

Declaration of Faith

UNIT FOUR

INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL



Declaration of Faith

UNIT FOUR

Condensed
from the
original,
two-year
teaching
series

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International Church of the Foursquare Gospel
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DECLARATION OF FAITH

One of four units of study condensed from the original, two-year teaching series copyrighted 1949, 1950 by International Church of the Foursquare Gospel

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CONTENTS

	The Vision: A Message Known Around the World	5
	Introduction	7
1.	Moderation in the Daily Christian Life	9
	Individual Worksheet	14a
2.	Devotional Bible Study in the Daily Christian Life	15
	Individual Worksheet	20a
3.	Prayer in the Daily Christian Life — Part 1	21
	Individual Worksheet	26a
4.	Prayer in the Daily Christian Life — Part 2	27
	Individual Worksheet	34a
5.	The Place of Christian Service and Personal Witnessing in the Daily Christian Life	35
	Individual Worksheet	42a
6.	The Place of Love in the Christian Life	43
	Individual Worksheet	48a
7.	Water Baptism	49
	Individual Worksheet	54a
8.	The Lord's Supper	55
	Individual Worksheet	60a
9.	Church Relationship	61
	Individual Worksheet	68a
10.	Foursquare Membership	69
	Individual Worksheet	76a
11.	Tithes and Offerings	77
	Individual Worksheet	84a
12.	Missions	85
	Individual Worksheet	90a
13.	Evangelism	91
	Individual Worksheet	98a

THE VISION: A MESSAGE KNOWN AROUND THE WORLD

by Aimee Semple McPherson

One particular night, in the midst of the Oakland revival, God led me to speak on the prophet Ezekiel's vision, as recorded in the Book of Ezekiel, the first chapter, the fourth to tenth verses. Verse ten was dwelt upon at great length, as the Spirit spoke through me in revealing power. It reads:

"As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle."

Approximately 8,000 people filled the huge tent and hundreds more crowded around the edges where the side walls were rolled up. People leaned forward in expectancy as God poured the message forth from my innermost being.

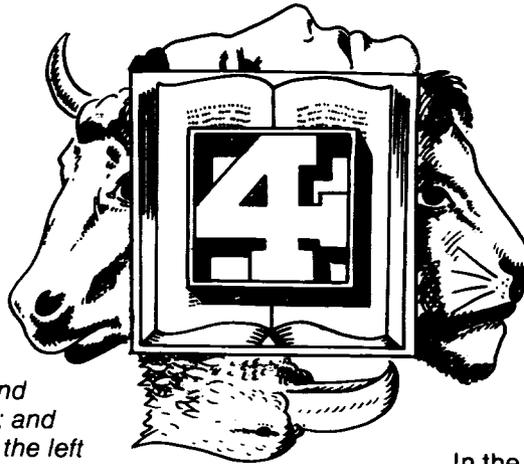
My own soul was awed as the Spirit painted in word-pictures the glorious account of that which Ezekiel saw.

IN THE CLOUDS of heaven the prophet had beheld "a whirlwind, a great cloud, and a fire unfolding itself, and a brightness." Out of this phenomenon "came the likeness of four living creatures," moving back and forth across the skies with "the appearances of a flash of lightning."

Above the firmament that was over their heads, Ezekiel saw "the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon this throne was the likeness of the appearance of a man above upon it." From his loins upward, and from his loins downward, he was clothed in the brightness of fire and round about the throne there was a rainbow!

This, explains Ezekiel, "was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." So wonderful, so magnificent was the revelation, that the prophet could only repeat, "it was the appearance of the likeness of" some thing!

As I spoke, God revealed to the assembled multitude that the four faces typified the four-fold ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.



In the face of the *MAN* we beheld that of the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" — the Saviour of the world!

In the face of the *LION* we beheld that of the mighty Baptizer with the Holy Ghost and fire; Jesus is the "lion of the tribe of Judah." As a lion denotes strength and power, it is a fitting symbol for Christ as the Giver of the Holy Spirit.

In the face of the *OX* we beheld the Great Burden Bearer, who "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Jesus is the Great Physician and the Healer of our bodies.

In the face of the *EAGLE* we saw reflected a vision of the coming King of kings, whose pinions would soon cleave the shining heavens as He returns to catch His waiting bride away!

A PERFECT GOSPEL! A complete gospel for body, for soul, for spirit, and for eternity! A gospel that faces squarely in every direction!

As the wonder — the power — the majesty of it cascaded o'er the battlements of glory, filling, flooding, enveloping my very being, the whole tent seemed enveloped as well — aquiver with the praise of God!

I stood there still and listened, gripping the pulpit, shaking with the wonder and the joy of it, then —

"WHY" — why, it's the F-O-U-R-S-Q-U-A-R-E Gospel!" burst from the white heat of my heart.

Instantly the Spirit bore witness! Waves, billows, oceans of praise rocked the audience.

Borne aloft upon the wings of a Holy Ghost revival, the term "The Foursquare Gospel," which the Lord gave to me that night as vividly distinguishing the message which He had given me to preach, has become known around the world.

INTRODUCTION

The condensed Declaration of Faith is designed to meet the educational needs of the growing, progressive church and individual. Its distinct purpose is to provide a strong, Biblical foundation as well as a solid framework of Foursquare beliefs and doctrines in a course-study format. This format facilitates the learning/growth process by means of personal application to ensure effective, spiritual advancement.

The course is comprised of four units containing thirteen (13) lessons each. The lessons revolve around a central theme which is clearly stated under the lesson *AIM*, and which focuses on the basic directive for that particular study.

Needless to say, Scripture is a very important part of the course. *KEY VERSES* have been purposefully provided as a foundational basis from which each lesson's text obtains its footing. Throughout the course many other Bible references are listed with the intent of adding a fuller, Scriptural documentation, and of providing materials for a secure, learning structure. Thus, research and careful examination of these references will prove to be rewarding.

Inserts entitled, *NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR* are woven into the tapestry of the lesson plan. They are a means of stimulating class discussion in a group study; provoking constructive, individual thought; and channeling the attention of the student(s) into the mainstream of the section immediately following it. Accompanying each note is a question(s) or instruction which is answered or discussed in the ensuing text.

The *OPENING* and *CLOSING ACTIVITIES* are helpful application assists designed to highlight, solidify and emphasize the Bible truth being presented. They can be done in small groups or individually. The *OPENING ACTIVITY* should be completed in the classroom if the course is being used in a group study, and the *CLOSING ACTIVITY* can be done either in the classroom or at home the week following.

Each lesson is finally capped with a series of questions referred to as a *WORKSHEET*. This sheet can be used as a review for group evaluation, or as a "self-check" if the course is being studied independently.

All will find the condensed Declaration of Faith to be highly palatable in its reading and flexible in its use. Following are a few suggested means for most effectively utilizing this material.

Group-Study Options Include:

1. Class discussion — The instructor conducts the actual classtime in a discussion atmosphere, using the lesson as an outline. In this case, the instructor may wish to devise more questions than those listed in the *NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR* section. Students should read the lesson during the week prior to class.
2. Lecture — The classtime may be primarily lecture, allowing prescribed time for questions and some discussion as needed throughout the teaching. In this case, the student may read through the lesson the week following class as a review.

If the instructor is the only one using a book, the students should be encouraged to take notes. It is helpful to have an outline of the lesson charted on a blackboard or an overhead projector. The worksheets placed at the end of each lesson may be photocopied for the class. The same applies to puzzles or lists of questions included in the *OPENING* and *CLOSING ACTIVITIES*. It is also suggested that the title, *AIM*, and *KEY VERSE* of the study be posted for all to see.

In a group situation, it is recommended that the instructor involve the class in the *OPENING* and *CLOSING ACTIVITIES*, guide the students in thoroughly examining the Scripture references, and become skillfully acquainted with all of the material.

Not only is this book a valuable tool for group study, but it is also an indispensable "must" for the individual endeavoring to explore God's Word, and better understand specific Foursquare doctrine.

Individual-Study Format Involves:

1. Setting a goal for the completion of the course — preferably one lesson per week.
2. Reading the lesson *AIM*, looking up the *KEY VERSE* in the Bible, and meditating on the Scripture and its meaning.
3. Completing the *OPENING ACTIVITY* and observing the special directions for individual study.
4. Studying the lesson, and making notes on important aspects of the subject matter.
5. Considering the question(s) or instruction listed

under *NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR* in view of finding the answer(s) in the material immediately following it.

6. Working through the *CLOSING ACTIVITY*, and finishing the *WORKSHEET*, either at the same time or a few days later.

Although the means of approach pursued in this course may differ in varying circumstances, the final outcome

will be the same — a common advancement in the strength and knowledge of the Word of God.

A world of adventure waits to be discovered by the one who sets out to journey through the annals of Biblical wealth. This Declaration of Faith will prove to be a faithful guide coursing a pathway enriched with the fruits of Life, bedecked with revelation of the King, Jesus, and canopied with a fresh vision of His Majesty.

MODERATION IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

AIM: To understand what is meant by moderation in the Christian walk and how it applies to the believer in such areas as the exercise of spiritual gifts, doctrinal belief, personal preferences, living habits, religious observance, personal liberty, and temperament.

KEY VERSES:

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5).

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:33,40).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Moderation means reasonableness; the avoidance of unprofitable, foolish, or harmful extremes. Certainly the gospel would receive a better hearing today if a greater number of fundamental believers were more fair, reasonable, gentle, meek, and prudently discreet. When a Christian acts, speaks or argues unreasonably, he acts in an un-Christian manner. The least the world can expect of Christians is fairness. But he is not moderate who acts reasonably in only one respect; moderation must be practiced in every phase of life.

Take a few moments to meditate on your own Christian walk. Write down areas of your life where you need to practice moderation. Commit these areas to prayer this week as you seek to be moderate in every area of your life.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago Sister McPherson wrote an article in the “Bridal Call” entitled “The Middle of the Road,” in which she set forth the spirit and policy of the Foursquare way. Along with the above mentioned article was printed an artist’s illustration showing the Foursquare believer walking along a straight highway between icebergs of formality on one side and uncontrolled fanaticism on the other side. Our founder advocated a way of worship which was warm, zealous, spiritual and Pentecostal; yet a way which kept free from unscriptural and unedifying manifestations. It is indeed doubtful that there has been a revival in modern times as powerful, spiritual and productive of soul-winning as the revival under Aimee Semple McPherson which gave birth to the Foursquare Gospel Church. One thing is certain, that in our initial revival, in which multitudes were saved, healed and filled with the Holy Ghost, in which God’s power was so mightily manifest that those who “came to jeer, stayed to cheer” and to accept Christ, there was no fanaticism or unbecoming manifestations. Our way was and is the “middle of the road” way.

service. The middle of the road simply means doing all things in moderation and self-control. True faith and consecration makes extremes unnecessary inasmuch as the true, intelligent believer knows that all success in the kingdom of God is achieved by God’s power, not man’s.

Not unbounded human emotion, but faith is the victory that overcomes the world. When we must wear ourselves out with extremes of human effort, we have ceased to work with God. Zeal and enthusiasm are commendable qualities, but they are most admirable when they are controlled by an intelligent and biblical comprehension of specific goals of achievement. Frenzied zeal destroys more than it builds. They that wait upon the Lord shall not make haste. Let no one, however, mistake moderation for indifference or mediocrity. Moderation means going as far as the Bible goes, but no farther. It means doing God’s work, God’s way, in God’s strength, and in God’s time. One great fault of all extremists is that while they go beyond the Scripture in some things, they fall far short in other things equally important.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*Is moderation indifference or compromise? Explain.*

Now the middle of the road is no compromise way. It does not mean the absence of zeal and enthusiasm; it means going only as far as Scripture and sanctified reason go in worship, life, doctrine, government and

MODERATION EXPLAINED IN THE WORD OF GOD

Philippians 4:5

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”

According to this verse, the distinguishing characteristic of a Christian should be his reasonableness and moderation. It is a mistaken notion some have that a true Christian must be known as eccentric. We are God’s peculiar people indeed, but not necessarily “eccentric”

people. "Peculiar" means "belonging exclusively to." Now it is true that sincere believers are often looked upon as different and as unworldly, which is natural. We are not to be conformed to the pattern of a perverse civilization. We are indeed to be a transformed people with an uncompromising purpose to live holy lives, but unfortunately many persons' reputation for being "eccentric" comes not so much from holy living as from their indiscreet and untactful manner of presenting the Christian principles. The world may think us strange in our manner of life, but God forbid that we should be despised for crude exhortations, intolerant attitudes, boastful presumption, and extremist doctrines. Many who bemoan their persecutions for Christ's sake are actually persecuted for their intolerance. However much we hate sin and sinful practice, we must never hate men, nor treat sinners in a manner so as to convey the idea that we look with "holier than thou" contempt upon them. Very seldom will a humble and unselfish person be directly persecuted for presenting Christ. Persecution comes usually when the prejudices and personal interests of hardened sinners and false religionists are invaded and upset by the successful inroads of Christianity. All of us will be persecuted enough in the days ahead for the sake of Christ and His holy gospel; let us not intensify this persecution needlessly by rude and overbearing manners. We need not resort to frenzied human extremes in Christian accomplishment, for Christ is at hand. That is, our Lord is so near to us, that we can, if we have real faith, do God's will effortlessly.

