and give us peace and hope. In the end, the storms and rain will past. In its place will be beautiful sunshine!

Goals

The underlying message in all of these lessons is that God is with us no matter what problems or issues we may have in life. Sometimes we may think that we are alone in dealing with our problems, and we try to seek out ways to deal with them ourselves. But the Lord promised us that He will always be with us, guiding our every way, if we but only turn to Him.

Students will be asked to take a hard look at their lives, to see if there are any areas that they may be sinning against the Lord. They will be prompted to think about their daily actions and what they can do to serve and glorify the Lord instead. They will be guided towards ways in which they can walk with God on a deeper level and to knit their hearts with Him.

unit
3**Teacher Devotional**

When it comes down to it, have you truly handed over your life issues to the Lord? Have you laid all at His feet and given over your worries and burdens to Him? The Lord commands us to go to Him and to cast all our burdens at His feet (1 Pet 5:7). This is easier said than done. Of course, we believe in the Lord, and most certainly, we do cast our anxieties upon Him. However, we often hold a little back for ourselves to deal with. We don't truly cast all our cares onto Him because we don't have complete trust or faith in Him. We need to learn to let go and let God deal with the issues that are dearest to our hearts. Only by completely letting go of our burdens will we be able to enjoy the blessings and joy the Lord has in store for us.

Let Go and Let God take care of you

"Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved." (Ps 55:22)

Lesson 8

Internet Addiction

Listed Scriptures

Jas 1:13-15; 1 Pet 5:8; 1:15f; 1 Cor 10:13; Mt 5:27-30; Ps 119:11

Lesson Aim

- 1) To understand that the images we see and conversations we have online do impact our thinking and life in subtle ways.
- 2) To understand that many images and conversations we engage in online are not real.
- 3) To do a self-check and gauge our level of addiction.
- 4) To use the Internet to serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."
(Mt 5:29)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Hosea 10-12

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



James 1:14f says, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." Satan is the one who tries to tempt us. Once we sin we fall into his control and we are judged. In 1 Peter 5:8 it reminds us to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Satan is indeed very cunning. He does not devour us physically, but tempts us. If we look at the case of Adam and Eve, we can see this quite evidently. Satan did not devour them. He tempted them and they sinned. They were afraid to face God because they would have to face the judgment of God. Likewise, when we sin against God, we will

have to face His judgment. Satan himself cannot kill us but he will tempt us to sin and God will judge us.

We are tempted when we are drawn away from the right path, away from God, by our own desires. Sometimes our desires will tempt us. Desire itself can be neutral. But when the desire crosses the boundary of truth, it becomes lust and that lust will tempt us. When we go on the Internet and surf we are free to visit any website we wish. However, we may be tempted by the spam messages we get to visit inappropriate sites, such as pornographic ones. When we click on such sites to view them, we are crossing the boundary of truth. This becomes lust which grows in our hearts and begins a plan of action. If we don't abort it, it will cause us to sin. Be very watchful! Satan tempts us through our own lusts. We have to therefore control the lust of the flesh and learn to abide in God because God will hold us accountable for everything we do (Mt 12:36f).

W A R M U P



Read this to your students and ask them to think about it:

Hi! My name's Gordon and I'm a Netaholic. It's been 5 minutes since my last Internet fix. Even though I know there's nothing really worth searching for on the Internet, I still feel the desire to be online. I crave the Internet, especially the chat rooms. I get such a high from talking to my friends on the net. And even if my friends aren't on it, I'll find other people to talk to. Usually, I come straight home from school, grab a quick bite and start surfing while chatting to my friends online. Sometimes I don't go to bed till 1 or 2 am. My mom thinks I'm doing my homework. Well, I am, sort of. I do it while chatting online. Hey, who said you can't multi-task?

What do you think of Gordon's story? Could this happen? Could someone actually become addicted to the Internet? Why?

According to a study, as many as eleven million people are addicted to the Internet. It has become one of the fastest growing addictions in today's society and is ranked alongside other addictions such as smoking, drinking, and gambling. Today, we'll be looking into the causes of Internet addiction and how it can affect our spiritual lives.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Internet Addiction: The Facts



A. What is Addiction?

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to use the Net ... and he won't bother you for weeks."

An addiction is defined as a behavior that:

- provides a feeling of an intoxicating "high" or "rush"
- escalates and becomes habitual
- requires increasing quantities for satisfaction
- continues even in the face of great personal consequences
- displays symptoms of withdrawal when attempting to stop

Is the Internet really a credible form of addiction? According to research, yes it is. Professionals have now termed those who spend hours online or who show characteristics of withdrawal symptoms as having Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD).



B. What Causes Internet Addiction?

The roots of addiction can usually be traced to a wish to suppress or avoid some kind of emotional pain. Addiction is a way to escape from reality, from something that is either too full of sadness or too devoid of joy, which is evident among alcohol and drug addicts. Internet addiction offers a fantasy world where the addict comes into denial and believes that the people he or she meets online as more real than his or her actual friends.



C. What Are They Addicted To?

Research has shown that over 10 percent of students have an Internet dependency problem. Unfortunately, many are usually unaware of this until it becomes serious. In actuality there are many different areas of the Internet that people become addicted to ranging from online multi-user games to online chat rooms. The four main categories of activities that people become hooked on are:

a. **Sex**

This ranges from pornographic sites to cybersex and encourages such things as flirting to masturbation. Easy access, anonymity, and affordability have all made Internet porn more attractive and seemingly less dangerous. This addiction becomes very dangerous as it could lead to actual meetings with online contacts for in-person sex.

b. **Money**

Gambling, online auctions, day trading and shopping all fall under this category. Such addictions can cause conflict in families when the addict loses or spends a significant portion of the family income.

c. **Chat Rooms**

This also includes instant messaging and is a problem in its own right. Unlike e-mail, chat servers allow for "real-time" interaction. In addition to keeping in touch with loved ones, such technologies allow the user to "meet" and make friends with people from all over the world. They can take on an anonymous new identity and forge new friendships. In some cases these computer-based interactions take the place of real physical human contact, thus leading the person to live in a virtual world.

d. **Surfing**

This is perhaps the only form of Internet addiction whereby the addict can truly be said to be addicted, with the exception of online chatting. Surfing addicts or "Internet vampires" (because they surf all night) thrive on seeing what's out there. They waste a lot of precious time trying to find if there's anything interesting. Their quest is not finding specific bits of information but about finding any information, about anything, anywhere.



D. What Are the Effects of Internet Addiction?

Like most other addictions, Internet addiction disrupts relationships with family and friends and has a tendency to replace school and other positive activities. When students get hooked and stay up late every night online, they lose sleep, fail at school, withdraw socially, and lie to their parents about what's happening. In the most extreme of cases, Internet addiction, particularly pornography, could lead to rape or sexual abuse. Most broadly, pornography has been demonstrated to shape attitudes, and its harms can range from damaged relationships to the increasingly common incidences of date rape, compulsive behavior, and "acting out" in dangerous ways.



Part 2

What Are the Signs of Internet Addiction?



A. Are We An Internet Addict?

How do we know if we're addicted to the Internet? Some people spend 20 hours on the Internet per week and say that they are fine, while others spend 10 or 15 hours and yet become hooked. What is important in differentiating normal from problem Internet use is the experience of compulsion to use the net. Normal users, no matter how heavy their usage, do not need to get online and do not neglect their duties or their relationship with family and friends to get online. Let's take a test to see if you are addicted! For each question, put a check in the box that you feel relates to you the best. Then add the numbers you selected for each response to obtain a final score.

Question	Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Frequently (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
1. How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?					
2. How often do you neglect your work to spend more time online?					
3. How often do you form new relationships with fellow online users?					
4. How often do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend online?					
5. How often do your grades or school work suffer because of the amount of time you spend online?					
6. How often do you check your email before something else that you need to do?					

Question	Rarely (1)	Sometimes (2)	Frequently (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
7. How often do you become defensive or secretive when anyone asks you what you do online?					
8. How often do you find yourself seeking more stimulating material on the Internet and have experienced guilt or shame about your relationship with God?					
9. How often do you snap, yell, or act annoyed if someone bothers you while you are online?					
10. How often do you lose sleep due to late-night log-ins?					
11. How often do you feel preoccupied with the Internet when offline, or fantasize about being online?					
12. How often do you try to cut down the amount of time you spend online and fail?					
13. How often do you try to hide how long you've been online?					
15. How often do you feel depressed, moody, or nervous when you are offline, which goes away once you are back online?					

The higher your score, the greater your level of addiction and the problems your Internet usage causes. Here's a general scale to help measure your score:

Total Score	Level of Addiction
15–34 points	You are an average online user. You may surf the Web a bit too long at times, but you have control over your usage. Try to cut down a bit on your usage.
35–54 points	You are experiencing occasional or frequent problems because of the Internet. You should consider its full impact on your life. You also need to cut down on your usage and try to find other things to fill your life instead.
55–75 points	Your Internet usage is causing significant problems in your life. You should evaluate the impact of the Internet on your life and address the problems directly caused by your Internet usage. You need help. Talk to someone you can trust about your problem.

Adapted from "The Internet Addiction Survey," Dr. Kimberly Young



B. Signs of Internet Addiction

Here are some signs of an Internet addict. Are you one of them? Is the amount of time you spend on the Internet having a negative effect on your social, personal, and school life, and possibly your relationship with God?

1. You can't stop logging on to the Internet on a regular and daily basis.
2. You spend an excessive amount of time in chat rooms.
3. You spend more time online than with friends and loved ones.
4. You are dishonest about the amount of time you spend online.
5. You become defensive and secretive when people ask you what you do online.
6. You are over-dependent on the computer. You spend a lot of time online, often overtaking other things in your life like school and God.
7. You're using the Internet as a way of escaping your problems.
8. Your loved ones are concerned about your absence because of the time you spend on the Internet.
9. You demonstrate a loss of control when trying to stop or limit the amount of time on the computer.
10. You feel restless, irritable, depressed, or anxious when someone or something

shortens your time or interrupts your plans to use the computer.

11. You find yourself seeking more stimulating material on the Internet and you have experienced guilt or shame about your relationship with God.
12. You find yourself using the computer at times when you are feeling uncomfortable, irritated, or sad about something happening in your life.
13. You find yourself preoccupied with the computer when you are not using the computer.
14. You lose sleep due to staying up late frequently to be online.
15. Your grades and school work are suffering because of the amount of time you spend online.



Part 3

Overcoming Addiction

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor 10:13)

So, what do we do if we find out that we're addicted? The key is to first acknowledge that we have a problem. Then follow these steps to make changes in our lives. If we have a focus or a goal in our lives, we will not fall easily. The ability to stand strong depends not on our own strength, but on God's provision of a way out. The key is to focus on God's ability to deliver us from temptation.



A. Repent and Confess to God (Ps 51:17)

Often, our prayers cannot reach God because our sin separates us from Him. We are unable to reach Him because of our iniquities (Is 59:2; Jer 5:25). The only way for us to reach Him is to first cleanse ourselves from all evil, for the Lord is holy and those who worship Him must also be holy in their conduct (1 Pet 1:15f). We need to therefore restore our broken relationship with the Lord and acknowledge our sin (Ps 32:5; 40:12). After repentance and confession, we must make a determination to be pure and never repeat the same offense again. Let's do what Job did and make a covenant with our eyes never to sin again (Job 31:1).



B. Seek Spiritual Support (Jas 5:16)

We need a spiritual support group so that we won't relapse into our addictions. A lack of accountability will allow the problem to resurface, but telling others offers the potential for support. The more we use the Internet, the more isolated we become. The more isolated we become, the greater the likelihood that we will continue to engage in the addictive pattern due to guilt and shame. Isolation can lead to depression. Don't isolate yourselves! Thus, we need to seek help from trustworthy brothers and sisters, counselors, and ministers who can maintain confidentiality, have a good level of spirituality, pray for us, advise us with the words of God and hold us accountable.