Ephesians 4:14-15

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

We are further to be moderate in our doctrinal beliefs. That is, we are neither to be childishly moved by every new whim of doctrine, changing our belief with every new wind of propaganda; nor are we to be unteachable and dogmatic in the extreme. One ought to base his belief on personal unprejudiced study of the Word with the help of the writings and teachings of the best scholars of his denomination. This does not mean, of course, that scholars are infallible, nor that one can follow any ready-made system of teaching blindly; on the other hand, however, one should not quickly adopt new doctrines, nor follow after pretenders to new revelations. God does sometimes lead us into new understanding of truth but no new revelation is so urgent that we cannot give ample time to the study of the Bible and the meditation of God's written revelation. If a new movement is really of God, it will last and there will be plenty of time to get into it when we have had sufficient time to study and investigate it in the light of the Holy Word. Many sincere Christians have been greatly embarrassed and retarded spiritually by hastily and unwisely following new movements which have falsely

pretended to possess new truth and authority. "*By their fruits ye shall know them,*" but take plenty of time to make a close examination of the fruits. Some fruit that looks good is only wax imitation tied on with the cords of loud pretention. One who is moderate in belief is not set in his ways, but he is very slow to move from what satisfies. A plant which is constantly being transplanted to new ground cannot grow up to maturity in Christ.

1 Corinthians 13:5

"(Charity) doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What is meant by the statement, "When one is intemperate in any manner he is violating the law of love"?*

Moderation is actually the state of behavior of one who is guided always by love. When one is intemperate in any manner he is violating the law of love. Extremes always do injury to the right of others. Unbecoming manifestations in the church always take up time which should be devoted to more profitable forms of worship. Overly emotional disorder always drives someone away from church, perhaps someone another member is eager to win to Christ. If we are filled with love we will not insist on the right to private manifestations which do not benefit the whole church. There is such a thing as being intemperate even in the blessings we express. The blessing is of God, but the reaction is human. Love always guides us into the most judicious and considerate manner of reacting to God's blessing.

1 Corinthians 14:33

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

Confusion and disorder are not of God. The blessings of the Lord are often so great as to be almost too great to contain but never such as cannot be expressed in some profitable and edifying manner. We should learn to harness the power of divine blessings using such in the practical work of soul-winning more than in mere explosions of emotion. Emotion is good when it is the charge that sends the missile to its specific target, but it is vain when it manifests itself only in a big puff of smoke. A concentrated discharge of practical power often produces noise, but noise is not necessarily power. Let us use all the divine power the Holy Spirit gives us in the achievement of God's work, but let us avoid confusion and disorder of which God is not the author.

1 Corinthians 14:40

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★How would you describe moderation in worship?

Moderation does not mean less zeal or power. It does, however, mean zeal and power applied to a task in an intelligent and Scriptural order. The best work or worship is not achieved under conditions of disorder. God has a plan and God's leading will not be diverted into a disorderly manner of work or worship. It is true that monotonous form and ceremony are deadening to spontaneous spiritual worship, but confusion and disorder do not provide the cure. God's order has infinite variety and never becomes tiresome.

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

"Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

Fanaticism nearly always is the result of a narrow point of view. Paul tells us that all things are our privilege. Some people are, like some of the Corinthians, fanatical in their attachment to, or a preference for, one minister or one type of ministry. This is not good. God has given all types of ministers to the church in order that the believer may have a balanced growth. One man plants, another waters, another cultivates, another prunes, but God gives the increase. Let us profit by the ministries of all God's servants, without undue attachment to personalities. Respect and honor all, with perhaps exceptional love for our spiritual fathers who led us to Christ, but do not worship any man nor place him unfairly upon a pedestal.

We, likewise, have foolish preferences for only one kind of singing, praying, preaching, or worshiping, but these exercises and functions have infinite variety intended to provide a full and ever-interesting service of adoration. We only rob ourselves when we childishly restrict our appreciation to a few kinds of songs, sermons, or methods of worship. God reveals Himself to us in an infinite number of ways; let us be sensitive to any approach God takes. All things are ours. Moderation means an intelligent appreciation of all God's variety.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27

"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But

I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be castaway."

Moderation means temperance in our habits of living. One must bring his bodily appetite under control so as to be his best in the Christian warfare. We cannot win the race if we are intemperate. Undue pampering of our bodily demands will soften us spiritually. Strength is built by resistance not by indulgence. Character is formed by right adherence to right principles of action which demands that one say "no" as well as "yes." The successful Christian must adhere to principles of living which are just as rigid as those followed by any soldier or athlete. We are not shadow boxing, not fighting an imaginary enemy. Carnal indulgence will ultimately disqualify us for the race. Foursquare churches discourage worldliness, because it robs the true soldier of his strength for battle and of his endurance in the race.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth."

In America we have overdone the idea of personal freedom. Freedom is a noble concept, but it does not mean that we have the license to do as we please. We cannot act always according to general rights. Some things are not wrong in themselves which become wrong because they injure, deprive, or sadden others. No man in a mutual society has a right to seek exclusively his own interests and happiness, ignoring the interests and happiness of others. The Christian especially must be moderate in pursuing his personal interests, for he must not love others less than himself. No man can seriously contemplate the cross of Christ and afterward seek only his own interests.

1 Corinthians 10:32-33

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Offenses come through selfish action. Moderation tends to avoid offense, because the moderate and reasonable people seek to please others as well as to please themselves. This passage does not mean, of course, that we are to seek to be men pleasers, nor that we can please everyone. Often we cannot please God and please all men at the same time; however, our aim should be doing that which will come nearest benefiting all classes of men. We may ultimately benefit them in Christ. We ought not to antagonize any class of men, nor attack any because of their race or condition. One never accomplishes any permanent good by preaching against the groups or churches to which others belong. Let us present Christ to all in a positive gospel. We may even point out the fallacy of wrong ways and the deception of false teaching if we do it in a spirit of love and tolerance.

Romans 14:5

“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

We further ought to be moderate in our interpretation of minor doctrines. Some exalt small matters and make them the supreme issues of worship and life with the result that many divisions are made in the ranks of the church. In some matters such as food, days, innocent diversions, dress, etc. each person must be persuaded in his own mind. We must not take God's private revelation to us, and make it a yoke for all others to wear, nor must we use our liberty as a point of view from which to call others narrow.

Colossians 3:12,13

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★How should we treat persons with whom we have had a difference? Give Scripture reference.

Finally, let there be moderation in the settlement of our differences. One should not permit difference of viewpoint on doctrine, life governments, worship, or personal liberty to drive a wedge between himself and his brother in Christ. If we find differences arising let us resolve them in love, forgiving in a spirit of meekness. When we are tempted to quarrel over a supposed wrong, let us remember the axiom “two wrongs do not make a right.”

MODERATION IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK

Moderation In Exercise Of Spiritual Gifts

Now moderation does not mean the neglect of spiritual gifts; it merely means the Scripturally intelligent use of the gifts. To use the phraseology of Paul, it means the profitable and edifying exercise of the gifts. It further means compliance with Scriptural teaching in the exercise of the gifts so that they may operate in the right place, at the right time, and in the right proportion to other spiritual functions. Moderation in the exercise of spiritual gifts means their use in such a manner as to preserve order, avoid confusion and unbecoming behavior, and to be a blessing to the whole assembly of believers.

Lack of moderation is seen in the failure to control the human spirit (*“the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”* 1 Corinthians 14:32) and in uncontrolled emotional reactions. It is very difficult for many persons

to distinguish between the blessing of God and one's reaction to the blessing of God. The operation of the Spirit is one thing, while the person's emotional reaction to the Spirit's operation is another thing altogether.

Some have gone to such extremes in the exercise of the vocal gifts as to devote the entire time of every service to tongues and prophecies, going so far as to decide all problems of individual members by special revelations and messages. A consideration for the principle of moderation would have avoided all such unfortunate extremes. On the other hand, let us not go to the opposite extreme of despising and neglecting spiritual gifts which are a very great blessing when they are exercised by reasonable persons.

Moderation In Doctrinal Belief

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★Describe the two opposite extreme variations from the middle of the road when it comes to doctrinal beliefs.

There are, as in most things, two opposite extreme variations from the middle of the road in doctrines. One extreme is the fickle manner of flitting from one belief to another, from one theory to another, from one teaching to another. Paul's admonition to the Ephesians in chapter 4, verses 14 and 15, as translated by Arthur S. Way is very apt. *“So that we may be children no longer, like ships wavetost, and drifting before each gust of teaching,—the prey of the fraudulent cunning of men, and of their unscrupulous trickery—drifting on to the maze of error's reefs; but that our life may be all truth, enfolded by love, and that we may grow up in all respects into the likeness of Jesus, of Him who is our head, our Messiah.”* If our doctrinal position and denominational choice are the result of intelligent and unprejudiced study of the Word, there is certainly no reason for our shifting from one belief to another, nor from one church to another. They grow most and serve best who “stay put.”

However, it is also a mistake to be so dogmatically set in our opinions that we are incapable of progress or going deeper in the spiritual life. Often the sincere are wrong or only partially sound in their beliefs. If we are wrong or immature, we should be open to conviction. Even when admitting the possibility of a new group's doctrinal superiority, it is advisable to move very slowly. Let all new ways prove their superiority beyond any shadow of doubt.

Another type of intemperance in doctrine, is that of condemning all who do not follow us in every fine point. There is much room for sincere difference of belief within the bounds of sound doctrine. Christian love, tolerance, fellowship and cooperation are far more desirable than exact doctrinal conformity. Some of those who call themselves “fundamental” do harm to

the conservative position, by their fierce, intemperate, and unreasonable condemnation of all, or any who vary in any respect from their system of teaching. We certainly should stand fast in orthodox teaching, but there is no need to use our orthodoxy as a club to beat the rest of the world into submission. Some preachers devote more time in the pulpit to the emphasis of interchurch controversy than they devote to positive evangelical truth. Unfortunately some of the loudest contenders for orthodoxy are careless in their orthopraxy. Let us stand fast for the truth, but fairly, reasonably and courteously.

Moderation in Our Personal Preferences

Taste and preference are as often as not based upon prejudice and past conditioning. We sometimes become so set in our whims of choice that we unknowingly deprive ourselves of needful provisions and of a wealth of new experience. Many persons like only a certain class of hymnology. They prefer fast songs or slow songs, or perhaps the choruses. Such persons often fail to enjoy a service if their type of songs are not sung. Some enjoy only those services characterized by vociferous preaching and loud shouting while others only enjoy quiet reverent worship. Either type of person is being immaturely unreasonable in his preferences. We ought to cultivate a taste for all forms of true worship in order to be able to profit by every avenue of the Spirit's manifestation. Let us not suppose that spirituality is always loud, nor that reverence is always silent. Those who prefer the shouting way, perhaps greatly need more quiet meditation; and those who prefer a quiet meditative way, perhaps need a little more exuberance. All things are ours, let us not be foolishly narrow in our preferences.

Moderation in Living Habits

A temperate life is essential to an effective testimony. We, whose hopes are spiritual and whose bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, should avoid extreme indulgence in food, drink, or diversion. "*Bodily exercise profiteth for a little, but godliness is profitable eternally.*" If we satisfy our carnal appetites too fully, we deaden our spiritual faculties. The Christian race requires rigid training in self-control. The other extreme is self-exalting, impractical extremes in fasting, other worldly indifference to human problems, and hairsplitting contentions over minor considerations of diet. Live according to your conscience, but do not crush everyone whose conscience allows more than yours allows, or less than yours allows.

Moderation in Religious Observance

Some matters of religious observance, such as the keeping of certain days and the eating of certain foods, are very important to some persons, and of little importance to others. Here again one must be guided by an enlightened conscience and by the most enlightened position of his religious group. Certainly Christ is the central fact of the gospel and never should any minor consideration displace Christ from the center of our thought and observance. The Christian way is to trust in

Christ's finished vicarious work of the Cross for our salvation and provision. No ceremonies nor foods are vital to one's salvation. The sacraments and Christian holidays are a blessing if rightly observed, but they are not essential to salvation. Christians do well to devote the Lord's day to worship and Christian works, but differences as to the day's observance should never divide the church nor provoke quarrels. In this as in other things let us be reasonable and tolerant.

Moderation in Personal Liberty

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★How would you describe moderation in personal liberty? Can you list some Scriptures to back up your thoughts?

Our young people whose consciences do not condemn them for certain innocent diversions feel that they have personal liberties in such matters. Our personal liberty goes only as far as our brother's well-being. Even such things as may be innocent in themselves may be better avoided if they cause contentions, or if they stumble weaker Christians. No matter what our personal liberty of conscience, a life above question is more valuable than selfish enjoyment. On the other hand, we need not be bound to live a prudish life merely to satisfy the hypercritical who have fallen into a gloomy aspect of life. Everyone may harmlessly have some diversion, but how much better in every way if we select types of diversion which cause no dispute and which in no way rob us spiritually. Any diversion is bad when pursued to the neglect of prayer, Bible study, and worship.

Moderation in Temperament

No matter how carefully we live, teach, practice, or worship, there will arise occasions which demand a settlement of differences. No church can long function without the imposition of discipline. Let us remember the Christian way in all discipline and settlement of differences is the way of tolerance, fairness, understanding, and reason.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Drawing from what they have learned in this lesson, ask your class to write out their definition of moderation in the Christian life. Then ask them to share with someone nearby why they believe moderation is important in the Christian life.

If you are working alone, write your definition of moderation and why you believe moderation is important in the Christian life on the back of the worksheet at the end of this lesson.

MODERATION IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. *Is moderation indifference or compromise? Explain.* _____

2. *What is meant by the statement, "When one is intemperate in any manner he is violating the law of love"?* _____

3. *How would you describe moderation in worship?* _____

4. *How should we treat persons with whom we have had a difference? Give Scripture reference.* _____

5. *Describe the two opposite extreme variations from the middle of the road when it comes to doctrinal beliefs.* _____

6. *How would you describe moderation in personal liberty? Can you list some Scriptures to back up your thoughts?*

DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

AIM: To gain an understanding of how the Word of God is to us a “*lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway,*” without which we would certainly stumble or go astray. To appreciate the fact that the Word is indeed an infallible guide without whose direction the serpentine pathway of life would be a meaningless maze of blind alleys. The Scripture is the soul nourishing bread, deprived of which, the pilgrim would fall by the wayside faint and starved.

KEY VERSES:

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word” (Psalms 119:9-16).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Read through Psalms 119:9-16. Match the following by drawing a line from each statement to the correct verse of Scripture.

THE WORD AND FELLOWSHIP	VERSE 9
THE WORD AND SANCTIFICATION	VERSE 10
THE WORD AND MEMORY	VERSE 11
THE WORD AND JOY	VERSE 12
THE WORD AND VICTORY OVER SIN	VERSE 13
THE WORD AND MEDITATION	VERSE 14
THE WORD AND DEVOTION	VERSE 15
THE WORD AND TESTIMONY	VERSE 16

INTRODUCTION

Every sincere Christian is vitally interested in how he may continue to live a successful and useful Christian life each day. Altogether too often it happens that the first glow of a new-found Christian experience begins to wane a few weeks or months after one has come to know the saving grace of Jesus. The reason for this is that the party concerned probably failed in one or all of several exercises that are absolutely necessary for the continuance of the vitality of any Christian experience. In order to continue to enjoy the fullness of life in Christ Jesus, a Christian must give close attention to Bible study, prayer and testifying. These are prime requisites in every life. And here is something that God or the Holy Spirit will not and cannot do for us. Most of salvation is accomplished for us by God alone — it is purely of grace — but once a person is saved there are things he must do for the continuance of that life. In this lesson we are concerned with the first of these Big Three of the Daily Christian Life.

DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY OUTLINED IN PSALMS 119:9-16

Not only do the Psalms — Israel’s hymn book — provide us with one of the richest sources of devotional reading, but they themselves, more than any other section,

exhort us to live in the Word of God. The Psalms were written for daily living and have their great value as a result of having been composed in the midst of the experiences of daily life. Their teachings are not untried theories, but tried and true precepts that are workable. Nothing is more frequently recommended by the Psalmist as a source of strength for the daily life than recourse to God’s Word and nowhere more clearly than in Psalm 119.

The Word and Sanctification (Verse 9)

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*What cleanses the heart? In what ways?*

Here the study of the Word is enjoined as a means of moral purification. This cleansing is not exclusively for young men. The application is to a young man only because to him more than his elders is moral relapse a problem. Sin is, nevertheless, a problem to all age groups and all must find the victory realized through

habitual recourse to the Holy Scriptures. The believer stands out in this carnal civilization because of his adherence to the pure standards of God's Book. On the other hand the unbeliever, because his reading selection is that of a literature characterized by greed, violence, cynicism, and lust, follows the nearly uniform rut carved out by a selfish, carnal society. Daniel and the three Hebrew youths withstood the temptations of the land of exile, because they were daily fortified by the Word of truth. The missionaries in foreign lands whose testimony is most brilliant and whose life is most consistently exemplary are they whose habit of Bible reading is most deeply rooted, and most faithfully practiced. If any one of us will regularly and consistently saturate his mind in God's Word, he will discover himself strong and against moral impurity in the hour of temptation.

Note that verse nine says, "*a young man shall cleanse his way by taking heed.*" While Bible study is a most powerful technique, its success depends upon concentration. The Word blesses one to the extent that he "*takes heed*" to what he reads. The Bible was never intended to be a "good luck piece" or a talisman. A mere thoughtless passing over of a given number of verses has no ceremonially religious value in itself. The Word cleanses the mind to the degree that it is taken into the mind and considered reverently. The Scriptures when read and not heeded become a sure condemnation to the impure. Divine precepts sanctify when they are applied to the heart and mind with that object in view.

The Word and Devotion

(Verse 10)

This verse makes clear a very important point concerning the Bible's relation to daily life; that is, that the Lord Himself must be sought and communed with through His Word. The Scriptures are not an end in themselves, but a way to God. The power of the Word consists in its being a medium of fellowship. The devout find God in His revelation. The curious find out about God in the Bible, but the devout find God Himself. Further, when one is accustomed to keeping tryst with God in His Holy Statutes, he comes to be fully aware of his dependence upon God. The arrogant may proudly exult in their self-sufficiency, not knowing that self-sufficiency is self-impoverishment. Independence is but a pretty illusion and happy is the man who confesses his reliance upon the Lord, praying with the Psalmist, "*Let me not wander from Thy commandments.*"

The Word and Victory Over Sin

(Verse 11)

As much as we may revere the written Word, it is not until we hide it in our hearts that it does its most powerful work. The Psalmist prays that God's Word may keep him from sinning. The author of this Psalm lived under a much inferior covenant than that which we enjoy. Moreover, he lived in a day when the standard of holiness was only imperfectly perceived, yet he was deeply eager to be free from any sin against God. Beyond question his yearning after righteousness was the direct result of his love for and devotion to God's Word.

In the New Testament, Timothy stands out as being one of the purest and staunchest of the young ministers. And who will not see that his character was the result of his having hidden God's Word in his heart from early childhood? What would the saints have done in those periods of persecution when the Bible was forbidden, had they not engraved the divine precepts on the fleshly tables of their hearts? If some professing Christians today are lightly concerned about sin, it is because they have lightly esteemed God's statutes and lightly applied them to their hearts.

The Word and Fellowship

(Verse 12)

As the writer here infers, the deep understanding of the divine statutes is taught by the blessed Lord Himself. There is a certain amount of sacred knowledge one can understand by the application of the rules of reason and grammar, inasmuch as the Bible was first of all written to real people who understood words in their usual significance. Furthermore the Bible says what it means and means what it says. Yet there is a deeper meaning in the Sacred Book that words are incapable of conveying apart from experience with God. Such deeper meanings are taught us by the Divine Teacher when our experience has brought us to a point where we are ready to receive them. The understanding of God's Word is progressively related to spiritual maturation.

The Word and Testimony

(Verse 13)

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What value is there in the telling of the truth of the Word to others?*

The word "declared" here means "recounted" or "rehearsed." The Lord's precepts and judgments are such that they will not keep. Within us the Word burns as a fire; it is a gospel that must be shared, good news that must be told. Surely no one is rich in the Scriptures who is reluctant to witness for Christ. Paul felt like the Psalmist when he cried, "*Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.*" Surely no true believer needs wait for the ordination of men to declare the saving truth to the unconverted around him, nor to share his biblical discoveries with his brethren. Does Paul have this Psalm in mind in writing to the Colossians when he says, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*"? Perhaps one of the best ways of remembering anything is to tell it to another. Would our minds, perhaps, retain more of God's Word if it occurred more frequently in our daily conversation?

The Word and Joy (Verse 14)

The Psalmist's heart had rejoiced over God's testimonies as one rejoices over wealth. And, what more enriches one's life than the truth of God? History is full of examples of men who have renounced all earthly riches for the sake of God's kingdom. In fact, no man is poorer than he who has no resources beyond material wealth. Moreover, he is rich toward God whose heart is saturated in divine truth no matter how lacking he may be in material wealth. The superiority of spiritual wealth lies in the fact that its value does not fluctuate with the changing times, and in the fact that it is securely deposited beyond the reach of thieves.

Furthermore, material wealth is not an unqualified blessing, for it often may be as great a source of sorrow as it is of pleasure. Its satisfaction is subject to the law of diminishing return, so that on every successive day its pleasure diminishes by deadening the senses. On the other hand the joy of the Lord, found in the wealth of His Holy Word, is equally delightful in all circumstances, and it continues to be joyous in an increasing degree as the time passes, inasmuch as it is not experienced in the physical senses.

The Word and Meditation (Verse 15)

The depth of devotion of the ancients was due to their frequent meditation which some have declared to be a lost art in these days. That the practice of meditation is neglected in this falsely named century of progress is seen in the shallowness of the literature, both secular and religious. In this epoch of whirlwind activity, there is no time for meditation. Men are becoming mere cogs of industry who do not need to think. As a result we have multiplied gadgets and deadly arms of destruction before we know how to use the gadgets or protect ourselves from our destructive bombs. If we had spent one-half the money that we have squandered in greedy and bellicose enterprises for the spreading of the knowledge of God's Word, we would perhaps not now be quivering in fear before our idols of steel and uranium.

Further, if there were more men in position of influence whose minds were trained in God's statutes and who were adept in holy meditation, we might now be on a safer road. But whatever the course that the history of the nations may take, let the individual believer be much in meditation on these holy truths that prepare his heart for the sublime reign of righteousness that the King of Kings will establish in the glorious day of His coming.

The Word and Memory (Verse 16)

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★Why must one study the Word as not to forget?

Not only are we to read God's truths in passing, but we are so to fix them in mind as to remember them; they are for life and their application to experience may be called for in the most unexpected moment. Blessed are those believers whose memory of divine truth is such that they are never taken unprepared by any turn of events or device of Satan.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY

Moses, the great emancipator of the nation of Israel, as well as its mighty lawgiver, had this to say with regard to the place the Word of God should have in the individual Christian's life: *"These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates"* (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Here is a plain indication that the words of the Lord should be with us at all times in all places. They should be before our eyes to guide our steps and even be upon our houses as the standard for every detail of life therein. This sort of thing can only be accomplished as we daily take time to read and study the Bible.

Solomon, the great writer of the Proverbs, knew the value of the Word of God and he wrote: *"My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh"* (Proverbs 4:20-22).

Apart from a continued close association with the Word of God, we shall not know what is God's will for our lives. We are living in a very material world and one that is no help to the living of a vital Christian life. We need the spiritual help that comes alone from the Bible. Life is filled with problems and temptations that will frustrate the Christian unless he is thoroughly grounded in the Word of the Lord. Each day will bring fresh tests, so we need fresh strength every day. An old but good motto says, "Begin the day with God." We need to begin the day with our Bible.

THE VALUE OF DAILY DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY

It Builds Faith in Our Hearts

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★How is faith developed? What Scripture promises us this?

In our previous lessons on the subject of faith we have seen the absolute necessity of this characteristic if we are going to be successful in our Christian life. Faith is developed by a close and constant association with the promises of God. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).

You cannot believe in a person if you do not know what he has promised to do and what he has already done. The Bible is the account of what God has already done for those who put their trust in Him, as well as the record of the great things He has promised to do. The more we let this Book sink down into our hearts the more we will find it easy to believe in Him. If the heart is filled each day with the promises of God, what strength will result!

It Keeps Us From Sin

Sin is a positive evil and one that is all about us. God has not seen fit to translate us to heaven the moment we are saved, but He has provided a way by which we may be kept in this evil world. It is positively amazing the influence that will come from having the Word in our hearts when we are tempted. Someone has said, with reference to the Bible: "This Book will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from this Book."