C. Practice Self-Discipline (Gal 5:22f)

We need to have a plan to keep ourselves away from the lure of online images. The plan must address all our physical, mental, social and spiritual needs. The lure of lust is powerful. To avoid its snare, we must be wise in protecting every possible area of temptation. In Matthew 5:29 it says, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." We need to remove anything from our lives that could potentially cause us to relapse into sin. That could mean obtaining filters for our Internet service, block out certain services that are a problem for us like chat rooms, or even eliminating it completely until we feel that we've established control over the problem. We can also place a maximum limit on how much time we spend online. Force ourselves to do other activities while we're away from our computer so that we can develop other healthy habits and hobbies.

To give up excessive surfing we must want to do it—and we must believe we'll succeed. We may find our addiction gives us an escape route from some other problem in our life. Think about the reasons behind our addiction carefully. We need to tackle these problems—escaping to the Internet won't make them go away.

Sometimes though, we may need to stop using the computer altogether. Perhaps we can start by designating one day per week that we will not turn on the computer or log onto the Internet. Train ourselves so that we can tolerate a day or evening without it. Resolve to spend less time online. We need to act now, don't delay!



D. Establish Intimacy with God (1 Thess 4:3f)

Many go online to find intimacy. The Internet offers plenty of sex but fails to offer the depth and long-term satisfaction of face-to-face intimacy with a real person in a committed relationship. In order to overcome our lusts and desires, we need to develop intimacy with God. Only God's spirit can free us or bring us to our senses. Spending time in communion with God through prayer in the spirit will satisfy our souls, and we will not need to find other ways to fill the void in our lives. If we spend our time and energy walking in the spirit and trying to produce its fruit, we will not be susceptible to sinful desires (Gal 5:25; Col 1:10–12).

Another integral part of maintaining our relationship with God is doing good and serving Him (Mt 7:12, 21). If we focus on maintaining a close communion with the Lord and put our efforts in serving Him, we will not be tempted to fill our lives with empty pursuits or vain gratification. We need to keep this goal in mind. Pray fervently. Resist with the words of God. Leave no space for Satan. "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:4).



E. Renew Our Mind (Rom 12:1f)

We must change our thought patterns in order to overcome our addictions. If our minds are idle, it is highly likely that we will lose the battle. However, an active mind that invests in pure, true and good thoughts will win. To overcome our bad habits, we must renew our minds by ingesting the word of God. Not only that, but we must also memorize the words of God. Hiding His word in our heart will give us victory over, and be a defensive weapon against, sin (Ps 119:11).

F. Find Other Interests

Find something that will interest us, preferably something that has nothing to do with computers or the Internet. Try a new activity or hobby. Take up some form of exercise. Exercise is fun, can improve our health and improve our energy levels. Research has also shown the efficacy of exercise in improving psychological well being and treating addiction problems.

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praisewor-

thy—meditate on these things" (Phil 4:8). The things that produce purity, those things that are right and proper are the interests we should seek as they produce positive results. "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16).

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



There are no questions for this lesson. Please see the questions found in the Life Application section.

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Part A: Case Studies

Study the following case studies carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Case 1

As a junior in high school, I got hooked on the Internet. It started out just as chatting in the chat rooms. Slowly, I became addicted to these chat rooms. I even developed a few on-line pen-pal relationships. It was harmless, or so I thought. When I think back now, I think I was just fooling myself. There was an appeal to it, somehow. Later, I even met people I came to know from the chat rooms. Some were only a little over four hours away from where I lived. Sometimes, we would get together with each other and hang out. Some days I stayed on the Internet for over twenty hours. Right after class, I would head home and log on. I started failing school, and my relationships with my family members were horrible. It took me over two years to get back to reality again.

Questions to think about:

1. What do you think got this person hooked on the Internet in the first place?
2. What do you think was the appeal in chat rooms?
3. How do you think this person got back to reality?

Case 2

Tony, a 14 year old, rushes home every night to go online to play games, most of which are violent. "By day, I look as if I'm a mild mannered guy, and a hard-working student. People at church think that I'm a good kid," Tony said. "But by night,

with a click of the button, I turn into the most aggressive person that you could imagine. And no one knows it's me doing this. It's scary. I need help with it."

Questions to think about:

1. What do you think causes this aggressiveness in Tony?
2. How can you help him with his addiction?

Case 3

Stacy gained Internet access as part of her job as an administrative assistant in a busy real estate office. But instead of streamlining her work communication, she cruised the singles ads of cyberspace and met a guy she liked. They typed love messages back and forth throughout the work day. When Stacy's boss caught on, he cut off her Internet privileges at work and gave her an official warning. "So I begged a friend at work to let me borrow her Internet account," she confessed. "When my boss found out, he fired me on the spot."

Questions to think about:

1. What do you think Stacy's problem is?
2. What does she need to do to stop her from getting into more trouble?

Case 4

I was once addicted to the Internet so much at times I barely even slept. I hardly ever ate, and subsequently lost many, many pounds. It was a blessing and curse all rolled into one. I am thankful that the words of God pulled me back out of the chat rooms and made me realize how sinful my mind can be. I have to give thanks to the Spiritual Convocation that I went to. Yes, the Internet is very addictive. Be very alert that God is watching every single thing that you do. I vowed to never enter chat rooms anymore. It can lure you into doing many things that are against God's will, especially sexual sins.

Questions to think about:

1. Do you think it was only the words of God that helped pull this person back? What else helped?
2. Why do people still go and do things they shouldn't do, knowing that "God is watching every single thing that you do"?

Case 5

Let me describe my tragic story to you. When my parents bought a computer for me, I learned quickly that I could meet friends online. I realized that it didn't matter to my cyberfriends that I was overweight and insecure. The chat room was a

place of promise and acceptance. This was a place where I could be myself without being physically seen. Life began to take on more excitement and promise. I spent so many hours online that I didn't even mind if I lost some sleep. What got me more excited was that what started out as friendly chat room conversation soon became cybersex. Cybersex is consensual sex practiced by typing descriptions of sexual acts and exchanging in verbal dialogue via e-mail or instant messaging. Cybersex contains a lot of fantasy and I was thrilled by it. It was soon followed by telephone sex. From there, it didn't take very long to reach the inevitable hotel meeting for "real-time" sex. I was so crazy to meet this woman that it didn't even matter that she was a stranger, except for the time we spent "together" online. Because of my curiosity, I found myself meeting her in the hotel room many times after that. Six months later, I found that I had contracted HIV. It had a shocking impact and it caused so much pain physically and emotionally that it brought me back to reality. I had become addicted to the Internet without realizing it and the disease I tragically contracted was far from virtual.

Questions to think about:

1. Do you think that such a situation could happen in the church? Why or why not?
2. What could have been done to prevent this from happening? When should the person have realized his problem?

Part B: Internet Ministry

Society today is filled with good and evil. The Internet is a reflection of that, offering a wealth of resources, some of which are good and some of which are evil. As Christians, the Lord commanded us to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:16). We need to go out and shine our light on the Internet. We need to use the Internet as a medium for presenting the good news of Jesus Christ and as a tool for ministering to today's youth.

In groups of three or four, think of some ways you could use the Internet to serve God. For example you could set up a prayer network over the Internet. You could build your own website and have a prayer form where people can enter prayer requests which will be delivered to you by email. Or you could set up a web log (blog) and post your favorite verses or share your thoughts with other Christians. An excellent web site for this is from some brothers and sisters of our church. The website is www.renewed.nu. Another good website where brothers and sisters can share their thoughts, testimonies, questions or ideas is <http://forum.tjc.ca/por>

tal.php. Before you do this though, keep the following blog from www.renewed.nu, in mind:

May 17, 2002

For the record, this is written in all sincerity and love. In no way do I want to come off seeming unconstructively critical.

I was awakened this morning with pain in my teeth—I had attempted to wear the retainers I haven't worn for about a year. So six o'clock in the morning I'm lying in bed and, being a thinker/dreamer, something came to mind:

The Internet presents the wonderful opportunity to publish anything you want. You are your own publishing company. With recent user-friendly content management (journal) systems, such as blogger, livejournal, xanga, publishing one's own ideas is even easier. However all of us must realize the very fact that publishing means making public. Hence, the same word root "pub." As followers of Christ we cannot merely follow what everyone else is doing, posting all of our feelings and actions without any concern for our readership. Who is our readership? The PUBLIC, meaning anyone, including your next door neighbor, our school mates, some stranger searching the Internet, your little sister, mother, pastor, or perhaps younger believers in Christ who cannot discern yet what is right or wrong. The latter is my main concern.

An owner of a blog must question the purpose of his/her blog. What's its point? A place to encourage, exhort, edify? To entertain, to vent, rant, and rave? Or just a place to let folks know what's going on?

My main point is, if you have a blog, or are planning on creating a weblog, consider your readership and the point of your blog. I believe most intend their readership to be other TJC friends. In that case, please watch what you write—there are younger ones (physically or spiritually) that will not benefit from certain types of posts. Those go in your own personal journal, not on the Internet. If we are going to be a generation that simply follows trends without foresight, we are in some deep trouble. We ought to use technology to our advantage.

I am happy to say that the guest writers on this site have exemplified this, and in fact, at times, write too little! If we could only have more of their learning experiences and acquired wisdom! Our guest writers, including myself, go through the same deal most people go through—fun, laughter, sadness, spirituality struggles, and personal problems. But a PUBLIC blog, especially from a TJC believer, should

follow the teachings of Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your [fingers], but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the [readers]." Therefore, blog in moderation with nothing excessive, avoid unnecessary posts, and privatize in your own handwritten journal.

Remember: you must critically examine your motive and the way you use the Internet. "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess 5:21f).

Teaching Tips

If there is time photocopy "The Darkness of Cyberporn," Manna, Issue 34 Jan- Mar 2001 for your students to read and discuss. It is a very good article about pornography on the Internet and the effects it can have on those who take part in it.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 177: Yield Not to Temptation.

Very often we fall into temptation because we are yielding to our own desires and lusts. But this hymn reminds us that we have to fight off our desires and subdue every passion by looking to the Lord Jesus. He will carry us through. We need God's power and spirit to dwell within us so that we have the strength to shun all evil. Even though we are weak at times, ask the Lord to help us and use our faith to conquer our passions. May the Lord help us and keep us in Him in our daily struggles against temptation.

Blockbusters

Listed Scriptures

2 Tim 2:22; Prov 4:23; Col 2:8; Jas 1:21-27; Ps 101:3

Lesson Aim

- 1) To understand that the images we see impact our minds and thinking.
- 2) To make a commitment to not watch non-edifying movies.
- 3) To find ways to use our spare time and money in more meaningful ways.

Memory Verse

"Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way." (Ps 119:37)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Hosea 13-Joel 1

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



James 4:8 tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. God is light. God is love. God is spirit. If God is drawing near to us, we will feel His light in our hearts. Sin and iniquity will therefore have no place to hide. When God fills us we will also feel His love. We will feel overjoyed being in His love. Moreover, when He is in us, His spirit will fill us and we will be filled with power, peace and joy. Thus, if God lives within us and we are completely filled by Him, then we can feel the peace of the heavenly kingdom in our hearts. "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). These are the benefits of drawing near to God. Let us draw near to the heavenly Father so we can receive this abundant blessing, casting away all evil thoughts and desires from our hearts.

W A R M U P



Give your students the Spiritual Vision Test to evaluate their spiritual condition. After they've taken the test, give them their diagnoses.

Spiritual Vision Test

Measure your spiritual vision with this test. Circle the letter that you agree with.