The Psalmist declared, *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Psalm 119:105). It will reveal the hidden ways of evil and guide us in the right way. Jesus overcame the tempter by the one expediency of the use of the Word of God. *"It is written,"* was His one and successful weapon against Satan. Paul calls the Word "the sword of the Spirit," and it is our mightiest weapon by which we may overcome. *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word"* (Psalm 119:9).

It Will Bring About Growth in Our Spiritual Life

We have continually emphasized that Christianity is a life. It is spiritual life in the soul of man. This life must be nurtured and fed just exactly as our natural life must have food for its sustenance and growth. If the average Christian treated his bodily life as he does his spiritual life he would be a physical anemic, lacking strength for any useful labor and a prey to every disease germ that would care to bring sickness upon him.

The Scripture declares *"man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live"* (Deuteronomy 8:3). Job said, *"I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"* (Job 23:12). Peter speaks of the development of spiritual life as a result of giving attention to the promises of God: *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:3,4). Peter also urges the followers of the Lord to *"desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"* (1 Peter 2:2).

The reading and study of the Word of God will usually bring a real blessing to the heart of the Christian, because the Holy Spirit will make its truths applicable to the experience of the individual heart. However, there may be seasons when little blessing is felt and the young Christian might become discouraged and think there was no profit in his continual pursuance of the Scriptures. The Bible does us good whether we feel like it or not. Some people do not like the taste of spinach, but spinach is good for a person whether he particularly delights in its flavor or not. So the Word does not always bring a sense of peculiar joy, but it is good for us just the same.

It Will Aid in Our Prayer Life

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★How can devotional Bible study aid in our prayer life?

This particular phase of the daily Christian life will be discussed later, but sufficient to say here that without a real knowledge of the Bible and a constant refreshing of our memory in its promises, there will never be a healthy prayer life. Prayer is pleading the promises of God. It is reminding God of what He has promised and expecting Him to perform them. How can we pray powerfully unless we are on promised ground?

George Muller was one of the greatest modern examples of what can be accomplished through prayer, as he trusted God for over \$7,500,000 to meet the needs of his orphanages without asking any man for a penny. Muller laid great stress on prayerful Bible study in connection with his great life of faith. He never presumed to ask God for something which he did not know for certain He had promised to give. More time spent in a prayerful reading of the Word would certainly enrich the prayer life of every Christian.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DAILY DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Practical Applications

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What would be the purpose of reading Scriptures together with Christian brethren? What would be the purpose of reading a choice verse for the final thought of each day?

- Read the Bible daily for inspiration.
- Read the Bible always before prayer.
- Peruse the Scriptures when there are problems to solve.
- Resort to the Word in trials and tests.
- Go to the Bible in times of sorrow and grief.
- Read the Scripture together with Christian brethren as a means of spiritual fellowship.
- Peruse the Bible when you have time on your hands, as when travelling or awaiting an appointment.
- Read a choice verse for the final thought of each day.

Methods of Reading the Word

It is not possible for any one person to tell another exactly how he should read and study his Bible. Each one's attitude toward study is so different, and the circumstances and the time factor in every life are not the same. Each Christian should seek to work out that system which will be the most helpful to him according to his life and surroundings. The following thoughts are suggestions which we trust will prove helpful in some, if not every life.

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What are the two main ways of reading the Bible? Are there any disadvantages to either method?

There are two main ways of reading the Bible. The one is concerned most with how much of the Scripture is read. Some are anxious about how many times they read the Bible through in a given time. Many seek to read it through at least once a year. There is a very distinct advantage in doing this, because it gives us a very simple plan and incentive to keep reading regularly. It also gives one an over-all view of the teachings of the Book as a whole, and we would encourage this sort of reading.

There is, however, a disadvantage in the above mentioned method in that one is tempted to feel that there is a certain value in reading a great deal of the Bible. Now it all depends upon the individual. If one is able to grasp all that he reads very quickly, well and good, but if his mind merely skips over the precious truths with little time taken for meditation and personal

application, there is a very real question if the Bible reading has accomplished too much.

The other method is to take a much shorter passage and to be more concerned with understanding what one is reading rather than in the number of chapters covered. We certainly do not mean to substitute the promise box for Bible reading, as many seem to do; but we feel that, unless one grasps the significance of the truth, reading it will not accomplish those things which we have mentioned above.

Reading the Bible is like eating one's food. It is possible to bolt it down so fast, without chewing it sufficiently, that it is never properly digested. Food value is only extracted as the molecules are completely broken down and forced to yield their full content to the various organs of the body. Even so, the greatest blessing and strength will be obtained from the Word of God as we take time to break it down by meditation, prayer and study, that it might yield its hidden treasures to our own hearts.

We would suggest that each one have a certain portion which he is going to read. One might even set himself to read the Bible through, or the New Testament, or the Gospels, or Epistles, or Psalms. No definite time should be set and no certain number of chapters or verses should be attempted. Prayerfully read along, ever asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you from the Word, until you come to a verse or passage which seems to be particularly borne upon your heart and mind by the Spirit. When you come to such a portion, then pause and study that passage. You will note that we have continually used the words "Bible study." Spend as much time as you can over that portion, until you are satisfied that you have received real strength from it. If possible memorize that particular verse that has impressed you and you will then be able to take it with you throughout the entire day. We have heard of those who would write out such a portion and take it with them, continuing to repeat and meditate on it throughout the day. This is how the Word will truly become part of our spiritual being and will be a tower of strength to us in the varied experiences of the life which we live in this world.

Remember, the Holy Spirit cannot read the Bible for you. You must do that yourself. The Bible is a spiritual book but it must also be read and studied like any other book. Bible study will take time, but it will more than repay every moment spent. Be a Bible-reading, Bible-loving Christian and you will indeed grow in spiritual strength and be able to stand in the evil day.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have each class member take a few minutes to complete the following sentence by writing his answer on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson. "DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE DAILY CHRISTIAN WALK BECAUSE . . ." After completing their answers, have them divide up into groups and discuss what they have written down. If time permits, you may also want them to discuss ways they can improve their daily devotional Bible study and then to pray for one another within the groups.

If you are working alone, complete the following sentence on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson. "DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE DAILY CHRISTIAN WALK BECAUSE . . ." Also, write down some goals and guidelines for yourself in the area of daily devotional Bible study that will assist you in being a Bible-reading, Bible-loving Christian.

DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. *What cleanses the heart? In what ways?* _____

2. *What value is there in the telling of the truth of the Word to others?* _____

3. *Why must one study the Word as not to forget?* _____

4. *How is faith developed? What Scripture promises us this?* _____

5. *How can devotional Bible study aid in our prayer life?* _____

6. *What would be the purpose of reading Scriptures together with Christian brethren? What would be the purpose of reading a choice verse for the final thought of each day?* _____

7. *What are the two main ways of reading the Bible? Are there any disadvantages to either method?* _____

PRAYER IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

Part 1

AIM: To discover why we pray, the value of prayer, and how we may best utilize its wonderful opportunities.

KEY VERSE:

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Matthew 6:9-13).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Prior to classtime, prepare a large sheet of butcher paper by writing at the top in large letters “PRAYER IS . . .” Also, provide markers or crayons. As the students come into class have them write on the butcher paper what they think prayer is.

If you are working alone, write down at least three answers to the incomplete sentence, “Prayer is . . .” You may do this on the back of the worksheet provided at the end of this lesson.

INTRODUCTION:

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★Do most people believe in prayer in some form? Do most people practice habitual prayer?

Perhaps no one doubts the importance of prayer. All Christian groups agree that it is essential to the Christian life. Even the pagan religions have their forms, techniques and exercises of prayer. It can be said with no fear of exaggeration that many persons who disclaim all religious belief and practice resort to prayer in times of crisis. Prayer is so universal that it would seem to be instinctive in man. Indeed, one’s arguing for the importance of prayer apparently is equivalent to arguing for what everyone already concedes.

Now, while we will readily admit that it is needless to contend for the importance of prayer as an idea, we will not admit that it is needless to contend for the importance of prayer as a way of life. Nearly everyone extols prayer as an ideal, but very few practice prayer as an avenue to fellowship with God. Prayer as a means to wish fulfillment, and prayer as the exercise of communion with God are two different matters. The spiritual decline in the modern church is seen in the fact that almost everyone believes in prayer and very few believe in praying. Prayer is very popular as a “wishing gate” or a “magic lamp,” but is tragically neglected as a means of generating power for Christian service and world evangelization. Here and now we are contending for the urgency of prayer as a habit, as a daily exercise of the

soul, as a way of life, as the renewed attitude of the mind. It must not be sporadic, but regular; not occasional, but continual; not ego-centric, but Christ-centric; not grasping, but intercessory; not self-complacent, but humble and contrite. Lord, teach us to pray!

THE NEED OF PRAYER

Any consideration of the daily Christian life must give a large place to the study of prayer. We cannot imagine a person continuing to live without breathing, nor is it possible for a Christian to experience very much of the life of Christ within his life unless he prays — and continues to pray. The apostle Paul uses the expression in Philippians 4:6, “*everything by prayer.*” We may have relegated prayer to just one small part of our Christian life, whereas our whole experience depends upon prayer. This does not mean that we must *only* pray, but it does mean that we should do nothing *without* praying. You can do more than pray, but you cannot do more until you have prayed.

Prayerlessness is the great sin of the Church of Jesus Christ today. It seems that it is possible to get people to do almost everything else but pray. Christians will go so far as to be willing to talk about prayer and even to study it, but so few are willing actually to pray. It is not at all difficult to get any number of people to talk about prayer for an hour, yet so often those same individuals will not spend that same time actually doing what they are talking about.

The need for prayer may be considered under three main headings: First, the need of prayer in the Christian’s personal life. Second, the need of prayer in the Christian’s conflict with Satan. Third, the need of prayer in relation to our service to God. Of course it can

instantly be seen that the latter depends upon the former. Our personal Christian life must be strong before our service will be very effective.

The Need of Prayer in the Christian's Personal Life

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What are three blessings of prayer in the Christian's personal life?*

Prayer Promotes Personal Fellowship With God — The first and greatest blessing that comes to a person through prayer is that as he prays God is made real and he enjoys a personal fellowship with the Almighty. Everyone needs to be personally acquainted with God in a very real way. It is not possible to live victoriously in a world that is predominantly motivated by sin unless the reality of God's presence is a vital conviction of the soul. This comes, as in no other way, through prayer. It is important to see the manifestations of God in the physical universe about us. It is inspiring to read what He has done for saints in days gone by, but only as we commune with Him in secret prayer do we really know *"that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

Prayer Inspires Faith — Prayer is also one of the greatest means of inspiring faith. We are so surrounded by material things and the claims that they make upon our lives that unless one takes time to commune with God in prayer he will all but fail to realize that there are spiritual realities that are of greater importance than those that are material. It is as the soul is lifted up in prayer that spiritual things become real, and as they do it is not difficult to believe. Faith must bridge the gulf between that which is seen and that which is unseen and prayer enables the soul to do this very thing. You need faith to pray, but you also need prayer to have faith.

Prayer Assists in Estimating True Values — Prayer enables the soul rightly to estimate true values. Apart from a proper evaluation of spiritual blessing, life becomes a constant struggle for the promotion of self and selfish ideals. There is little room for love for others and a willingness to serve in their behalf. Everything must revolve around ourselves in such a manner as to properly set off our importance. All this is changed when the soul is drawn out in prayer and privileged to catch a glimpse of the glory of God and the inestimable value of spiritual characteristics that can only be achieved as we love and serve others in the name of our Lord. As one prays he loses sight of self and is willing even to be nothing in order that the Lord whom he loves might become everything. Prayer will remove the scales from our eyes and let us see values as God sees them — in the light of eternity. This is so important today for many are forsaking the ways of the Lord in order to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of self-gratification and pleasure in the

things of this world. One who prays constantly and consistently will never turn from the Lord and worship at the shrines of this world.

The Need of Prayer in the Christian's Conflict with Satan

The Christian life is a warfare. The sooner the individual Christian recognizes this fact, the easier it will be for him to understand many of the things that happen in his life, and the quicker will he learn the sure ways to victory. Satan and his hosts are arrayed against the man that will live righteously and for God. When we set out to devote our powers to the service of the Lord, we are engaging in open warfare that will never cease until we put off the body of this flesh.

It is well to remind ourselves that *"we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12). It is not a natural conflict that is ours but a spiritual battle. In view of this, we are instructed to take unto ourselves *"the whole armour of God,"* and after having done so we are admonished that we should be *"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints"* (Ephesians 6:18).

Prayer, then, is one of our great essentials for victory over the enemy. Indeed, this is plainly illustrated in the life of every child of God. If there is one thing each Christian has to contend for it is his time spent in prayer. The enemy will do everything in his power to rob us of prayer. He does not seem to mind how busy we keep in our endeavors to serve the Lord as long as we do not pray, for he knows that our efforts are powerless unless they are truly bathed in believing prayer. Everything depends upon our keeping the mighty weapon of prayer. Satan will be defeated if we keep and use this. Without prayer all the other pieces of our armour will be of little avail.

The Need of Prayer in the Christian's Service for God

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*Why is prayer necessary in the Christian's service for God?*

Prayer is essential in our service for God. The early apostles recognized that without prayer their service would have little effectiveness, and so we hear the twelve say, when the question of caring for or ministering to the widows arose, *"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word"* (Acts 6:3,4).

Paul recognized the need of prayer in connection with his service and we hear him constantly enlisting the prayers of the churches in his behalf — “*brethren, pray for us*” was his cry.

Whatever we seek to do for the Lord should be enveloped in prayer. Even the simplest testimony will have power when prayer is behind it. It is as the result of prayer that the anointing of the Holy Spirit comes upon us and we receive power to do the thing we are called upon to accomplish for His glory.

“I am convinced that nothing in the whole Christian religion is so difficult, and so rarely attained, as a praying heart. Without it you are as weak as weakness itself. With it you are irresistible. This by some would be thought a strange remark, and to savor strongly of fanaticism. But I affirm the Church will have to turn over a new leaf on this subject, and learn a new lesson on the subject of prayer. Frequent seasons of secret prayer are, in my mind, wholly indispensable to keeping up an intercourse with God. Let me say again and again, if you lose your spirit of prayer, you will do nothing, or next to nothing, though you have the intellectual endowment of an angel.” — Charles G. Finney.

THE OBJECT OF PRAYER

It is well that we understand the scriptural object, or purposes of prayer. It is important that we pray intelligently — that we know what we are doing when we come to God in prayer. It is also important that we are in complete agreement with the revealed will of God in relation to prayer, as that will is made known in the Bible. We shall see that true prayer is very comprehensive. It reaches afar and touches virtually every phase of our being and every aspect of our relation to God and to the world about us. The more we know about God's purposes for prayer, the greater will be our delight that we are given this great and glorious privilege. We shall seek to consider some of the most important objects or purposes of prayer as they touch our personal spiritual lives and our service for the Lord.

Communion With God

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What is the greatest object of prayer? In what way does this phase of prayer keep us from viewing prayer as a duty that must be performed?*

The first, and ever the greatest, object of prayer is that men might have communion with God — that the children of God might have sweet fellowship with their Father who is in heaven. All too many think of prayer only as a means of asking or begging something from the Lord. Indeed, they only come to Him when they are in need. Such souls have never learned the deep and very real joy of personal communion and friendship with God.

To be sure, prayer has in it the element of petition and answer to our requests, but is not this the lesser aspect? Are we not evidencing immaturity, childishness, when all we think of is begging from God when we pray? Should not the same growth take place in our relationships to God that is seen in a child's attitude toward its parents? In the early years of life the little child thinks of its parents in terms of what they give to him, but as he grows older he values his father and mother for their personalities, their counsel and advice, their ideals and their approval. From merely loving his parents for what they give him, the child grows to love them for what they are — for their own sakes. So it should be in our fellowship with God. Prayer is the privilege of knowing and enjoying the presence of God.

Unless we realize this phase of prayer we are liable always to regard it as a duty that must be performed, a burden that should be borne, an obligation to be fulfilled. Listen to the words of David: “*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; . . . Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee . . . My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.*” (Psalm 63:l, 3, 5-8). There is no hint here that prayer is a burden. David had found the true secret of prayer — “it is one of life's greatest privileges to be grasped thankfully and used gladly. The man who misses the deep meanings of prayer has not so much refused an obligation; he has robbed himself of life's supreme privilege — friendship with God.”

Until we see this foundation principle of prayer, our praying will be entirely spasmodic. It will not become habitual in our lives. Prayer should not be just an occasional act, but a continuous fellowship with God. There should be certain definite times when we close ourselves away from the rush of earthly things and enjoy special seasons of intimate fellowship with our God, but it is also possible for us to commune with Him at any time or in any place. Make continuous communion with God the settled principle of your life. If we are to know Him as we should, and as He would reveal Himself to us, we must learn the lesson of constant communion. Some people say that the reason they do not pray is because God is not real to them, but a truer statement would be that God is not real to them because they do not pray. To recognize that there is a God means very little. Almost anyone can stand off and say “*O God,*” but how much more is meant, when we can say, as David, “*O God, thou art MY God*” (Psalm 63:l). This revelation of a personal God comes only through the personal fellowship of prayer. Many believe that God is because they cannot explain the universe without Him, but they maintain no personal relationship with Him.

Worship

This aspect of prayer cannot be separated from that mentioned above, but we do so for the sake of

emphasis. Communion with God will mean largely worship, adoration and praise. Paul says, *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men"* (1 Timothy 2:1). A very definite part of our worship in prayer will be *"giving of thanks."* Jesus said, *"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him"* (John 4:23). In the previous passage quoted from the 63rd Psalm, we have a wonderful example of worship in prayer. You will notice that there is not a petition made in the entire passage — just a wonderful expression of appreciation of the Lord Himself. Jesus taught His disciples that prayer should begin with praise and adoration: *"When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name"* (Luke 11:2).

Petition and Intercession

Although this is the most familiar aspect of prayer, it is still well to remind ourselves that God does answer specific petitions brought before Him in prayer. There is a great deal of emphasis placed, these days, on what praying does in the life of the one who prays. Some would lead us to believe that this is about all the good accomplished by praying.

While recognizing the personal, subjective blessing of prayer we know full well that our definite petitions are answered. The Scripture says *"Ye have not, because ye ask not"* (James 4:2). Jesus said *"Ask and ye shall receive"* and He certainly meant that we would receive that for which we asked. *"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them"* (Mark 11:24).

Intercession is the special privilege Christians have of praying for others — of making petition in their behalf at the throne of God's grace.

PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

Very briefly let us consider the object of prayer as we see it exemplified in the life of Jesus. He prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21); before His first collision with the Pharisees (Luke 5:16); before choosing the twelve (Luke 6:12); before some of His mightiest miracles (Matthew 14:19; Mark 7:34; John 11:41); after some of His greatest miracles (Mark 1:35; 6:46); before the first prediction of His suffering and death (Luke 9:18); at His transfiguration (Luke 9:29); before teaching His disciples to pray (Luke 11:1); in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39, 42, 44); and on the cross (Luke 23:34, 46).

PRAYER IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The Church was born in the midst of a prayer meeting — a prolonged prayer meeting that continued until the Holy Ghost came upon those present in mighty baptizing power (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4). The Church continued daily in prayer (Acts 2:42, 46). In times of threatening adversity the Church had recourse to prayer (Acts

4:23-31). Prayer was considered of the utmost importance in connection with the ministry of the Church (Acts 6:4, 6). When one of its leaders was imprisoned the Church prayed (Acts 12:5).

The Epistles abound in references to prayer and its utmost importance in the Christian life. One particular feature of prayer which is emphasized in these New Testament writings that is of vital importance is the place which the Holy Spirit holds in the prayer life of the believer. He is referred to as the *"Spirit of supplications"* in Zechariah 12:10 and Paul teaches us that we can *"pray with the Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 14:15) and he tells us *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"* (Romans 8:26).

THE LORD'S EXEMPLARY PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matthew 6:9-13).

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What prayer reveals all worthy objects for which to pray? Where is it found in the Word of God?

No discussion of any vital phase of the Christian life is complete without a full appraisal of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself on the subject. The Lord's prayer in Matthew 6 is a skeleton given to guide the worshipper in the choice of worthy objects, and to remind him of the relationships which exist between God and the believer. A prayer is partial and incomplete which does not include in substance the basic petitions of the Lord's Prayer. But let it further be noted that this prayer includes in principle every worthy petition that man can ever lift heavenward. It is the perfect prayer which no man has ever equalled.

Praying Godward

"Our Father who art in heaven —" Jesus teaches us to fix our first thought in prayer upon the Father Himself, rather than upon our own wants. We are to seek first the kingdom of God. Yet in lifting our thought heavenward, our approach to the throne of grace is made natural and easy for our limited faith by the Father-Son relationship. Our initial approach is not to a king, master, or judge, but to a Father.

God's Name Hallowed (Verse 9)

"Hallowed be thy name —" True prayer does not begin at once with a clamor for personal needs, but rather with a petition that the name of the Lord be revered and hallowed by men in word and deed. No specific name is here inferred. "Name" means all that God is known to be. One prays that God may be known to men everywhere, through the believer's testimony and works, that He will be honored and revered. This petition reminds us that God is known to the unbelieving world principally through contact with those who profess His name, and, further, that men will reverence God no more than Christians reverence Him in word and in action. We should be very careful always to refer to divine names and experiences only in terms of highest respect. Lest we take too much for granted, or make God too common, calling Him "*Father*," we hasten to pray, "*Hallowed be thy name.*" We have a perfect right to call God "*Father*" but not presumptuously.

God's Kingdom Come (Verse 10)

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What is meant by "*Thy kingdom come*", as stated in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:10?

"Thy kingdom come —" The coming of the kingdom refers to the reign of the Lord over the hearts and wills of men. In this age, the kingdom is brought to realization by the preaching of the gospel. To pray for the kingdom is to pray for the salvation of men and their submission to God through faith in Christ. We who so pray commit ourselves to do all within our power to advance the interests of God's kingdom. The relationship here is that of a king and his subjects who are sincerely interested in every phase of the sovereign realm. This is a missionary prayer which makes all who utter it missionaries at heart. When we pray for the missionaries and their work, for the missionary boards and the solution of their problems, for mission endeavors at home or abroad, we are praying after this pattern, "*Thy kingdom come.*"

Our prayers should always be for the salvation of the lost. In 1 Timothy 2:1-6 Paul exhorts that "*supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority.*" What is the purpose of these prayers? It is expressed in verse 4, "*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*" The chief reason, then, why we should pray for all men is that they may be saved. This is indeed praying for the kingdom of God to come.

Our prayers should also be for the Church of Jesus Christ and its members wherever they are found. Paul gives us abundant examples from his own ministry how we should pray for all the household of faith. Note his prayers for the Church in Ephesians 1:15-23 and 3:14-21 as just two examples.

God's Will be Done (Verse 10)

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." — We who pray in this manner must be deeply concerned about knowing the will of God. Now, have not the two previous petitions revealed what His will is? Is it not that His name be glorified and that His kingdom be extended? Do not we who so pray confess the relationship of servant and master, and at the same time commit ourselves, as His servants, to render the same willing obedience to our Master which He receives in heaven where the angelic servants cry always, "Holy, Holy, Holy"? Dare we ask for the provision of our needs before we have prayed that God's children, including ourselves, render full obedience to His holy will?

Praying Manward

Daily Bread Provided (Verse 11)

"Give us this day our daily (needful) bread." Here is the petition for the meeting of every personal need for the glory of God. We need strength each day and we can expect our Father to supply all that is needed if we will ask Him — but it is necessary that we come to Him and ask — that we individually appropriate what He has provided. Matthew 7:7-11; Mark 11:24 and John 14:13 are but a few of the promises which we may plead as we come.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What is included in God's daily bread?

Material Bread — The Lord's Prayer is not egocentric prayer, for not only does it begin with God's interests, but even when it turns to human interests it is not for "my" bread, but "our" bread. One cannot pray only for his own bread as long as any other child of God is hungry. If I seek the provision of my material needs, I must with the same breath pray for the provision of the material needs of all who suffer. I might even assume that the loaf sent from God is meant to be divided with hungry neighbors. Let us note that this daily bread is our needful sustenance and does not include our whims and selfish wants. God may be pleased to give us more than we need, if we are good stewards, but we are not to fill our prayers with petitions for unnecessary extras. "Bread" here includes all one's basic material needs.

Spiritual Bread: Divine Healing — Now by "bread" is meant very much more than food, clothing, and housing. Bodily health and well-being are also included in this petition. If the bread of the communion table speaks of Christ's body which is broken for the sake of our bodily health (*by His stripes ye were healed*), then certainly "daily bread" includes not only food to strengthen the physical body, but divine power to maintain the needed health for active service. We need to recognize daily our dependence upon God for food and health.

Spiritual Bread: Spiritual Blessing — There is yet another meaning in “daily bread.” In Luke 11 we are assured that God, as surely as an earthly father will give to his son bread and not a stone, will give the Holy Spirit to him who asks. Just as the man went to his friend at midnight and obtained through persevering prayer three loaves of bread, so will the believer who goes to God receive the fullness of the Spirit. *“Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* When we pray for “daily bread,” we mean, besides food for the body, food for the soul. The word in this prayer translated “daily” is nowhere else found in Greek literature. It may mean “daily” and it may mean “needful,” but many of the early church fathers translated it “spiritual bread.” We are quite sure that material bread is included, but we are equally certain that more than material bread is inferred. Do we not need daily spiritual food just as urgently as we need material food? Beyond question both blessings are intended, and we will remember, when we pray for material blessings, to ask also for the even more necessary bread from heaven.