1. When you lay on your back in an open field and look into a cloud-filled sky, what do you see? (Ps 19:1)
 - a. A rainbow
 - b. A thundercloud
2. When you see a glass half-filled with water, do you consider it:
 - a. Half-full
 - b. Half-empty
3. When you see a driver cut you off, then direct an obscene gesture at you, what's your reaction?
 - a. A feeling of compassion for someone so driven by anger
 - b. To return an obscene gesture
4. What is your reaction when you're in a group that's passing along bad but true gossip about someone you know?
 - a. Suggest that there are two sides to every story, and that you're not in a position to judge.
 - b. Just listen—and be thankful you're not the subject of this gossip.
5. When you look at peoples' faults, what do you see first? (Mt 7:1-5)
 - a. The log in your eye
 - b. The speck in their eye
6. What kinds of movies do you like to see?
 - a. Movies about adventure or wholesome relationships
 - b. Movies characterized by sex or violence

7. Which would you rather watch?
 - a. Sunsets
 - b. TV
8. Which would you rather read?
 - a. The Bible
 - b. A novel

Diagnosis: For every a. answer you circled, give yourself two points. For every b. answer you circled, give yourself one point.

Score	Diagnosis	Treatment
14-16	You have Heavenly Vision. Thank God!	Keep looking at our Lord Jesus! (Heb 12:1f)
11-1	You have Spiritual Farsightedness.	You need to be more watchful (Mk 1:15).
7-10	You have Laodicean Vision. Your eyes are neither good nor bad. You run the risk of losing your sight altogether (Rev 3:14-16).	You need to "anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev 3:18).
4-6	You have Roaming Eyes. Your eyes are darkened because they have roamed from the things of God to the pleasures of the world.	You need to look to the light so you can regain your vision again. Look for the new heavens and the new earth (2 Pet 3:13f).
1-3	You have Spiritual Glaucoma. You're spiritually blind. The darkness of the world is all around you (1 Jn 2:9-11).	"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Mt 5:29).

Adapted from Spiritual Vision Test, Discussion & Lesson Starters 2 for Youth Groups, Youth Specialties, Inc., 1997, U.S.A.

How did you do? Do any of you have Spiritual Glaucoma? I hope not! Sometimes though, we are blinded by the world around us without even realizing it. Today, we'll be looking into how many movies nowadays can spiritually blind us and what we should do about it.



Part 1

What's the Big Deal About Watching Movies?

From their inception, motion pictures and television have pushed the boundaries of morality in society farther from the standard of God's word. Nowadays many movies, even PG-13 ones, contain nudity, immorality, violence, and foul language. From the standpoint of a Christian who wants to obey the Lord's call to holiness, there is no real difference. Immodesty is immodesty. Cursing is cursing. Blasphemy is blasphemy. Extramarital sex is extramarital sex. If one movie contains a little less of these things than another movie, that does not make either movie acceptable before God.

It is crucial that we make wise choices regarding entertainment so that we will not stumble. The moral stances and opinions of the film industry (particularly Hollywood) are very different to, and often contradict, God's standards. If we want to be godly and innocent, then we must show it with our actions. If we say we want to be holy and set apart for God, then we must be careful what we ingest into our lives. As apostle Paul reminds us, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim 2:22).

When it comes to choosing movies, we must be wise in our decisions. Many movies today are filled with things that can be destructive to our resolve and convictions. Have we ever sat through a movie that made us cringe? Have we ever seen something on the screen that we wished we could erase from our memory? We must know our convictions and live with them. Don't let movies be the cause of our downfall! The following are four areas which we need to be aware of when watching movies.

**A. Sexual Content** (1 Thess 4:1-8)

Both society and media are saturated with sexual images, innuendo, and conversation. If we do not filter these out of our life, we will be affected. We may think that watching a movie with some sexual scenes will not affect us. But such images will stay with us and will pollute us. If we continue to watch movies with sexual

scenes in them, we will slowly be influenced. If we watch a movie with sexual images or innuendo and our heart is moved, then this is sin. We are basically paying money to tempt ourselves.

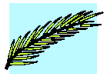
The effects of watching sexually explicit material could have a serious consequence on our faith. It could lead to: lust and inappropriate sexual arousal, guilt or shame; and questioning or rebelling against God's standards. When we watch a movie, ask ourselves if it crosses the boundary of truth. Are we watching the movie because of the sexual content? Be very careful! "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (Jas 1:14f).

**B. Negative and Cynical Views of God**

The film industry does not present a positive view of God or those who worship Him. When the film industry is trying to spread an offensive image of God, we should be offended. How can we sit through a movie when the actors curse using our heavenly Father's name? How can we sit through a movie that takes "the name of the Lord your God in vain?" (Ex 20:7). How can we claim to truly love the Lord when we are sitting through a film that mocks the One who has given His life for us?

**C. Violence and Anger** (Rom 1:28-32)

Watching a movie with graphic violence and anger will just feed our own violence and anger. Even though we may think it is just a harmless movie, it does affect our emotions. Look at the news nowadays. How many of the shootings and killings that go on are a result of violence seen on screen? "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal 6:8f).

**D. Occult Movies**

We should not sit through a movie that tries to convince us that supernatural forces other than God should be embraced or feared. Don't let our defense down. Don't think that since other people are doing it, it gives us the right to do it too. Don't be like Saul who inquired of a medium for help (1 Sam 28). Remember that we are

fighting a spiritual battle and we are serving the Lord of heaven and earth. Therefore, we must have absolutely nothing to do with the evil spirits or those that are against our Heavenly Father.

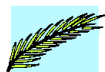
"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (Jas 1:27).

Part 2



What Are Our Motives?

An important question that we have to ask ourselves is, "Why are we watching this movie?" What are our motives? Perhaps our reasons are:



A. Boredom

We feel bored so we want to go and enjoy ourself by seeing a movie. There is no harm in this. It really depends on the kind of film we choose to watch. However, the next time we feel bored, stressed, frustrated, or depressed, instead of going to the movies, try going to our heavenly Father. True satisfaction comes from Jesus Christ. "Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days!" (Ps 90:14). The key to battling boredom is to keep ourselves busy with something meaningful that will strengthen our spirituality.



B. Stimulation

We may feel sometimes that we would like some excitement in our lives. So, we turn to movies. But have we tried frequent daily prayers instead? We will find that we receive much joy and satisfaction from it. The Holy Spirit will fill us with strength and stimulate us! It will renew our strength, mounting us up with wings like eagles (Is 40:31).



Part 3

Pursue Spiritual Sensitivity

Many Christians have allowed themselves to become desensitized to sin. They have become like a frog. If we drop a frog into a pot of boiling hot water it would

immediately try to jump out, but if we put the frog in the pot and gradually increase the heat, we can eventually boil it because it does not recognize what is happening to it. This is what has happened to the average Christian in today's wicked society. They have been influenced by the society around them. Instead of setting themselves apart from society, they have in turn lowered their Christian standards and morals to fit in with the world. This should not be the case.

We need to have spiritual sensitivity. Spiritual sensitivity is the ability to perceive and respond, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to God's will, His love, and our wrongdoings. To be spiritually sensitive is to be alert. This comes about through prayer and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Here are some tips on pursuing spiritual sensitivity. Follow them carefully. Don't let ourselves slip into spiritual callousness.



A. Listen Carefully to the Lord's Instructions (Jas 1:21)

How do we listen carefully to God's instructions? By reading and meditating on His word. If we keep God's word in our heart, it will keep Him close to us and keep us far from sin. Ephesians 6:17 describes the word of God as the "sword of the Spirit." We are fighting a spiritual battle. We need the sword, the word of God, to help us fight off lust and temptation. The Bible is our sword. Read it. Memorize it. Internalize it. Listen to it. It will train us in righteousness and help us attack our desires. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16f).

There was a sister who loved to watch movies. It didn't matter what type of movies they were, she would always go to the movie theater or rent them to watch at home. One day she rented a film which contained a lot of sexual scenes. Deep down inside her she knew she shouldn't watch it. There was a nagging feeling in her heart telling her not to watch it, as if God was warning her. But she shrugged off the thought, and consoled herself that it would be the last time. However, the very next day, this sister's eye developed a very serious sty. The inflammation was

so bad that pus ran out from it. This sister knew immediately that it was God's punishment to her. She repented before God and vowed never to watch such movies again.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4).



B. Knit Our Hearts to the Heart of God (Ps 73:28)

In whatever situation he was in, King David always looked to God for advice (2 Sam 5:19). Not only did he seek advice, he also waited for God's instruction and followed it. Likewise, in order to remain sensitive, we need to be in tune with God's heart. How do we remain sensitive? Psalm 51:7-10 says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." In order to be in tune with God's heart, we need to be cleansed by the Holy Spirit so that He can work within us, guiding our every step.



C. Open Our Eyes (Ps 101:3)

To be able to see as God sees, we need to have spiritual eyes. We need the Holy Spirit to direct and guide us into all truth. "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (Jn 16:13). The Spirit can only guide and teach us when we are willing to submit to Him (Jn 14:26). We need to purify our hearts as Elder James commands in James 4:8. In order to do this, we need to purify our eyes as the two are inextricably connected: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Mt 6:22f).

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1

What are the four areas we need to be aware of when making entertainment choices?

2

What are the two main motives for watching movies?

3

What should we do to pursue spiritual sensitivity?

4

How does the word of God act as a sword?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Part A: The Brownie Story

A father of two teenagers had a rule in the house that no one could watch R rated movies. One time, a really popular movie came out that all the youths were raving about. Even youths at church were talking about it. The teens really wanted to watch the movie, but it was rated R so they knew their father would not readily permit them to see the movie. To make a case, they decided to research and list all of the pros and cons of watching that movie. The pros were that it was a quality film made by a famous director, it starred famous actors, had a good storyline, etc. The cons were that it had some foul language, violence, and one sex scene (but mostly implied sex, which we see on regular TV). The teens presented their case to the father. To their delight, he said that he would think about it and let them know that evening.

That evening, the father called his kids downstairs to his study to hear the verdict. The kids came down and were pleasantly surprised to see their father with a plate of brownies. The father said to the kids, "I thought through your request to see the movie and I will allow you to watch the movie if you will simply eat a brownie." The kids jumped with glee. "But before you try the brownie, I'd like you to know that I made these from scratch, following a famous cookbook recipe and using the finest ingredients. The only thing is that I added a little bit of dog poop. I mixed it thoroughly into the batch, so you probably won't even taste it." The kids were grossed out with the thought of eating dog poop and would not dare to eat the brownie.

Questions to think about:

1. What case was the father trying to make with the brownies?
2. Do you think the kids went to see the movie? If not, what prevented them from going?
3. What does this tell us about watching certain movies, especially R rated ones?

Part B: Case Studies

Case 1

Brock, a church brother, confides that he has been watching adult movies on cable television late at night. Recently, he has had difficulty praying because scenes from the movies flash in his mind every time he closes his eyes. He has completely stopped reading the Bible and has lost interest in attending church services. He knows what he is doing is wrong, but he lacks the strength or the will to stop. ("Overcoming Temptations and Sin," *A New Life in Christ, Workbook for New Believers*, True Jesus Church, 2000)

Questions to think about:

1. What practical advice could you give him? What could you share from personal or others' experience that could help him?
2. What other action might you take?

Case 2

Olivia loves to watch movies. Every opportunity she gets, she will try to get other people to watch movies with her. She likes all kinds of movies. However, Olivia also loves to come to church to worship God, pray, and study the Bible. Recently, Olivia was put in charge of the Religious Education Department at her local church. She has been doing an excellent job. In fact, Olivia is one of the most respected teachers among her R.E. students.

One Sabbath Day, following church services, Olivia took all the children from her class to see a very sexually explicit and violent blockbuster movie. There, she reminded the children that they should not use movie stars or the plots in the movies as models for their spiritual life.