Daily Faults Forgiven (Verse 12)

“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors — ”. Sins are considered as a debt to God which must be paid. Christ paid the debt, giving us a right to pray for forgiveness. The word “forgive” means literally to dismiss or to “send away.” God sends our sins away from us as far as the east is from the west. Christ, in one act, secured for us forgiveness of sins, but we are to seek pardon daily for daily faults. We do not, however, merit forgiveness because we so pray; we obtain forgiveness of our debt, which was too great for us to pay, through Christ who paid the full ransom price. Through prayer we avail ourselves of what has been made available. We cannot expect much success in obtaining effective pardon until we forgive all who have offended us. Matthew 18:21-35 contains one of the Lord’s parables which clearly illustrates this necessity. Again we say, this prayer is completely unselfish.

Daily Tests Overcome (Verse 13)

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one — ”. These are not two petitions, but two parts of the one. The request literally means, “Do not permit us to be subjected unnecessarily to tests and temptations, but in the trials that are unavoidable, deliver us from the evil one.” Jesus Himself prayed, *“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt”* (Matthew 26:39). We do not purposely seek trials, nor do we carelessly or presumptuously subject ourselves to temptation. However,

if trials and temptations must come, and they certainly will in spite of our most careful avoidance of them, we confidently pray and expect that God will deliver us from the evil one.

If we yearn to know what are the objects for which God wills that we should pray, let us repeatedly turn to this exemplary prayer, to this beautiful gem of supplication from whose every facet shines a beam of divine revelation for those who delight to commune with Him whom we dare to call, “Our Father.”

A NEW METHOD OF PRAYING

There are many other specific requests which may be made to the Father which we have not listed, but which can be covered as we realize the new method of praying which Jesus taught His disciples just before He went from them into heaven. Men had been taught to pray to God in Old Testament times. They had even been taught to recognize God as their Father and approach Him thus; but never before had they been given the privilege of praying to the Father in the Name of His Son Jesus. Here is the great New Testament privilege in prayer. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full”* (John 16:23-24).

Jesus, in a sense, gave to His children the power of attorney by which they may use His name in asking for anything at His Father’s throne. This means that as we approach the God of glory we come not in our own name, but in His. How little influence our names would have, but how great is the power of His!

Let us remember, though, that in using His name in prayer, we must not ask anything which would be out of keeping with the greatness of Him whose name we bear. Should we make our petition for something that is inconsistent with His divinity and His holy will, we just could not ask it in His name. The Father would instantly recognize that such a desire did not spring from the Spirit of His Son. We may positively claim every one of His promises and present them at the throne of Grace in the name of Jesus and have perfect confidence that our requests will be granted.

“Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit” — International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: (This activity may be done individually or in groups.) Using the Lord’s Prayer, as found in Matthew 6:9-13, as a model, write your own prayer to God. Remember to include all worthy objects for which to pray.

If the prayers are written individually they may be done on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson. If they are written in group settings, assign one person in each group to write the prayer down as the group produces it. Take time at the end of the class for some of the prayers to be shared.

If you are working alone, write the paragraph on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson.

PRAYER IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE
Part 1

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. Do most people believe in prayer in some form? Do most people practice habitual prayer? _____

2. What are three blessings of prayer in the Christian's personal life? _____

3. Why is prayer necessary in the Christian's service for God? _____

4. What is the greatest object of prayer? In what way does this phase of prayer keep us from viewing prayer as a duty that must be performed? _____

5. What prayer reveals all worthy objects for which to pray? Where is it found in the Word of God? _____

6. What is meant by "Thy kingdom come", as stated in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:10? _____

7. What is included in God's daily bread? _____

PRAYER IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

Part 2

AIM: To understand the hindrances to prayer — the reasons why prayers often are not answered. Also, to take a look at prayerlessness — its cause and cure.

KEY VERSES:

“From whence come wars and fighting among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he said, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:1-17).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups. Assign each group one of the following passages of Scripture: James 4:1-5; James 4:6-10; or James 4:11-17. Ask each group to read its assigned passage and answer the following questions.

- List the hindrances to prayer that can be found in this passage of Scripture.
- Write down a practical example of each hindrance.
- What are some ways of overcoming these hindrances?

Bring the class back together and have each group share its discoveries or wait and have them share when you come to the portion of the lesson that discusses James 4:1-17.

If you are working alone, choose one of the following passages of Scripture to study: James 4:1-5; James 4:6-10; or James 4:11-17. Read it and then answer the questions listed above on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson.

UNANSWERED PRAYER

We must face the fact that many prayers are not answered, unless we consider “no” as an answer. The importance of discussing this matter lies in the fact that believers and unbelievers alike are prone to question unanswered prayer as if God were in some way heedless or unfaithful to His promises. God has nowhere promised to answer unconditionally any prayer that anyone might pray.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). Here is one of the greatest promises and challenges in relation to prayer. *“Ye shall ask what ye*

will, and it shall be done unto you” is a tremendous statement, coming as it does from the lips of the omnipotent Son of God. Let us not forget, however, that it is preceded by the word “if,” and in that little word is wrapped all of the explanations of the multitude of prayers that have never been answered.

The problem of unanswered prayer has always been a great perplexity to the children of God. The promises of God are positive and definite. Why then do many of our prayers go unanswered? Simply because there are certain conditions which must be met for prayer to be answered. God has rightly willed it to be so. What a world we would have if everybody could get every prayer answered instantly! It would be worse than bedlam. God

has given us the privilege of prayer, but He has reserved the right to stipulate that there shall be certain bounds, outside of which prayer will not be answered.

Reasons For Unanswered Prayer

God is very merciful and many times answers our prayers when we have fallen far short of perfectly meeting His conditions; but we cannot have the confidence which should be a part of all our praying, unless we are earnestly endeavoring to obey God's Word and meet His stipulations. Let us notice a number of important reasons, revealed in portions of God's Word, why prayers are sometimes not answered, in order that we may remove the barriers and enjoy a life of wondrous fellowship and communion with God, and that He may be able to channel His blessings through our lives in answer to our prayers.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What are four reasons for unanswered prayer? Give a Scripture reference for each reason.

No Spiritual Relationship With God

In order to provide a firm basis upon which we may stand in believing God for answered prayer it is first necessary that we belong to Him. Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father," and before this term can be used we must make certain that we are His children. We are not saying that God does not answer a sinner's prayer, for there have been countless instances when He has done just that, but it is only the result of God's mercy and there are no grounds upon which we can be sure He will.

Man's favor with God and his access to God are based on his relationship to God, through the new birth. When we pray, "Our Father," it is not to be just a mechanical framing of words, but because we "have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). Jesus said, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:11-13). This explains the attitude of a father toward his son. Here the whole matter is based on the fact, "If a son . . ." Many prayers are not answered because they come from those who have no legal right to approach God—they do not belong to the family of God.

Not According To God's Will

Many prayers go unanswered because they ask for things which are outside the sphere of God's will. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we

have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14,15).

God has nowhere obligated Himself to do more than fulfill the promises which He has made, and when we ask for something not in accordance with these we can expect that petition to go unanswered. If we abide in Him and His word abides in us, we will not ask for that which is contrary to His will.

The Word of God plainly sets forth what His will is, and when we ask Him to fulfill what He has promised we can be sure it will come to pass. One of the finest ways to pray is to remind God of what He has said He will do—Jacob prayed that way in Genesis 32:9-12. He said, "THE LORD WHICH SAIDST unto me, Return unto thy country . . . and I will deal with thee . . . And THOU SAIDST, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea." Moses prayed this way in Exodus 32:13, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and saidst unto them . . ." Make sure that your prayer is according to God's will—that it is in accordance with the Word of God.

Known and Unconfessed Sin

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18). "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they have gone away backward . . . When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isaiah 1:4,15). "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:20,21).

These verses make it abundantly clear that many prayers are hindered because of known and unconfessed sin in the heart of those who pray. Sin destroys confidence and without faith prayer is unanswered. God has not promised to bless the sinful, but He will hear the cry of the righteous (Proverbs 15:29). If your prayers are unanswered, make sure there is no known sin which you have not brought before the Lord, asking His forgiveness.

Lack of Faith

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:5-7).

Faith is an absolute essential to answered prayer. It is not enough to pray; we must also believe. Jesus could do no mighty works at Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people there (Mark 6:5,6), and many of our prayers are not answered because they are not mixed with faith (Hebrews 4:2). Mark 11:24 says, "What things

soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Here it is: "When ye pray . . . believe . . . and ye shall have." Do not try to believe, just believe. Do you try to breathe? If so, there is something wrong with you physically. Do you have to try to believe God? Then there is something wrong with you spiritually. It should not be difficult for us to believe the Mighty God who has promised so much. Begin believing and your prayers will be answered.

Selfishness

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3). How many times our prayers go unanswered because there is so much self mixed with the petition. Some selfish design, a selfish motive, a self-centered aspiration may make it impossible for God to answer prayer. If we are seeking our will rather than His we need not expect an answer.

God is not interested in glorifying us, but Himself. He will not answer our prayers just for our own convenience or pleasure. As we learn more and more to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done" we shall find more and more of our prayers being answered.

Disobedience

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9). "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22). Wilful disobedience to the commands of God will definitely hinder our prayers from being answered. In fact it will stop further progress in our Christian life. If God has a plan outlined for your life, and you at any point, refuse to follow in His will, there can be little progress until that unwilling, disobedient spirit is overcome. Perhaps if your prayers are not being answered you know some place back in your life where you refused to obey the Lord. Go back and make that right with God and He will again make bare His arm in your behalf.

An Unforgiving Spirit

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25).

"An unforgiving spirit is one of the commonest hindrances to prayer. Anyone who is nursing a grudge against another has fast closed the ear of God against his own petition. How many there are crying to God for the conversion of husband, children, friends and wondering why it is that their prayer is not answered, when the whole secret is some grudge that they have in their hearts against someone who has injured them, or whom they fancy has injured them. Many and many a mother and father are allowing their children to go down to eternity unsaved, for the miserable gratification of hating somebody." — R.A. Torrey

Uncongenial Relationships

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Uncongenial relationships between a Christian husband and wife will be a real hindrance to answered prayer. They are in a very definite sense made one in the marriage relationship and that which disrupts or comes between them will be reflected in their spiritual lives.

The Time Element

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★In what ways is time a hindrance to prayer?

One of the chief hindrances in seeing prayers answered is that so few are willing to give the time that is necessary to prayer. We must learn to pray just as we must learn any other accomplishment in life, and it takes time.

Then, too, there is such a thing as our being in too much of a hurry to wait until the answer comes. Satan is the great hinderer of answered prayer, as of everything else pertaining to the Christian life. Daniel had the experience of having to wait twenty-one days until the answer to his prayer came because it had been hindered by the powers of darkness (Daniel 10:2-14).

Perhaps, too, many of our prayers should not be considered unanswered just because we have not yet seen them fulfilled. In God's great wisdom they have been granted, and if we will but wait for Him, He will manifest the answer in His time. Remember God is a God of eternity and a few days do not change His purpose. Abraham waited twenty-five years before God's promise of a son was fulfilled.

Hindrances to Answered Prayer Found in James 4

The fourth chapter of James seems to be the best connected text that treats this difficult, but important subject. James was writing to Jewish Christians who were scattered abroad and perhaps not in close touch with the main stream of the apostolic revival. At any rate, he wrote to persons who had become worldly, covetous, contentious, and, as a result, unsuccessful in prayer, if not altogether prayerless. Whatever may have been the conditions prevalent among these Jews of the dispersion, one thing is certain, the epistle written to them describes with amazing accuracy the condition of a great many church people of our day. It is a remarkable phenomenon of divine inspiration that letters written so long ago were so phrased that they continue to be pointedly applicable to Christians and churches of all ages.

The Hindrance of Strife

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:1,2).

One certain way to close the windows of Heaven is to set about to get things by strife, competition, and political maneuvering. If we are determined to obtain what we want at the expense of others, or others have them, prayer will avail us little. It does no good to pray and then set out to obtain by carnal means what we have asked of God.

This does not mean that a believer cannot do anything to assist in the answer to his prayers, but he must not do anything unchristian. We must make up our minds whether we want things from God or whether we want to get them through carnal strife; the two methods will not go together. But let it be noted that strife never brings real satisfaction; the contentious never quite lay hold upon the objects of their covetousness.

The Hindrance of Base Motives

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What are some wrong motives of prayer?*

“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3).