But over time, one of her students, a young sister in the eighth grade, decides that it would be a good idea to get a boyfriend. The young sister recalls how the good-looking hero in the movie had intimate relationships with a number of beautiful women. The young sister is excited about experiencing what it's like to have a boyfriend. So the young sister decides to start chasing one of the best-looking guys at her school. Eventually, this young sister gets this popular guy at her school to go out on a date. As time goes on, this guy wants to spend more and more time with the young sister. In fact, he wants to spend so much time that this young sister can no longer come to church on the Sabbath. Olivia, her R.E. teacher, is concerned about this young sister's faith. She calls her student and asks her if she wants to go see a movie with her on Saturday night. The young sister accepts

Olivia's invitation and they go see a popular romantic comedy. ("Repentance," *A New Life in Christ, Workbook for New Believers*, True Jesus Church, 2000)

Questions to think about:

1. What problems can you see in this story?
2. Can you find any biblically-based sin in this story?
3. What needs to be done to rectify the situation?

Part C: The 23rd Channel

*The TV is my shepherd. I shall not want;
It makes me lie down on the sofa;
It leads me away from the faith; It destroys my soul.
It leads me in the paths of sex and violence for the sponsor's sake.
Yea, though I walk in the shadow of Christian responsibilities, there will be no
interruption for the TV is with me;
Its cable and remote control, they comfort me.
It prepares a commercial for me in the presence of my worldliness;
It anoints my head with humanism and consumerism, my coveting runneth over.
Surely, laziness and ignorance shall follow me all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house watching TV forever.*

Source: Dr. Neil Chadwick

Questions to think about:

1. How does this contrast with Psalm 23?
2. What message is the author trying to get across with this poem?
3. Do you agree with this psalm?

Part D: TV or Not TV

Fill in the questionnaire below with members of your group. Be ready to share your completed questionnaire with the rest of the class.

1. How many hours a week do you watch TV? (average of each member of the group)
2. What one program are you most likely to watch each week? (list one for each member)
3. In what area of your life has TV most affected you?
4. If there were no TV, how would your life be different? What would you do with-

- out TV?
5. Can you think of any instruction given in the Bible that applies to your television viewing? Try to come up with several.
 6. Could watching TV ever be considered a sin? When?
 7. How can a person set guidelines for his own viewing? Write three rules that you think would be generally helpful for everyone.
 8. Think of some better ways you could use your time and money. For example, instead of going to the movies, you could set aside the money for the churches in Africa.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 388: Near to the Heart of God.

"But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all your works" Ps 73:28.

Lord, we ask You to help us make wise choices that protect us. May Your thoughts and attitudes be ours and may we always be close to Your heart so that we can view things the way you view them. Grant us eyes so that we can clearly discern between what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, and what You take pleasure in.

Lesson 10

Loneliness

Listed Scriptures

Lk 22:39-46; Gen 28:11-22; 32:22-30; Ps 66:17-20; Is 49:15f; Heb 13:5

Lesson Aim

- 1) To understand what causes loneliness.
- 2) To remember that God is our friend and constant companion.
- 3) To learn to find strength and comfort in the words of God.
- 4) To find ways to help our friends and church members who are suffering from loneliness.

Memory Verse

"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." (Deut 31:6)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Joel 2-Amos 1

BIBLE BACKGROUND

There is no Bible Background information for this lesson.





Share the following famous quotations with your students. (You can write these up on the board beforehand.)

"It is strange to be known so universally and yet be so lonely." (Albert Einstein)

"We are born into a world where alienation awaits us." (Ronald Liang)

"Loneliness affects some people all the time and all people some of the time." (Kevin Flannagan)

"Loneliness is the greatest problem facing humanity today." (Billy Graham)

Ask, "Do you agree with these quotations? (Give them time to answer). Loneliness is in fact a universal condition."

Then, write the words "Lonely" and "Alone" on the board. Ask your students to discuss the meaning of these two words with their partners. Ask them if loneliness equates to being alone. Why or why not?

Being alone does not equate to being lonely. Loneliness is when we are forced to be alone. It is painful and unpleasant. Loneliness, like depression, is one of the plagues of modern day society. On the other hand, solitude or aloneness is a voluntary act of withdrawal from other people. It can be refreshing, rejuvenating and enjoyable.

Today we are going to look into the causes of loneliness and how, as Christians, we can overcome them and support those who are feeling lonely.



Part 1

What Does the Bible Say About Loneliness?

Loneliness is a painful awareness that we lack close and meaningful contact with others. When we are lonely, we have a feeling of inner emptiness, isolation, and intense longing. Even when surrounded by others, lonely people often feel left out, unwanted, rejected, or misunderstood. They will feel frustrated, a sense of hopelessness and unable to initiate, continue, or experience a close relationship.

In addition, loneliness is a feeling of alienation—alienation from God and alienation from other people. It can be defined on two levels:

1. Human or Emotional Level—This is between you and others.
2. Spiritual Level—This is between you and God. Sometimes when you try to pursue spiritual advancement and the people who surround you are not spiritual, then you will spiritually feel very lonely. Often this sense of isolation is felt when the person is separated from God and feels that life has no meaning or purpose. You need encouragement but no one can encourage you. You feel spiritually alone and no one understands you. That type of spiritual loneliness is not good and may eventually lead to the backsliding of your faith.

In our spiritual lives, we can be alone, but we should not have the feeling of loneliness. Jesus Christ mingled with a lot of people during the day, but in the evening, He withdrew Himself to be alone to communicate with God (Lk 5:15f). When He withdrew, He was alone, but not lonely.

Our Lord God knew that human beings need other human beings for moral support. That was why He created Eve, because "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen 2:18). Indeed, Adam and Eve were not alone because they had fellowship with God and with each other. However, when they fell into sin, they were separated from God. Interpersonal tension came into their relationship along with the feeling of loneliness.

Feelings of loneliness were also evident in the lives of Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Job, Nehemiah, Elijah, and Jeremiah. In Psalm 142 King David wrote about his loneliness in the cave. However, instead of just talking about it, he used it to connect to

God. He also mentioned, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me" (Ps 27:10).

Likewise, our Lord Jesus also experienced loneliness in the Garden of Gethsemane. The pain and anguish He suffered was evident through His earnest prayers. He was only able to overcome this pain and loneliness through the Father's help—an angel appeared and strengthened Him (Lk 22:41–44; Mt 26:36–45).

The solution for loneliness as seen from the Scriptures is to have a growing relationship with God and with others. That is, loneliness will only disappear when we have communion with God and we learn to love, help, care, forgive and encourage one another. In actuality the two sides of loneliness—emotional and spiritual—are interrelated. If we have a good relationship with God, we will naturally have good relationships with others and will not emotionally feel lonely. When we feel lonely it is often a reflection of our interpersonal relationship problems as well as problems in our relationship with God. Remember that God will never forget us (Is 49:15f).



Part 2

Causes of Loneliness

Loneliness has been described as one of the world's most common health problems. It is a painful inner emptiness that may flee after a few minutes or persist for a lifetime. It affects people of all ages, but soars during the teenage years and reaches its highest peak in people between ages eighteen and twenty-five. Loneliness occurs most often in societies that emphasize individualism. We may be surrounded by a lot of people but will still feel lonely. Loneliness cannot be overcome when we mingle with others. So, what are the causes of loneliness?



A. Lack of Friendship and Support (Ecc 4:9-12)

We will be lonely if we do not have friends. If we have good friends, we will want to share things with them. Consequently, we will feel satisfied and loved. However, if no one shares good things with us, our feelings are very different.

Once, a pastor was in Ghana and he invited a full-time worker to go out to have

some fried chicken with him. While he was eating, the pastor looked at the worker and realized that one of his pieces of chicken was missing. He noticed that this worker ate one of the pieces of chicken and wrapped the other one up to take back to church so that he could give it to his co-worker. This worker could have eaten both pieces and told his co-worker back at church how delicious it was. Instead, he kept one for him so that his co-worker could also enjoy it. Loving others makes us joyful! If we are alone, we cannot share things with others. If we are alone and we fall, no one can lift us up.

Moreover, if we marry a non-believer, we will feel very lonely spiritually because there is no one to encourage us. Being lonely in our spiritual journey can be fatal to our faith. As it says in Ecclesiastes 4:10, "But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up."

Likewise, when we make a decision to move somewhere, we must think about our spirituality. If we move to a place where there is neither church nor members, we may feel lonely and our faith will eventually grow cold. There was a brother who was very fervent back in his home country. He was an R.E. teacher and the youth coordinator. However, once he moved to the United States, he only attended services about three times in the course of twenty years because there was no church in the area. Inevitably, his faith became cold. But the Lord was merciful and called him back by allowing his daughter to suffer from an illness. The brother realized that God was calling him so he brought his whole family to church. During baptism, his daughter saw the blood of Jesus Christ and she was cured. If God did not call him back, the whole family might have been lost.

"Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecc 4:12). When we are choosing which college to go to, it is best to look for a school close to church or where there are already members. If we choose a school where there is no church or members nearby, it could be fatal to our relationship with God. We need support—emotionally and spiritually.

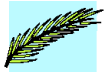


B. Missing Someone

Genesis 41:50-52 records how Joseph had two sons in Egypt. He named his first son Manasseh, "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." The name reflected Joseph's feelings—he suffered a lot during his years and also missed his family immensely. From the age of 17 he was sold to Egypt by his brothers and was unable to see his loving father. That type of rejection, betrayal and

loneliness he felt were almost unbearable. However, the Lord made him forget it all and blessed him greatly.

Likewise, when we miss someone, we feel very lonely. But we can turn this negative situation into something positive. There was a member who studied in a school far from church. He and his wife initiated Bible study and invited a friend. That brother studied in the school for four years and brought three families to believe in Christ. These four families now have family service together. Thus, if we miss our family and friends, we can initiate something. We can go out and evangelize and bring others to Christ. That way, we are channeling our energy into serving God and turning our loneliness into something positive.



C. Feeling Rejected or Abused

When we are rejected by friends or family, we will feel the weight of the world upon us. We might begin to isolate ourselves because we think that no one wants us. It becomes easier to be on our own than to face others. Then feelings of loneliness will set in and it is a difficult hole to climb out of. Sometimes we might be rejected because people don't like the way we are or because they don't understand us. Sometimes it is possible that we have done something that gives others reason to avoid us.

Jesus Christ was someone who was rejected by the people in His hometown. It would have been very easy for the Lord to feel dejected and just give up His work. He could have chosen to go into the wilderness and be on His own. Yet, it was at these very times that He would be even stronger in prayer and rely on God more to help Him overcome these feelings. At times when we feel others don't understand us or reject us because they don't accept who we are, we can pray to God to help others know us better so that communication can bring everyone to a better understanding.

Sometimes we may be rejected because we have done something wrong. If others have reason to avoid us, then we need to show them a new and changed person. Because Paul had persecuted the Christians in the past, no one wanted to be near him immediately after he was converted. And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe he was a disciple. (Acts 9:26) The people did not trust him. He could have given up and isolated himself from the Christian community. After all, he was doing the right thing, yet no one accepted him. But he kept up his work and used his life as living proof. Over time, his actions and words proved that he was a true apostle of Christ.

Loneliness can also come about when we are abused, physically or emotionally. When it does occur, it is very difficult to convince ourselves that we are worthy and of value. When Tamar was raped by her half-brother, the Bible records that she remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house. (2 Sam 13:20) We tend to keep to ourselves because it doesn't give others the opportunity to abuse us even more, by mocking or hurting us. But we don't want to become desolate. It is not God's intention for us. Although Absalom went about it the wrong way, he was in essence showing support for his sister. When we can openly discuss our feelings, we can become stronger. Then loneliness will not have the chance to settle in and take over our lives.



D. Separation From Our Heavenly Father

"Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit" (Ps 51:9-12). In these verses David confesses his sins before God. He understood the impact of being separated from God because of sin. That was why he asked God to restore to him the joy of His salvation because loneliness is also a feeling of emptiness, of not being spiritually satisfied. They are interrelated. If we are not fulfilled, we will feel empty within.

Jesus Christ also endured suffering on the cross—physical, emotional, and spiritual. The most unbearable, however, was spiritual suffering: He was lonely because He was abandoned by God. That was why He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me" (Mt 27:46). This type of spiritual separation from the heavenly Father was indeed very painful.