Those who still prayed failed to get an answer to their prayers, because they prayed out of wrong motives. They never thought to pray, *“Hallowed be Thy Name,”* nor *“Thy kingdom come,”* nor *“Thy will be done.”* They did not even pray *“Give us this day our daily bread”* with spiritual food in mind. What they prayed was, *“Give us this day our daily delicacies, so that we may set a table as splendid as that of our neighbors.”* They prayed for extras while many fellow-beings walked the streets in rags and in hunger. They pervert prayer who make it merely a means to wish fulfillment.

The Hindrance of Worldliness

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (James 4:4,5).

Another serious hindrance to prayer is worldliness which James here calls spiritual adultery. Whoever makes the “world” his lover is just as guilty of adultery as the man or woman who violates the marriage covenant. Worldliness, which is undue attachment to the things, the interests, and the spirit of this world, is enmity toward

God, because it is inimical to the spiritual life. He who delights in the world and its vain pleasures has gone after strange lovers. The latter part of verse four would be translated more literally thus — *“Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world, puts himself down as an enemy of God.”* If we want to be on praying terms with God, He must have first place in our hearts. No man can serve two masters. One of the most obvious facts of the Bible is that God requires of His followers that they make a frank and decisive choice in the placement of their loyalty. The latter part of verse five is not clear in our King James version; the more accurate revised translation with which most scholars agree is, *“Even unto jealousy does the Spirit which He made to dwell in us yearn over us.”* God is a jealous God whose spirit is grieved by worldliness.

The Hindrance of Pride

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:6,10).

Here pride is said to be a condition which cuts one off from God’s mercies. It reads literally, *“God arrays Himself against the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”* The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is exactly parallel with verse six. While pride is a hindrance to prayer, humility has been from ancient times an aid to success in prayer. (See Isaiah 57:15; 66:2; Psalms 34:18). Did not David cry out of the depth of his own life which ran the gamut of human experience from glorious victory to ignominious defeat, from wide acclaim to utter shame, *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”* (Psalms 51:17).

The Hindrance of Unyieldedness

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Yet another hindrance to answered prayer is the lack of submission to God’s will. Everyone who prays must accept responsibility. One has no right to ask of God if he is unwilling to do what God asks of him. The truly happy and victorious Christian is not only willing to do God’s bidding; he, in fact, surrenders his own will and in utter submission lets God work out the divine will through him. Submission is the first and basically necessary step which everyone must take in the quest of Christian victory. One must resist the enemy, but his resistance will be futile until he has first given himself in entire submission to the Captain of his salvation. One does not overcome sin by fighting temptation, but by yielding to the Holy Spirit. Now this yielded life is not only the way to overcome evil, but also the way to God’s best; for the Lord delights to bestow His gifts upon the fully yielded believer inasmuch as He knows that such an one will use divine gifts for the glory of God.

The Hindrance of Separation

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:8).

It is clearly pointed out here that one's success in prayer depends upon his being near to God, upon his approaching God in the only way that God can be approached, which is with clean hands and a pure heart. If we think God is afar off, we have misinterpreted the situation; if our prayers seem not to reach God, the reason is that we are afar off from God, separated by sin. If we will humbly avail ourselves of Christ's cleansing blood and draw near unto God, He will be quick to draw very near to us. (See Hebrews 10:22).

No matter what may ever separate us from God, let us, in the very moment that God's Spirit makes us aware of that separation, draw near humbly and contritely through the blood of Jesus, confident that if we draw nigh to Him, He will draw nigh to us. Satan delights to keep the believer separated through fear, discouragement, and shame.

The Hindrance of Superficiality

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*Why should we sometimes weep in prayer, as expressed in James 4:9?*

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness" (James 4:9).

The mourning and weeping referred to here is that which sin and separation makes necessary. However, there is a hint here to all believers that much prayer is too light and too superficial. This is a dry-eyed generation inured to the awfulness of sin. If one does not need to weep over his own sins, he surely will feel deeply the tragic state of the mock civilization which surrounds him. This does not mean that the Christian must be sad-faced and gloomy; true Christianity is fundamentally joyful, but there are times when even those with the most sanguine dispositions must weep over the ungodly state of lost relatives, neighbors, and friends. May God give us sufficient depth of character to be able to feel deep concern for men, for our nation, and for our church. How can one pray, *"Thy kingdom come,"* without feeling some grief over the conditions and attitudes that hinder its coming? Surely He who wept over Jerusalem is inclined to answer the prayers of those who share His deep concern for men.

The Hindrance of Criticism

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother,

speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:11,12).

It is hinted here that sitting in judgment upon other brethren may be a reason for unanswered prayer. The clause, *"Speak not evil one of another,"* means literally, "do not run each other down". Unfortunately this is a fault much too common among Christians. The word "devil" literally means an "accuser of the brethren". How tragic it is that so many are tricked into assisting the devil with his work.

If God reckons the believer in Christ to be just, who are we to run him down? Running others down is a trick of selfishly maladjusted persons to elevate themselves by bringing all others down to their level. Should we be surprised that God refuses to answer the petitions of those who pray and belittle with the same lips?

The Hindrance of Presumption

"Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:13-15).

The Hindrance of Disobedience

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Perhaps one of the greatest of all hindrances to answered prayer is the sin of omission. We pray in vain while we refuse to do what God has commanded. Let him not seek more light who refuses to walk in the light he already has. It is not enough to recognize all the hindrances to prayer; one must go farther and remove those hindrances, for to know what to do without doing it is sin. It is more than likely that we will discover in the day when all things are made clear that our greatest sins have been, not the sins of passion and violence which are reprehensible enough, but our sins of leaving undone what we were commanded to do. The most painful memories which every man's conscience accents are the unheeded cries for help, the sick not visited, the arm not extended, the smiles of encouragement not given, the widows and orphans not succored and the words of testimony not given.

PRAYERLESSNESS

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What relation has prayer in our daily Christian life to the success of evangelism?*

We believe that prayer is an essential exercise of the Christian life and we are deeply concerned when our people or our churches lapse into prayerlessness and the consequent spiritual decadence. Prayer is power, and prayerlessness is powerlessness. Christ's kingdom is never greatly extended by mere orthodoxy; the success of evangelism is just as surely contingent upon the anointing that comes through prayer as it is upon the affirmation of sound doctrine. Indeed, if there is any single predominant cause of the drought in soul-winning which prevails at present in many sections of the orthodox church, it is the lack of prayer, and especially intercessory prayer. On the other hand, revivals are beginning to manifest themselves in some quarters with an attendant surge in soul-winning, and almost without exception these revivals have been the result of a return to prayer produced by repentance and a humble sense of dependence upon the Lord.

The Sin of Prayerlessness

When Israel failed God by choosing a king rather than His rulership over them, Samuel said to the people, *"God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you"* (1 Samuel 12:23). He recognized that failure to pray would be a sin. Prayerlessness is usually looked upon as merely a weakness, but we must call it by its right name if conscience is to do its work and we are to gain the victory.

Sin is at least twofold. There are sins of commission: *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law"* (1 John 3:4). There are also sins of omission: *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"* (James 4:17). Prayerlessness is sin under each of these standards. It is an act of downright disobedience, and it is also an utter neglect of a great privilege which God has provided.

Disobedience to a Command of God

Prayerlessness is sin because it is disobedience of an oft-repeated command of God. He has said, *"Ask, and ye shall receive"; "Pray without ceasing"; "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation"; Pray "always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"*. When we fail to pray we disobey these definite commandments of the Lord.

A Reproach on the Love of God

Prayerlessness is sin because it is a reproach on the love of God. God loves His own and delights in their fellowship. He is waiting to meet them as they come. When they fail to do so they cast a reproach on the love He bears toward them. Just as fond parents look for word from an absent son, and are deeply grieved when he neglects to write to them, so our Father must be grieved when we do not commune with Him. Oh yes, if the absent son needed some money, or got into some trouble he would write for help! We pray when we desperately need something, but we so often find no joy in communion with our Lord. We make some excuse about not having time, but if a friend comes in to talk we

spend all the time necessary. What a reproach on my Lord if I say I cannot find time for communion with Him!

A Hindrance to the Work of God

Prayerlessness is a sin because when you fail to pray it reacts on your own personal life. A Christian cannot be what he should be for God if he does not pray. Prayer is the pulse of life. By it one can tell what is the condition of the heart. Andrew Murray has said, *"The sin of prayerlessness is proof for the ordinary Christian that the life of God in the soul is in deadly sickness and weakness."* The prayerless soul is not aglow with spiritual light and glory. There is bound to be failure in the place of duty. When others are in trouble and look to you for strength and help they fail to find it unless you have been in constant communion with the Lord. As a result they may sink down into temptation and defeat.

A prayerless Christian actually hinders the work of God. He loses faith and becomes a discourager instead of an encourager. Self gets the preeminence within and he is liable to become cranky and critical. Prayerless Christians are open ground for the enemy to occupy right within the ranks, and they can be used to frustrate God's work. Then, too, souls are being lost because we fail to pray.

Prayerlessness is a sin against God because we have not honored Him in our presence, nor believed that He would answer. It is a sin against fellow Christians because, as a result, we have so often been unkind in our thoughts and words about them. It is a sin against the unsaved because we have not been concerned about their salvation. It is a sin against ourselves because we have robbed ourselves of a sweet, blessed life of victory. We have left ourselves to struggle on in our own failing strength. All would be different if we prayed more.

The Cause of Prayerlessness

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What is the cause of prayerlessness?*

Why is it that so many Christians do not pray? Oh, we say our prayers and on occasions pray a little more, but there is so little enjoyment of the place of prayer. Someone says the answer is UNBELIEF. That is probably true. But what is the cause of the unbelief? In Matthew 17:19-21 we read, *"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting"*. The truth that is brought so forcefully to us here is that unless our life be one of

self-denial, as evidenced by fasting, then we shall not be able to believe as we should when we pray.

We know little of denying self. The vast majority of Christians are living after the flesh. The cause of all our prayerlessness is that we live our lives according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit. The reason why Christians are not availing themselves of this great privilege of prayer is because there is something within them that just will not pray — something within that is unyielded to the will of God, a disobedient spirit that will not come under subjection to God's will. That thing is the flesh. *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would"* (Galatians 5:17). *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"* (Romans 8:7,8).

Adam was created to have fellowship with God and he enjoyed a gracious communion with his Creator until the Fall. After that he had a deep seated desire to avoid God and fled from His presence. This incurable aversion is characteristic of the flesh and is the reason for our prayerlessness. The reason so many pray so little, and have such little victory in their lives, is because they are living and walking according to the flesh. You cannot walk in the flesh and expect to pray in the Spirit.

Paul says, *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft . . . murders, drunkenness"*. But he also mentions some others: *"hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings . . . revellings, and such like"* (Galatians 5:19-21). *"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh"* (Galatians 5:16).

The flesh can SAY prayers well enough and can be religious enough to satisfy the conscience, but it has no desire or strength for that prayer which strives after an intimate knowledge of God, that rejoices in fellowship with Him and that continually lays hold of His strength. The Christian who is still carnal is satisfied with the prayer of habit or custom, but the glory and blessedness of secret prayer are hidden from him. The carnal life cannot possibly pray in the Spirit and in power. Do not seek to find the explanation of your prayerlessness in circumstances about you, but seek it where God's Word says it is — in a hidden aversion of the heart to a holy God.

The Cure of Prayerlessness

The best cure for prayerlessness is prayer. The more you pray the better you can pray. The more you pray the more you want to pray. This is something which no one else can do for you. No priest can do your praying for you. You may be blessed when others pray for you, but you are never going to really know and enjoy God until you learn to touch Him for yourself.

In seeking the cure for the prayerlessness of our hearts, the first thing is to realize that it is a sin. Unless we realize the enormity of our failure we will never rightly seek the

cure. The first requisite, then, is a realization of our condition and a deep desire for deliverance.

When a person realizes his sin, the first thing he does almost always is to seek to find victory in his own strength. He begins to make resolutions and strive to overcome. How many of us have done just that, only to find that such a method is hopeless! We cannot pray in the energy of the flesh. The flesh does not want to pray and will not if there is any possible way of getting out of it. Neither can we gain victory over the flesh in the power of the flesh. You cannot cast out the flesh in the power of the flesh any more than you can cast our Beelzebub by the power of Beelzebub. You cannot make yourself pray. About the only thing that will result from such a struggle will be discouragement and a feeling that a life of victory in prayer is not for you.

We must first realize that prayer depends upon the proper relationship with our Lord. We will want to pray if our relationship is what it ought to be with our living Savior. Nor dare we comfort ourselves that our relationship with Him is what it should be as long as the sin of prayerlessness holds sway in our lives. How glibly we testify that we are saved and healed and filled with the Spirit, yet we have not spent an hour in prayer for the past month or more! If we do not pray it is because something is wrong with our relationship with our Lord. And this cannot be corrected by a striving in our own strength. It can only be done as we lay hold, by faith, of Christ Jesus and His strength and victory.