There is a testimony of a brother who had committed some sins. One day, he came back to the dorm to pray and realized that the precious Holy Spirit that he had was gone. He was so scared and felt that God had abandoned him. He felt unsafe even driving. His roommate invited him to fast and pray together for three days and nights. During the prayers, this brother was determined to live a holy life. On the third day, God gave him the Holy Spirit again. He vowed never to do anything unholy from then on because the spiritual loneliness he experienced was horrendous. From this we can clearly see that loneliness often comes because sin has alienated us from God and from one another. We need to examine ourselves to see whether sin is separating us from the heavenly Father because when God is ignored and sin is not confessed, loneliness is likely to persist (Is 1:15-20; 59:2).



Part 3

The Effects of Loneliness

The most obvious indication of loneliness is isolation from other people. However, there are other effects of loneliness.



A. Low Self-Esteem

When we are lonely, we will experience feelings of worthlessness and the inability to relate to others. It may also result in withdrawal into a self-centered thinking, a belief that nobody understands us. This in turn will result in complete withdrawal and cutting oneself off from society. This is dangerous.

There was a youth who did not go to school for a few months. He felt extremely lonely so he started to play games on the Internet until 4 a.m., as a way to numb the pain of loneliness. Because of his addiction, he was unable to get himself up in time for school. And because he could not go to school, he did not have any friends. So he withdrew himself and played on the Internet all day. He could not get himself out of this vicious cycle.

Low self-esteem arises as a result of not being in touch with others or with God. We must remember that withdrawing into ourselves will only increase our feelings of low self-esteem. Instead, we must remain positive and remember that "our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor 3:5). Don't forget that we are not alone, for the Scriptures advise us that the Lord understands our sorrow and our heartache. We must trust and believe in Him, pour out our hearts to Him for He has "put [your] tears into [His] bottle" (Ps 56:8).



B. Depression

Lonely people sometimes have a hopelessness that can lead to despair and even thoughts of suicide. When loneliness is too great, it leads to depression and suicide becomes a way out.

In the United States, children are experiencing high levels of loneliness. Many of their parents are devoted to their careers and their children have no one to relate to. Consequently, they turn to TV, and are obsessed with entertainment and the Internet. But deep down in their hearts, they are very lonely and depressed.

It seems that we are living in a generation of loneliness and famine. "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord God, 'That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord'" (Amos 8:11). Here, the Lord states the signs of loneliness. The famine on the land—bread and water—refers to material satisfaction. In this generation we have a lot of material enjoyment but our inner hearts are not fulfilled. When we watch too much TV, it is difficult to develop proper interpersonal relationships because we are waiting for the stimulation to come in order for us to react. Once we watch TV for too long it becomes a pattern and will become passive. If we cultivate a habit of relating to TV, we will find it difficult to relate to God or to others. That is why in Amos it says that the famine is coming to the world. It is not because of entertainment but because we are lonely and are not satisfied. We lack interpersonal relationships between God and men.



C. Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (Prov 20:1; 23:29-33; Is 5:11)

Alcohol and drugs are commonly used by many as a means to escape. Some turn to these in an attempt to find friends or to numb the pain of being alone. The Bible clearly tells us that turning to such substances is wrong: "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom 13:14; Eph 5:18).



D. Sex and Violence (Gal 5:19-21; Prov 6:16; 16:29; 1 Cor 16:15f)

Others express their frustration of loneliness through forging sexual relationships with others or displaying violent outbursts. Remember this: "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who keeps his ways preserves his soul" (Prov 16:17).



Part 4

Overcoming Loneliness



A. Reach Our Hand to Love Someone (1 Jn 4:7-13)

If we do not love others, we will feel lonely. As the Lord Jesus commands us, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39). When we have God's love in us, we will want to share that love with others and we will never feel lonely. When we live in love and do all things in love, we will never despair and fall into loneliness.

When Peter was weary in his faith, he denied the Lord three times. One reason for this denial was that he was alone in a harsh environment. When we feel weariness in our faith, do we feel lonely? Do we have a spiritual partner, someone whom we can reach out to? Make sure we do have spiritual friends because establishing caring relationships with others will help remove loneliness.



B. Communicate (Phil 2:1f)

Not only do we have to reach out to others, we must also be willing to open up and have someone whom we can seriously have heart-to-heart communications with so that we will not feel lonely. If we hide ourselves and do not open up to others, we will experience how painful loneliness can be. When we avoid relationships with others, loneliness is intensified. Develop a lifestyle of keeping in touch. Call a friend, family member or close brother or sister-in-Christ. Email them. Pray with and for them. Hang out with them. Communicate. Don't cut off all ties with them, for "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov 17:17, 18:24).



C. Have Fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:3-7)

Apart from opening up to others, it is also vital that we open our hearts to God. If we do this, we will never feel lonely because God is living in our hearts. Faith in God, prayer and Bible study helps to make the loneliness more tolerable and becomes an additional way of coping. Let God's word fill your mind and hearts. As the Lord promised Jacob, "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you" (Gen 28:15).

In conclusion, how do we deal with loneliness? The secret lies in 1 John 1:3: "that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Today we should no longer feel lonely because we have direct access to the Lord. If we have godly fellowship with the Lord and with brothers and sisters, our loneliness will disappear.

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Heb 13:5).

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



1

What is loneliness?

2

What are the two levels of loneliness?

5

What are the causes of loneliness and how can they be overcome?

6

How does sin cause us to be lonely?

7

What are the common effects of loneliness?

How can people overcome it?

What is the real secret in dealing with loneliness?

LIFE APPLICATION



Part A: On Loneliness

The following is a brother's web log on the subject of loneliness. Read through it and then think about the questions that follow.

To my younger brother, my brethren-in-Christ at schools away from church, my friends who are without their parents, and all who are lonely:

For the last seven weeks or so, I've lived alone with my older brother; of which one week I was left completely alone since he went to NYTS. Normally, I thrive on these times—I have always valued independence, autonomy, and self-reliance. They are often very good learning experiences.

But during that week, while I did learn and experience much, on an emotional level, more often than expected, I have found myself lonely and longing for companionship. Actually, it's a feeling that sometimes also occurs even when surrounded by oodles of friends.

Sometimes we feel alone because of the problems we face, what lies ahead of us, and what we feel. But most often we feel left alone, ostracized, and cast away when there are no close friends nearby.

One thing that occurred to me in prayer in the last week is that Jesus Christ truly can sympathize and relate with loneliness; more than you can even imagine. After all, look at what is written:

"When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping..." (Lk 22:41).

No one comforted Him in his pain, His anguish, and His agony. No shoulder to cry on. No friend to hug and squeeze tight. No one to pray with Him to share mutual woes and flow the sympathizing tear. He was left alone to pray.

"Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (Mt 26:55).

Not one was willing to stand up for Jesus, after all He had done for them. He had given all; no one showed appreciation. He was left alone to die.

"Then he began to curse and swear, saying, 'I do not know the Man!'" (Mt 26:74).

Of all people, Peter, his closest disciple and friend, not only denied discipleship and friendship with Him, but denied relations with him. He was left alone to suffer.

"But they shouted, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!'" (Lk 23:21).

The very people He loved, healed, exorcized, and fed, betrayed him. The people He came to save rejected Him, choosing a convict's life rather than the innocent, evil rather than grace, crimes rather than miracles. He was left alone to be despised.

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" (Mt 27:46).

Of all the sinners deserving to be forsaken by God, God forsook His innocent Son. Jesus Christ was cast away from the presence of the living God. Of all beings, Lord Jesus was left alone by the One who shuns no one.

In utter opprobrium, Lord Jesus was left alone to suffer, bleed, and die.

In our own loneliness, there is One who empathizes to the fullest degree. One who sticks closer than a brother. One who knows all pains, all longings, all loneliness. One who was even forsaken by God. This is comfort beyond words to the sad and lonely. No matter how you try to hide it, no matter how much you don't want to think about it, no matter how much you drown yourself with the things of the world, in sadness and emptiness, pray in the Spirit. As Lord Jesus has promised, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (Jn 14:18).

You are not alone. Lord Jesus' heart goes out to all of you. He will be Your guide and stay if you let Him. And He is just a prayer away. (www.renewed.nu)

Questions to think about:

1. How is Christ able to understand our loneliness?
2. How will the Lord Jesus "not leave [us] orphans"?

Part B: All I Ever Do Is Love You

The following are the lyrics from the hymn: "All I Ever Do Is Love You."

"When you're feeling lonely, when your heart is aching, when something happens that makes you doubt my love. Then my child, come close to me, just be still and listen. I long to comfort you and renew you in my love.

Don't let your heart be troubled, just take my hand, it doesn't matter if you can't understand; don't be afraid, trust in my love, for I will never, ever fail you, I'll never forsake or let you down. All I ever do is love you, yes, you are always in my thoughts, you are always in my care; my arms of love are all you need, so learn to trust in me completely, for I will not forsake or let you go.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word goes on forever, My word lives on forever. I will not forsake you, I will never leave you alone."

Questions to think about:

1. How do you feel when you read these lyrics?
2. "I'll never forsake or let you down." How does the Lord never forsake us nor let us down?
3. During your times of loneliness, what did you do to help yourself overcome it? How did the Lord help you? Be prepared to share with the class.

Part C: Reach Out!

We've already learned that everyone faces loneliness at some time or other. But we also studied that even though loneliness strikes, we can be assured that if we turn to Christ and walk with Him, we never need to be alone. Having been helped by Christ to overcome our loneliness, it's our turn to help others overcome theirs!

There was a woman who lived in a large apartment and worked in a shop with many people. Even though she knew a lot of people, every evening she would tune into the "sign off" statement of a radio station just to hear a voice saying, "We wish you a very pleasant good-night." She imagined that this person was just speaking to her! She hungered for a personal greeting even though she met hundreds of people every day.

Do you feel this hunger? Or do you know of someone who also feels this way? Why not reach out to someone and give that person a personal call or send them an email? Or think of other ways that you could reach out to someone so that they will experience the joy of feeling wanted and loved.

Here are some ideas that your class could do:

1. Put together a care package for those who have not been to church for a while, or who study away from home.
2. Call a friend and visit a member together.
3. Run an errand for a neighbor.

What other ideas can you come up with?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 82: I Am Praying for You.

Our Lord Jesus has promised us that He will never leave us alone. Even though we may go through many trials and temptations, the Lord has promised us that He will be with us through all our problems. Not only will He be right there guiding and protecting us, He will also carry us through our tribulations and allow His love to embrace and envelop us. When you go through the turmoil of life, remember that God is with you all the way, praying for you. And when you have received the grace and peace from God, go ahead and strengthen your brethren too!

Lesson 11

Worry

Listed Scriptures

Phil 4:4-9; Mt 6:25-34; Rom 8:28; 1 Pet 5:7; Lk 12:22-31; Ps 37:8

Lesson Aim

- 1) To allow students to share the worries they have in their lives.
- 2) To understand what the Bible says about worry and how it should be dealt with.
- 3) To analyze ways to allow others and God to help with our burdens.

Memory Verse

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." (Phil 4:6)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Amos 2-4

BIBLE BACKGROUND



There is no Bible Background information for this lesson.

W A R M U P



Read the following quotations to your students and discuss them:

1. "It ain't no use putting up your umbrella till it rains." –Alice Caldwell Rice
2. "Worry is a useless mulling over of things we cannot change." –Peace Pilgrim
3. "As a rule, men worry more about what they can't see than about what they can." –Julius Caesar
4. "People get so in the habit of worry that if you save them from drowning and put them on a bank to dry in the sun with hot chocolate and muffins they wonder whether they are catching cold." –John Jay Chapman
5. "When I look back on all the worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which never happened." –Winston Churchill

Are you borrowing tomorrow's troubles? Have you developed a lifestyle of worry? Should you even worry at all? Let's look into this and see what the Scriptures advise us.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

What Does the Bible Say About Anxiety?

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Mt 6:34)

Worry is practically an epidemic in modern society. The medical word for worry is anxiety, and every year, Americans spend millions of dollars on tranquilizers and nerve relaxers to conquer anxiety. Worry is anxiety over circumstances beyond our control. According to *Webster's New World Dictionary* anxiety is "a state of being uneasy, apprehensive, or worried about what may happen; concern about a possible future event."

In the Bible, anxiety is described in two ways—as healthy concern and as fret or worry.

a. Anxiety in the Form of Concern

This is not wrong, nor is it forbidden. In fact, this is a type of healthy concern, just like what apostle Paul wrote. "Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." (2 Cor 11:28)

b. Anxiety in the Form of Fret and Worry

This is when our problems overtake us. We become burdened and worry unnecessarily about things that may or may not happen.

Anxiety has been around for a long time. Even in Jesus' day, anxiety was everywhere. The people standing on the mountainside when He delivered the Sermon on the Mount were no different than us. What did the Lord Jesus say to them to help them deal with the pressures and fears of living? He gave them a cure for anxiety. He dealt directly with the cause and had a cure for the worried, anxious heart. He taught them that they should not worry about the future or about life's basic needs because the Lord knows and understands all this. "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; not about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt 6:25–34). In other words, anxiety is futile because life is more than possessions. It is more than the material. It is more than the physical. It has an eternal dimension to it that is beyond us.

Apostle Paul also echoes this by telling us to "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6f).

When we turn ourselves away from God and shift the burdens and responsibilities of life onto ourselves, this will cause us great anxiety and stress (Prov 12:25). By doing so, we will slip into self-reliance and preoccupation with our own life pressures. The Bible does not say that there is anything wrong with facing and dealing with the problems of life. But it is wrong, and unhealthy, to be consumed by excessive worry. Of course, it is not easy to banish anxiety and completely cast all our cares on the Lord Jesus (1 Pet 5:7). But what we do need help in is how to handle pressures realistically and within God's perfect schedule.



Part 2

What are the Causes of Anxiety?

In the Scriptures we can see many causes of anxiety. For example:

- family conflict (Gen 32:6-12; 2 Sam 18:24-33)
- the actions of authorities (Est 4:1-17)
- concern about loved ones (Lk 2:48)
- illness (Jn 4:46-49)
- anticipation of future events (2 Cor 2:12f)

However, in our study, we are going to focus on four main reasons: guilt, fear, lack of interaction, and a lack of meaning.



A. Guilt (Rom 5:12-14; 3:23)

Realizing one's own sin often results in feelings of guilt. In order to relieve oneself of this guilt the only solution is to come before our Lord Jesus admitting and repenting our sins. When we don't repent of our sins, the feelings of guilt remain, which in turn causes us to worry. We worry about the results of our sin and what the Lord will do to us. If we rectify the problem from the root then we will no longer feel guilty or worried. A good example of guilt is seen in the reaction of Joseph's brothers. "Then they said to one another, 'We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us'" (Gen 42:21). After all those years, the brothers carried this heavy burden around with them. They had endured many years of guilty feelings, worrying that, one day, their sin would come back to them.



B. Fear (1 Jn 4:18)

Fear of circumstances can also produce anxiety. Most of the time we feel relatively safe because we take care of ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But then something happens that makes us painfully aware of our vulnerability. It could be an illness in the family. A dreaded paper to write. Exams to take. Whatever it is, it makes us feel weak and vulnerable. Consequently, such factors tend to occupy our minds, keeping us from enjoying the privilege of being the children of God. Instead of occupying our minds with such things, a positive type of

fear we should be occupied with is the Lord: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Ecc 12:13; Mt 10:28).



C. Lack of Interaction

People worry because they lack interpersonal relationships. They are afraid of establishing friendships with others because of a fear of being let down. Consequently, they avoid getting involved with others. Their lack of interaction may be a result of low self-esteem. They worry about what people may think of them. But what does the Bible tell us if we are afraid of being let down? The solution is to turn to Christ and interact with Him. He is faithful and righteous, never lets us down, and always gives the best advice (1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 2:1). If we connect ourselves with the Lord Jesus, nothing will be able to separate us from Him and we will be able to cast all our burdens onto Him: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Mt 11:28-30).



D. Lack of Meaning (Phil 1:21)

We worry because we lack meaning in our lives. We lose faith and lose sight of the goal of our lives. We worry because we distrust God. When we worry, we have two choices. We can turn to the Lord and trust Him with our apprehensions. Or we can take our well-being into our own hands. When we no longer feel that we can trust Jesus Christ with our lives, our feelings, or our future, we worry. And that is sin because we are taking responsibilities on ourselves that belong to the Lord. We are stubbornly refusing to place ourselves in His strong hands. But what does the Lord advise us? "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Mt 6:31-34). There's no need to worry, God has everything under control. Just put Him into our lives and we'll see the meaning of it and our worries will disperse!



Part 3

God's Plan to Conquer Worry

What should we do when we are worried? Philippians 4:4–9 gives us five specific steps for conquering the problem. Let's look into these steps to see how we can overcome it.



A. Rejoice in the Lord Always (Phil 4:4; 1 Thess 5:16)

The command to rejoice is based on the fact that our rejoicing is in the Lord. True joy is not dependent upon our circumstances but upon our confidence that God is in control of those circumstances. Thus, we can learn to rejoice always. The more we worry the less we are able to be joyful.

To receive the joy of the Lord, we must be willing to give up our suffering. We must remember and be assured that God's grace won't take us somewhere where it can't keep us. What saps our strength and causes worry is not the difficulty that we encounter, but the inability to deal with it. In Lamentations 3:22–26, we are reminded that the Lord's compassions do not fail. They are new every morning. Those who quietly wait and hope for His salvation will receive joy.

Thus, to be able to see God's grace, we need to be still (Ps 46:10). We need to wait for God to come to solve the problem. He will bring us to higher planes and will elevate us. As it says in Nehemiah 8:10 "Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." The joy of the Lord will strengthen us and make us complete. So, how do we make the joy of the Lord our strength? By abiding in His words (Jn 15:11; 1 Jn 1:4; Ps 119:143) and by keeping focused. "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). Thus, to be able to have the kingdom of God in our hearts and be joyful, we need to eliminate the clutter in our lives and unload our burdens onto the Lord.



B. Learn to Cope Through Gentleness (Phil 4:5)

The word gentleness can also refer to graciousness or forbearance. It implies yielding to God and to the control of the Holy Spirit. The degree of our inward yielding will determine the degree of gentleness we have towards others. Yielding to the lordship of Christ brings consolation in place of worry. Many Christians worry because they are not presently yielding control of their lives to the authority of

Christ. They know Him as Savior and have acknowledged His lordship, but in their moment of anxiety, they are not consciously trusting in and yielding to Him. If we love God and yield to Him, everything will work for good (Rom 8:28).

Sometimes we encounter something out of our own will. In Genesis 50, it talks about Joseph's life. He must have felt so frustrated, yet he yielded everything to God because he knew everything had God's guidance and will. If we think we really love God and everything we do is right in the eyes of God, when we look back at our footsteps one day, we will be very thankful. God will open a way for us.



C. Be Anxious for Nothing. Pray! (Phil 4:6f)

The third step is the most difficult of all, because it sounds so simple: Don't worry, pray! There can be no doubt that the biblical antidote for worry is prayer: "...but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6f). Prayer must be rendered in everything (all of life's circumstances). Requests must be made with thanksgiving, trusting God by faith for His answer.

To receive the peace of God, we must make our requests known to Him. It is not just a matter of trusting Him, but also asking Him for help. We must learn to let go and let God take over. Believe that He has the power to solve our problems (Heb 11:6). In order not to worry we have to pray and bring our worries before God. We have to pray until our hearts are at peace. Keep praying until we have passed all our worries to God. Pray until we have released our burden. Entrust everything to Him. Pray for His strength to bear the cross. When the time is right, He will take away the cross. He will comfort and guide us.



D. ThinkLook at the Matter with Gods Vision (Phil 4:8)

Not only does this verse tell us not to worry, but it goes on to tell us to learn to think in the correct way. It commands us to think on the things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. Worry comes because we dwell on ourselves and our problems, not on God and His solutions. Christians need to be Christ-centered, not problem-centered. Teach ourselves to meditate on wholesome things. Replace negative anxieties with positive truths. Don't surrender control of our lives to a problem; give it over to the Holy Spirit, who can solve the problem (Rom 8:26f).

Things happen because God allows it to happen. If we are able to look at things in God's way, we will see clearly. If we look at the matter in God's way, we will find it easier to accept facts. If we are going to conquer worry, we must come to the realization that God loves us and that He will take care of us. If we really believe that God is in charge, and that He loves us and will meet our needs, then we should have nothing to worry about. Learn to look at the situation with God's vision.



E. Learn to Live Right (Phil 4:9)

Verse 9 tells us that since we have learned and received, heard and seen by example, we must now go and practice them. If we go and do the truth, we will conquer worry. Think and act like a true Christian with an unshakable trust and belief in Christ's absolute lordship. Only then can we rejoice in all things, live a yielding life, pray with faith, and think wholesome thoughts. Trust that whatever happens or doesn't happen at that moment is the best thing for us. Trusting involves waiting for His timing (1 Sam 15:22).

What is the cure for anxiety? Put the Lord FIRST in every focus of our lives. As we do this, our needs will be met as we focus on Him. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus promised. In other words, as we concern ourselves with the things of God, He will concern Himself with the things we need. This is the challenge for all of us—to practically trust Christ. It is to live out what we say we believe. It is to make Him Lord over our lives in practical ways. This is what the prophet Habakkuk challenges us all with:

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's feet,
And He will make me walk on my high hills.*
Habakkuk 3:17-19



Part 4

Pursue Spiritual Maturity

Spiritual maturity is the antidote to worry. It is something that every Christian needs to pursue. The problems we encounter in life, whether big or small, will bring us towards spiritual maturity.

When we encounter difficulties in life, we must never give up! Our spiritual journey is like a marathon. The last hill always seems like the toughest. We can't win the race in the first mile. We have to keep running until we're finally home. We need to pace ourselves and be prepared for the detours and hills. When they come along, don't give up the race. Remember, when the going gets tough, the tough get going: "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved" (Ps 55:22). All the problems we encounter now are there to strengthen and shape us.

Whatever our problems may be, they pale in comparison to the light of eternity. No matter how great our failures, God's grace is greater still, for "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Lift up our hearts and eyes. Do not avoid our problems and do not worry. Tackle each one directly, knowing that God will help us through. The tougher the problem, the greater His grace will be.

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). This is the Christian spirit and attitude that we all need to pursue in order to be spiritually mature. May the Lord guide us in all our endeavors to become spiritually mature Christians so that we can freely give over all our worries and burdens to Him.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1 What does the Bible teach us about anxiety?

2 What are the causes of anxiety?

3 How does a lack of meaning in our lives bring about anxiety?

- 4 What are the five steps we should take to conquer worry?
- 5 What is the cure for anxiety?
- 6 How does spiritual maturity enable us to give over our worries?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Part A: Anxieties? No Worries!

What are some things you worry about? List some of the things you worry about and share them with the class. Once you have shared your worry, the class will advise you on how to overcome it.

My Worries	How Should I Overcome Them?

Part B: Share Your Advice

"A problem shared is a problem halved." The following are worries that some people are having. Can you advise them?

Case 1

Dear Abby, I'm all stressed out! It's my last year of high school and I've got way too much on my plate. I'm on the football team, student council, National Honor Society, plus I've got responsibilities towards friends, family, school and church. AAARRGGH!!! It seems like I have a paper to write every day. I'm rushing around all the time, cramming things in last minute. I don't even have time to eat properly. I'm spread really thin. What should I do? I don't want to repeat all this when I go to college next year. Can you help?

Yours,
Senior in Distress

Dear Senior in Distress, you need to allow God to direct your steps, like it says in Jeremiah 10:23. You don't have to sign up for every worthwhile activity. Ask God to guide you so that you can stay in line with His plans for you (Jer 29:11). You'll have to prioritize your activities and you may have to drop ones which you really don't have time for. What do you see as the most important? Remember to leave room for God in your life.

Yours, Abby

Case 2

Dear Abby, I can't cope! Mom's at work all the time so it's up to me to look after my younger brothers and sisters. But she forgets that I'm still at school too and I need my own space and time. Plus church work is piling up. I have to teach R.E., choir, plus help our class organize our quarterly activities. It's all getting too much. I'm worried that I may break down soon under all this pressure.

Yours,
Worried in Wichita

Dear Worried in Wichita, you need to have a serious talk with your mom. Let her know that you can't cope, that you need help. Let her know how much stress you're under too. She'll understand. You also need to talk to some brothers and sisters in church about your situation. Let them know that you're under a lot of stress. They'll be most willing to help you in whatever way possible. Above all, learn to rely on God. Tell Him your problems. Remember, He will never give you more than you can handle (1 Cor 10:13).

Yours, Abby

Case 3

Dear Abby, personally when it comes to exams I just can't stop worrying! I do my best. I try to take deep breaths before and after each exam. But when it comes to putting pen to paper, everything seems to go out the window. I can't seem to sleep well at night. I feel lethargic all the time. How do I overcome my exam anxiety?

Yours,
Exam Worrier

Dear Exam Worrier, you really do have anxiety over your exams. First, you must learn to delete the causes. What causes you anxiety when you are studying? Too

much noise? Procrastination? Second, you need to displace thoughts. If you get up at all hours in the night, then perhaps you can do something productive to allow you to sleep better when you finally do go back to bed. Try to pray and ask God to let you go back to sleep. It's a great cure for insomnia! Another way to displace any negative thoughts is to get physical. Take on some form of exercise like walking or running. Third, treat the symptoms. Keep things in perspective. If you put in your best effort and entrust all to God, you have nothing to worry about. Go in and take the exam with peace in your heart knowing that God is looking out for you!

Yours, Abby

Case 4

Dear Abby, I'm having problems with feeling anxious about everything. I think I have too much on my plate. What do you think are the causes of my anxiousness and how can I overcome them?

Yours,
Anxious Amy

Dear Anxious Amy, your anxiety could come from stress. Here are a few ways to deal with it.

1. Admit you're stressed.
2. Make a list. Write down every single activity you're involved in and the time you spend in it.
3. Take your list to someone you trust. This should preferably be someone who has a high level of spirituality. Have this person go over the list with you. Talk about why each item is important to you. Discuss your priorities.
4. Prioritize your list. Determine what you need to cut out of your life and what should take precedence.
5. Practice saying no. If you want to become less anxious you must learn to say no.
6. Think about your use of time. Ask for tips on how to manage your time better.
7. Keep God first. Place your hope and trust in God. Make Him your first priority and everything else will fall neatly into place.

These are just a few tips. You can think of other tangible ways too. I pray that the Lord will guide you and give you the peace you need! Remember, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6f). God bless you!

Yours, Abby

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing hymn 140: God Understands.

When we feel overwhelmed or burdened, we can take comfort in the thought that our Lord understands. "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:15). Each time we feel anxious, remember that the Lord understands. He sees our tears and our heartache. Hand over all our worries to Him. He will take care of them.

Hypocrisy

Listed Scriptures

Mt 23; Lk 13:10–17; Tit 1:16; Jas 1:22–24, 2:14–26; Rom 2:1; Mt 15:8f

Lesson Aim

- 1) To take a hard look at whether we are Christians only on the outside.
- 2) To understand what it means to be a true Christian.
- 3) To take steps so that we can be in tune with God's voice.

Memory Verse

"He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 Jn 2:4)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Amos 5–7

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D

There is no Bible Background information for this lesson.



W A R M U P



Imagine someone in the streets with a sign that says "CHRISTIAN BUDDY MACHINE-10 CENTS." A lonely man waiting for the subway tells the machine his problems, deposits 10 cents, and the Buddy Machine gives him all the usual pat Christian answers to his problems. What do you think of this? Is the Buddy Machine showing real concern for this man? Is he showing real love and concern?

Of course he isn't. He's just giving answers that he feels Christians should give. But he is not sincere, nor does he truly care about the person he's giving an answer to. Let's think about this. Are we like this Christian Buddy Machine? Do we sometimes give the usual Christian response to people, but don't really mean it? Do we pretend to be Christians on the Sabbath, then act completely different during the rest of the week? Is it wrong to be a hypocrite? Let's look into what the Lord says about hypocrisy and what we can learn from His teachings.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Who Are Hypocrites?

According to the Merriam Webster online dictionary, hypocrisy is defined as:

1. a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not; especially: the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion
2. an act or instance of hypocrisy

The word derives from the Greek *hypokrisis*, an act of playing a part on the stage.

Thus, according to the above description, a hypocrite is someone who pretends. He is a person who does not act his real self but disguises himself to be another. Let's look into what the Scriptures say about hypocrites and how our Lord Jesus refers to them.

"Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do." (Mt 23:3)

The Pharisees and Scribes were meticulous in obeying the Law. They devised many of their own laws, which were supposed to help them better obey God's laws. However, when they lost the true spirit of the Law they became an organized group of hypocrites. Let's see what their problem was and find what we can do to check ourselves.



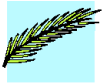
A. *Those Who Are Proud (Mt 23:1-12)*

The root of hypocrisy is pride. In fact, the root of all sin is pride, in that all sin contains an element of putting ourselves in the place of God. But it seems in the case of hypocrisy, one's pride is based simply upon one's position or status. Logically though, there is no virtue in status or position alone unless such roles were earned through virtuous behavior. Some people would like to be respected without earning respect. This was the case of the Pharisees. They were proud because of their status and the so-called works that they carried out before men.

Proverbs 16:5 says that everyone who is proud is an abomination to the Lord. Furthermore, Proverbs 16:18 describes that pride goes before destruction and it will bring a person low (Prov 29:23). In fact, everyone is guilty of pride but what differ are the levels of pride that each person has in his heart. It is a sin that everyone needs to be wary of because it is so easy to fall into the trap of feeling proud or exalting oneself.

There was one sister who testified how she broke down in tears during a service. She realized that she had become lukewarm in faith and that sin and pride had built up in her heart. At that moment, she felt distant from God, and it was the worst feeling in the world. She repented to Him in tears and begged for His forgiveness, asking Him to turn her heart of stone to a heart of flesh. After sincerely returning to Him, God showed her His mercy and love.

In serving and worshiping God we need to know to deny ourselves by removing the "I" in our thinking and taking away the ego in our service. We need to ask the Lord Jesus to humble us so that pride will never have a place in our hearts.



B. Those Who Put on a Religious Show (Mt 23:23f; 6:1-4)

The Pharisees performed acts of righteousness but did not observe justice and mercy. They were ritualistic and merciless people and ignored the more important matters—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. They lived to put on a front before other people. Instead of being sensitive to God's will, they were sensitive to public opinion.

Likewise, Isaiah 58 records how during the time of the prophet Isaiah, the people had been trying to find acceptance with God, but they were rejected. Instead of applying themselves to developing a heart of faith and holiness, they were into putting on a religious show. The present-day equivalent would be going to church every week, singing hymns, tithing, praying, fasting and witnessing—but doing it all for show, and not with a heart of love for God or people. What God wants is for us to seek Him, to “find out what is acceptable to the Lord” (Eph 5:10).

Saul was an example of one whose service to the Lord was one that loved fame more than God. Saul failed because he did not obey the Lord's command and took things into his own hands. He sought his own glory more than God's glory. That was why the prophet Samuel replied to him, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). The Lord will not accept any false offerings. What He wants is our sincerity in prayer and in service to Him.

In the same manner, Jeremiah wanted the people of Judah to realize that the mere act of performing temple sacrifices was no proof of faithfulness, especially when the priests' actions outside of the temple were so immoral (Jer 6:16-20). What the Lord requires is for us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him (Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9f).



C. Those Who Act Holy (Mt 23: 25-28)

The Pharisees tried to clean their outward appearance while their inner beings were corrupt. They appeared to people as highly religious people, but on the inside they were full of corruption, just like whitewashed tombs. They knew the Law backward and forward and they knew how to dress and look important. They wanted to be admired, praised and honored for their good deeds but everything they did was just for men to see.

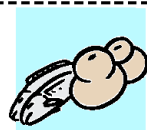
In the same manner Balaam was a false prophet who was hypocritical in all his ways (2 Pet 2:15f; Josh 13:22; Num 24:1). He may have been called a prophet by name, but he was not a true prophet at all. He was a seeker of material gain instead of a seeker of God. Even though he knew some of the truth, he did not have a spiritual life in him. He had an appearance of reverence but his actions proved otherwise. He was false in his ways and his service was in vain. He used his faith and his reverence as a way to earn money.

Are we like this? Do we say the right words and do the right thing to impress others with our spirituality? If others were to look straight through to our motives, would they find them sparkling clean? Don't be like the Pharisees who only looked good on the outside but had nothing to admire internally. Ask ourselves: Are our Christian actions coming from wanting to “look good” to others or from a heart of humility and obedience?

There is a sharp contrast in the way some Christians act in church and how they behave in the world. Daniel was an ideal model in his relationship with both God and man. He did not live by a double standard. His daily conduct was consistent with his spiritual values. His enemies tried to find some charge against him, but no fault could be found (Dan 6:4). His walk in the world was in harmony with his walk with God. Is our walk in the world in tune with God's walk?

It is so easy to be a hypocrite, to say “Lord, Lord” and not do what God's word tells us to do. To sing melodious hymns in church and then hum along with the most bizarre, ungodly tunes on the car stereo. Or to expect God to hear us when we pray but not to hear us when we say things that aren't kind or clean (Lk 6:46).

As the Lord reminds us, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Mt 7:21). May all of us learn to serve and worship our heavenly Father from the innermost part of our hearts.



Part 2

You, Hypocrite!

Are you playing the part of a hypocrite? Do you teach or advocate one thing while doing the complete opposite when no one is looking? Take the following quiz to find out.

Do you...	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. emphasize to others how important the Bible is, but seldom read it?				
2. insist prayer is your link to God, but only make time for one-liners to the Lord during your busy day?				
3. promise you'll pray for someone in need, but never remember to do it?				
4. express your respect for church leaders, but bad-mouth the pastor if he preaches too long or points out something you don't want to hear?				
5. talk about your concern for people who don't know Jesus, but make little effort to share your faith?				
6. state how crucial honesty is, but spit out a white lie if it'll help you in a sticky situation?				
7. tell others you obey your parents, but fuss when they want you to clean the kitchen?				
8. say how important it is to hang out with other believers, but choose to spend more time with your non-Christian friends than your Christian ones?				
9. announce that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, but abuse it with tobacco, drugs, alcohol or extreme amounts of food?				
10. preach that tithing is biblical, as well as important, but spend your money on CDs, movies and clothes before you give God His portion?				
11. maintain that you want your thoughts to always please Jesus, but fill your mind with books, movies, TV shows and magazines that are anything but godly?				
12. vow to do anything for the Lord, but say you're too busy when asked to do something for the church?				

Do you...	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
13. make it clear you believe in abstinence, but spend time alone with your boyfriend or girlfriend doing things you know are wrong?				
14. say you don't curse, but let out a few choice words if you get cut off in traffic or slam the door on your finger?				
15. say that cheating is wrong, but tell your friend about some of the questions on the history test you took the period before his/her class?				

Scoring

Give yourself three points for every "never" answer, two points for every "rarely" answer, one point for "sometimes" and zero for "often."

Score 40-45 points

You usually do what you say you believe. That's great! Only by living the godly life that the Bible teaches are you going to have true contentment. But remember hypocrisy is subtle and can easily creep in when you're least expecting it. So keep on evaluating yourself to make sure you're avoiding it.

Score 25-39 points

You've got some problem areas, but they're nothing that God and you can't handle. Take a closer look at the specific areas in which you're being a hypocrite. Is it your devotional life? Or maybe it's at school or on the job. Start confessing your sins and praying for strength to make wise choices. Consider asking a trusted Christian friend to pray with you, too. You can become more of the person the Lord wants you to be.

Score Below 24 points

If you don't want to hang out with the scribes and Pharisees whom Jesus condemned for hypocrisy, you need a major overhaul. The good news is that God is more than happy to do it, if you're willing to cooperate. Begin by telling Him you're sorry for the way you've said the right things, but done the wrong ones. Seek advice and help from a Christian adult who'd be willing to meet with you on a regular basis for prayer and accountability. You don't have to wallow in hypocrisy!

Adapted version from

<http://www.briomag.com/briomagazine/quizzes/a0005401.html>



Part 3

Be a True Christian

In the end, no one is immune to hypocrisy. Every Christian must fight daily to practice what he preaches. If we find ourselves engaging in any type of sinful activities, then either stop the sin or refrain from teaching against the sin until we are ready to change.

Wisely, King David wrote, "I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites" (Ps 26:4). If we want to please God, and be a true Christian, practice what we preach and preach what we practice.



A. Give Him Our Heart (Col 3:23; Mt 15:8f)

One whose heart is of the Lord will always set his heart upon the Lord's dwelling place (Ps 27:4). In other words, his heart will always be knit with the heart of God.

Ananias and his wife Sapphira did not offer from their heart. Instead, they allowed Satan to enter their hearts and kept back some of the proceeds (Acts 5:1-11). When we offer, our offering must come from the heart and not from deceit. Ananias and Sapphira did not do this. They offered in an attempt to gain reputation and a good name. They altered and twisted the purpose of offering. What was supposed to be a thanksgiving offering became a means of a lie to the Holy Spirit. Not only did it not bring any good to them, it was not acceptable to God and brought about a tragic ending for them. Likewise, in our service to the Lord, He wants our very best. He wants what is most true. He wants us to "continually offer the sacrifice of praise to Him, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb 13:15f).



B. Give Him Our All (1 Cor 13:3)

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23). We are made up of the spirit, the soul, and the physical body. We are not of separate entities, but of a single unit. We cannot separate these three, thinking that whatever we do with our body will not affect our soul

or our spirit. The three are interconnected. In the same manner, when we profess to be a true Christian, we cannot just show it through physical manifestation—it must be accompanied by our soul and spirit too. In other words, we need to give Christ our all.

1 Peter 2:5, 9 reminds us that we are a royal priesthood, a chosen generation. We are to offer spiritual sacrifices. In order to be honorable, we must be holy, righteous and precious in the eyes of God. We cannot claim ourselves to be holy in the eyes of God if we are not holy in our actions. We need to fight for and work towards holiness. To achieve this, we need a heart of humility and sincerity. Thus, if we have put our faith in the Lord Jesus, we are spiritual beings whose bodies are "dead because of sin" and whose spirits are "alive because of righteousness" (Rom 8:10).

In Romans 12:1 we are not told to present our spirits as a living sacrifice. Instead, we are told to present our bodies for it is with our bodies that we show what is in our spirit. If we give ourselves completely to God, we can stop putting on an act. We can be real followers of Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a role, it's a reality and a lifestyle. To be a true and genuine Christian, we must have a heart of zeal, love, and sacrifice.



C. Give Him Our Very Best (Lev 23:9-14)

Apart from giving the Lord our heart and our all, we also have to be pleasing to Him, offering Him our very best.

Cain and Abel made sacrifices to God, but the Lord only accepted Abel's offering. God did not accept Cain's offering because Cain was not in the Lord's favor. "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen 4:7). Moreover, in 1 John 3:12 it tells us specifically why God did not accept Cain's offering: the Lord favored Abel because Abel's actions were righteous and Cain's actions were evil.

Likewise, in serving God, it doesn't matter what we do or how much we offer. What matters is whether or not we please the Lord. "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic 6:8). These are God's requirements. He wants a sacrifice of our character and actions. That is, before we can make a pleasing sacrifice to God, we have to be pleasing to Him.



D. Worship Him in Spirit and Truth (Jn 4:24)

God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. It is important that we examine ourselves. In our service to the Lord, are we doing it for ourselves, for God, or for others? True worship must be sincere and heartfelt.

In Matthew 6 the Lord Jesus criticized the Pharisees for fasting and praying in order to be seen by men. Likewise, in Zechariah, the Israelites fasted four times a year for seventy years. However, God felt that their fasting was just a religious practice so that they could say that they had a successful festival. God is not so easily deceived. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs and goats...When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood" (Is 1:11, 15). Let's think about this. We may attend many spiritual convocations and partake of the Holy Communion, but are we truly worshiping the Lord in spirit and truth? As the Lord commanded the Israelites, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Is 1:16f). Let us seek to glorify the Lord's name with one heart and one will so that our labor will not be in vain.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



1

What are the tell-tale signs of a hypocrite?

2

How can we check ourselves to see if we are true Christians?

3

In order to be true Christians, what does the Lord require of us? (cf. Mic 6:8)

LIFE APPLICATION



Part A: Testimonies of Wholeheartedness

Testimony 1

Two sisters were praying when suddenly, both cried out aloud. After the prayer, they both asked each other why the other suddenly cried out. One sister said that she heard a voice saying, "You are not serving me with your whole heart." The other sister said she heard the same voice. They decided there and then that they needed to serve and worship the Lord God with their whole hearts.

Testimony 2

Two brothers had the same dream. Both saw an angel coming to them. The angels displayed two books before them, one with brother X's name and the other with brother Y's name. The angel opened up brother X's book: on one side was a record of all the things he had done, with a list of all the holy work he had carried out. On the other side was a check mark against each work carried out. When the brother saw this, he was very joyful. Next the angel turned to brother Y and opened up his book. In his book, it also noted the works he had done, but against nearly every single one were crosses rather than check marks. He only had a few check marks against his works. Both brothers knew in their hearts what this meant. Brother Y, not surprisingly, was not very happy with his book. The angel told them that they are both working very hard, but one was using his whole heart to serve God, while the other one wasn't.

Questions to think about:

1. What do the two testimonies tell us about our attitude in worshiping and serving God?
2. Why is it important to serve with our whole heart? (Ps 9:1; 138:1; 111:1; 119:2; 34:10,69,143)

Part B: Hell is Real

*I went into my classroom
Ready for another year at school.
I didn't want the work,
Just wanted to hang and be cool.
I had on new clothes,
New sneakers on my feet.
I was there for class on time*

Went to the back and took my seat.
 Yeah, I'm moving up.
 I'm already grown.
 Soon I'll be graduating
 And out on my own.
 I talked to some of my friends.
 We were all having fun.
 Said some things I shouldn't have said,
 Did stuff I shouldn't have done.
 I knew I was different.
 I felt God touch my heart.
 I knew I should set a standard,
 But then I'd be set apart.
 Walking to the bus,
 I was not looking for strength.
 I heard the car tires screeching,
 But now it's too late.
 I'm standing in this room
 And I can see the heavenly gate.
 Oh no! I never prayed.
 I thought I had time to get it straight.
 An angel walked to me.
 He had a book in his hand.
 I knew it was the Book of Life.
 When would this dream end?
 I told him my name
 And he began to look.
 Then he looked at me sadly and said
 Your name is not in this book.
 Angel, this is a dream.
 No, I can't be dead!
 He closed the book and turned away.
 He whispered--You cannot proceed ahead.
 No ... no this can't be real.
 Angel, you can't turn me away.
 Let me talk to God.
 Maybe He'll let me stay.
 He led me to the gate.
 Jesus came to me,
 He did not let me in but said,

Beloved what is your need?
 Jesus, I cried, please
 Don't cast me away from you.
 Tears ran down His face as He said,
 You knew what you needed to do.
 Lord, please I'm young.
 I never thought I would die.
 I thought I'd have plenty of time.
 Death caught me by surprise.
 Lord, I went to church.
 Please Jesus, I believe.
 He said you would not accept me.
 My love you would not receive.
 Lord, there were too many hypocrites.
 They weren't being true.
 He took a step back and asked
 What does that have to do with you?
 Lord, my family claimed to be saved,
 They weren't real. You know.
 He said, I died for you.
 Now I have to go.
 I fell to my knees crying to Him.
 Lord, I planned to be real tomorrow.
 I couldn't make Him understand.
 I had never felt such sorrow.
 Then it hit me hard, I said
 Lord, where will I go?
 He looked into my eyes and said,
 My child you already know.
 Please Jesus, I begged
 The place is so hot.
 It seemed to trouble and grieve Him.
 He whispered, DEPART FROM ME, I KNOW YOU NOT.
 Lord, you're supposed to be love.
 How can you send me to damnation?
 He replied, With your mouth you said you loved me,
 But each day you rejected my salvation.
 With that in an instant,
 Day turned into night.
 I never knew such torture could be.

Now too late, I know the Bible is right.
 If I can tell you anything,
 Hell has no age.
 It is a place of torture,
 Separated from God and full of rage.
 You know I thought it was funny—a joke,
 But this one thing is true.
 If you never accept Jesus Christ
 HELL IS WAITING FOR YOU!

By Unknown

Questions to think about:

1. How do you think this poem targets Christians who are Christians by name only?
2. What is the author's point?
3. As a Christian, how can you make sure that the inside of your cup is clean?
4. How can you spend as much time working on the inside as you do on the outside?
5. How can you become more honest with yourself and with God?
6. What makes you substitute religion for obedience?

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Sing Hymn 399: Lord, I Want to Be a Christian
 To be a true Christian, we must live out a life of Christ.
 It is not merely one of show, but one of true and honest Christian virtues from our hearts. We must repent of our proud heart and aim to live a life of true Christianity.
 May the Lord help us as we strive to become pure, holy, and perfect vessels for His use.

Lesson 13

Review

Lesson Aim

- 1) To review the past quarter's memory verses.
- 2) To be able to apply the verses to our daily lives.

REVIEW

Jumbled Memory Verses

The following Bible verses have been jumbled. Side A contains the first part of the memory verses and side B contains the second part. Reorganize them so that the memory verse is complete.

Teaching Tips

You may want to arrange the students to work with a partner. Create a larger version of the table and cut out the memory verses and give them a time limit to reorganize them. Once they have finished, allow them to write out the complete memory verses individually.

A	B
I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.	You will hear, O Lord my God. (Ps 38:15)
"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:	but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. (Phil 4:6)
If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you;	and revive me in Your way. (Ps 119:37)
But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.	And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:1-2)
But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,	for they shall be called Sons of God. (Mt 5:9)
Be anxious for nothing,	and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)
For in You, O Lord, I hope;	and the truth is not in him. (1 Jn 2:4)
But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;	for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you. (Deut 31:6)
Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,	"that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (Eph 6:2-3)
Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them;	For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. (Mt 12:36-37)
He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar,	for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Mt 5:29)
Blessed are the peacemakers,	and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt 6:33)

Life Application

From this quarter's memory verses, choose two that have had significance in your life and write a paragraph on each one, detailing how they have helped you in your walk of faith and how they relate to your life today. Remember to write out the memory verses that you use.

Memory Verse:

Life Application:

Memory Verse:

Life Application:

Once the students have written down their memory verses and their life application, sit in a circle and ask them to share what they've learned from this quarter's lessons.



*"Whatever your task,
work heartily as serving
the Lord and not men."*

(Col 3:23)

**"But you shall
receive power
when the Holy
Spirit has come
upon you."**

(Acts 1:8a)

*"Be an example...of good deeds of every
kind. Let everything you do reflect your
love of the truth."*

(Titus 2:7)