We must realize that Christ has dealt with the sin of prayerlessness through His redemption, just as He has dealt with every other sin. How foolish to think that He will give us all other blessings, but prayer, upon which everything else depends, must be gained by our faltering efforts.

We must not hear the call to prayer as the voice of the law — the voice of Moses — but rather as the voice of love from the heart of our Savior. Moses never gave anyone power to obey the law he gave, but Christ will give us the strength we need.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What is the key to overcoming prayerlessness?*

The first thing to do is to confess the sin of prayerlessness to Him. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). This applies to the sin of prayerlessness as to all others. Christ will help us in this need as in all others. Confess to Him that your heart is cold and dead and dry. Tell Him you have not the desire to pray as you should and ask Him to deliver you. Believe that He will undertake. We need to seek until we find that, in this matter, we are indeed new creatures in Christ Jesus. Our prayer life must be brought under His control and be

moved by His love. Then we will find that prayer is but "the natural joyous breathing of the spiritual life, by which the heavenly atmosphere is inhaled and exhaled in prayer."

Cultivate, then, an unbroken fellowship with the Lord. Deal with anything and everything that you know is

displeasing to Him. However, do not try to do this in your own strength. The power of Calvary still avails for everything that would come between us and God. Put yourself in the place and attitude of prayer and realize that He is able to lead you into the place of precious communion. Wait before Him. Give Him time to take the veil from off your eyes that you might see His glory. He is able.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Read the following quote from Dr. Alexander Whyte to your class:

"Let it be today. Shut yourself in, sit down to think, and to meditate, and to read that which will assist your thoughts about Him, and your meditations on Him. Read and think till you fall on your knees. Remain on your knees till you feel sure that you have had an audience. Persevere in prayer till the divine presence overshadows you. Continue in prayer and in tears, if they are given you, till a peace that passes all understanding fills your heart. And repeat this experience day after day till it becomes a habit with you. The Lord of glory hungers for your faith and your love." — Dr. Alexander Whyte

At this point, ask everyone to search his own heart for areas in his life that has hindered answers to his prayers or have caused the sin of prayerlessness to be evident in his daily Christian walk. Each person should then complete the following statements on a piece of paper that will be taken home to remind him of his commitment.

I DESIRE TO SEE THE FOLLOWING CHANGES IN MY PRAYER LIFE . . .
IN ORDER FOR THESE CHANGES TO TAKE PLACE I WILL . . .

If you are working alone, follow the directions listed above, completing the statements on a sheet of paper that you will keep for yourself.

PRAYER IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE, PART 2

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. What are four reasons for unanswered prayer? Give a scripture reference for each reason. _____

2. In what ways is time a hindrance to prayer? _____

3. What are some wrong motives of prayer? _____

4. Why should we sometimes weep in prayer, as expressed in James 4:9? _____

5. What relation has prayer in our daily Christian life to the success of evangelism? _____

6. What is the cause of prayerlessness? _____

7. What is the key to overcoming prayerlessness? _____

THE PLACE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE AND PERSONAL WITNESSING IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

AIM: To realize the importance of daily Christian service, of which personal witnessing should always be a part. To understand the rewards of Christian service and personal witnessing, as well as the results of neglecting the gifts God has given us to use.

KEY VERSES:

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30).

“He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Read the following definition of three kinds of Christian workers:

“There are three kinds of Christian workers,” said some one with a very vivid imagination, “canal barges, sailing ships, and Atlantic liners. The canal barge needs to be dragged to work. Often they do wonderfully well, but on the whole one volunteer is worth three pressed men. The sailing ship makes fine going as long as wind and tide are with them, but when things get hard, when ‘winds are contrary’, when work is discouraging, they turn tail and sail away. But give us the Atlantic liner type of worker, the man who can fight his way through wind and tempest, because within him there burns the hot throb of the mighty furnace of the love of Christ.” — Onward.

Share with the person sitting next to you which one of the three kinds of Christian workers you think you are right now and why. Discuss together why you think Christian service is important. Pray with one another and ask the Lord to open your heart and mind to what He wants to teach you about Christian service through this lesson and to show you how you can effectively put the lesson into practice in your life.

If you are working alone, read the definition of three kinds of Christian workers above. On the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson write down which of the three kinds of workers you think you are right now and why. Then write down why you think Christian service is important.

DAILY CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Three great principles are absolutely necessary to growth and continued enjoyment of the Christian life after one has come to know the Lord Jesus as his personal Saviour. We have emphasized the first two, Bible study and prayer, in previous lessons. Now we call attention to the third — daily service for our Lord and Master. In the parable in Luke 19:11-27, Jesus pictured a nobleman delivering money to his servants to be used during his absence. He instructed them, *“Occupy till I come”* — literally “Trade,” or “Do business until I come.” Just so, Jesus has delivered certain abilities to all His servants that they might use them in His service and for His glory. Jesus taught the glory of service when He said: *“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant”* (Matthew 23:11).

The Holy Spirit and Christian Service

At the very beginning of our consideration of the subject of Christian service, we would like to emphatically state that the Baptism with the Holy Ghost is no substitute for consistent, consecrated service. Nowhere are we given the least hint of the idea that the Holy Ghost is to take the place of men in the program of God. There are those who seem to have assumed the attitude that now that they are filled with the Spirit, the Holy Ghost will do everything for them. The Holy Spirit did not come to do anything for us. He came to empower us to do the will of God in the realm of service.

After the Day of Pentecost you do not read that the Holy Ghost went everywhere preaching the Gospel, but you do read of the early disciples: *“They went forth, and*

preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20). They went; they preached; the Lord worked with them. There is no substitute for consecrated Christian service.

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*Why does God fill us with the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to be yielded to the Holy Spirit?*

God has filled us with the Holy Spirit that we might be empowered to use every faculty, every talent, our personality, humor, emotions, mind and will — all in His service. Nor must we think that yielding to the Spirit means doing nothing ourselves. It rather means letting Him guide and direct in that which we do for Him.

May we emphasize, also, the necessity of application and study that we may increase in our abilities for God. Paderewski, the great Polish pianist, played before Queen Victoria. The Queen said to him, “Mr. Paderewski, you are a genius.” “Ah, your Majesty,” he replied, “perhaps; but before I was a genius I was a drudge.” The great musician was right. All who have gained success in any work, even in the work of the Lord, have been those who have worked hard at it for many long years. No one gets to the top of the ladder in one jump. The only way to do the big things well is to learn to do the little things well. “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*” God has said in His Word.

The Importance of Christian Service

(The Parable of the Talents — Matthew 25:14-30)

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where

thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:14-30).

The truth of the importance and urgency of faithful Christian service is nowhere more forcefully affirmed than in Christ’s parable of the talents. The whole twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew deals with the responsibility of the believer during the absence of the Lord. The parable of the ten virgins teaches the need of watchfulness and wisdom; the parable of the talents follows with a lesson on faithfulness in service; the chapter closes, then, with the fixing of the believer’s responsibility toward the unfortunate and downtrodden of humanity, service to whom is reckoned as service to the Lord Himself.

The Bestowal of Talents
(See verses 14 and 15)

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*In the parable of the talents whom does the man journeying to a far country represent? Whom do the servants represent? What do the talents represent?*

This parable is an illustration of verse 13, “*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.*” The best way to be ready whenever the Lord may come is to be busy putting the God-given talents to work.

The man traveling into a far country represents the Lord Jesus in His absence from the earth during this gospel dispensation. The servants into whose hands the man’s goods are entrusted represent all genuine believers into whose keeping is entrusted the work of Christ’s cause and kingdom. Just as long as the Lord tarries, this parable is pointedly applicable.

It may seem strange that a man of wealth would leave his goods in the hands of mere slaves. However, in ancient times, slaves were often men of great ability and wisdom, being in some cases philosophers or technicians who were enslaved by military conquest.

The bestowal of talents is according to the ability of God. This parable has been so widely known and so oft repeated that it has given a new word to the English language. A talent, which in Roman times was a weight

of silver or gold worth in our money more than \$1,000.00, has by extension come to mean an ability in music, art, or business. The talented are those who are unusually gifted in natural ability. However, though the word "talent" has come to mean a natural ability in general usage, that was not the meaning intended by Christ when He told the parable. The talents were given to the servants in proportion to the abilities which they already had. They represent, not natural capacities, but spiritual tasks and responsibilities entrusted to us for investment and improvement. These talents are not gifts to the servants, but investments which are reclaimed by the Lord at His coming.

The least in the kingdom of God has something that he can do for his Lord. Speaking of the distribution of spiritual gifts, the apostle Paul says that the Spirit divides "to every man severally as he will" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

The bestowal of talents is according to divine wisdom. Not all believers have the same responsibility nor the same gifts and callings. The Lord bestows His spiritual investments according to His perfect discernment of our capacities for service. Some are better stewards than others because of better natural capacities. We may not understand why God gives greater callings to some than others, but we may rest assured that God, who is no respecter of persons, will commission men according to His infallible wisdom, putting only upon each the responsibility he is capable of performing. God never gives five talents to a two-talent man, nor does He limit to two talents a five-talent man.

God has seen fit to make each of us a little different in our temperaments, and He uses this variety in His service. One of the saddest things is to see someone doing nothing for God because he is bemoaning the fact that he does not have the abilities that someone else has. Another has said, "Between the great things we cannot do and the little things we will not do, the danger is that we will do nothing."

"There are diversities of gifts . . . differences of administrations . . . diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all . . . For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

The Investment of Talents (See verse 16-18)

The investment of talents is every servant's responsibility. The five-talent man went to work immediately and gained by investment another five talents. We do our best work for God when we do at once what He commands. Delays only give doubts, misgivings, and indifference a chance to rise in our hearts. If we are busy working, we have little opportunity for vain questionings.

The only way we can multiply divine graces and experiences is to share them with others. We double God's investment in us by leading another into God's kingdom. The greatest investment possible is that of investing one's gospel knowledge in others. The failure to share our talents with others shows some lack of appreciation on our part of the value of God's graces.

The investment of talents is every servant's opportunity. The two-talent man also went out and doubled the investment made in him. He has only four talents to the first man's ten, but he has made the same percentage of increase; he has succeeded in proportion to his capacity for service. Let no one think that his work is less important than that of another whose work is more highly classified or operated on a larger scale; opportunity is the measure of one's responsibility.

God is only going to hold us accountable for that with which He has entrusted us. The man with one talent had only to account for what he had done with that one talent. Too often the servants of the Lord spend more time criticizing how someone else does his job than in concentrating on doing their own task well.

God does, however, expect us to use what He has given.

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith . . . Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:3, 6-8).

The Increase of Talents (See verses 18-21)

Depends Upon an Original Investment — It was common practice in ancient times to bury money in the ground for security (See Matthew 13:44). The one-talent man lacked faith. Being afraid of failure, he buries his talent so as to keep the original investment. Some Christians bury their graces and testimony in silence and inactivity, because they fear to face the world in Christ's name. Also, they who are eager only for greater personal blessing, who have a church for saints behind closed doors, are like the one-talent man. His shame was not in that he received only one talent, but in that he did not invest his talent. It might have been the five-talent man or the two-talent man who hid his gifts instead of the one-talent man, had the persons been different; the parable is too brief to mention all the possibilities. The idea is that no sum is great enough to be acceptable unless it is invested and multiplied, and no gift is too small to be accepted if it has been put to work for God's glory. One should not shirk Christian service on the grounds that his responsibility is small or because his place in the Lord's kingdom is of less importance than that of others.

The five-talent man comes forward boldly and joyfully to meet his Lord, because he has been faithful. Compare the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:19. Paul's joy and reward in the day of Christ's coming was to be the multitude of souls he had won. This faithful servant is aware that his increase of five talents was made possible only because of the original five given to him to invest. No matter how great may be the accomplishments of God's servants, they must ever recognize that their success was possible only because they were first recipients of God's power, grace and wisdom. Paul said: *"I am what I am by the grace of God."* There is no place in God's harvest fields for egotism; we only reap what He has sown.

Depends Upon Diligent Service — The absence of the man was long. He returned after a long delay. To some the return of the Lord seems to have been delayed for a long time. One thing is certain, the Lord has given ample time in which to do His work. When He comes none will have excuse before Him. Christians are obliged to be diligent in service whether His coming is early or late. Some postpone God's work saying, *"The Lord delayeth His coming,"* while others say that His coming is so near as to leave no time for further work. Our service has nothing to do whatever with the date of the Lord's coming. He might come today and reprove us for work left undone, but if He tarries for a long time we must still work faithfully, for the longer the delay, the greater the accomplishment and the greater the reward. Verse 19 clearly says that the day of the Lord's coming will be a day of reckoning on the basis of service rendered.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:12, 13).

The Rewards for Increased Talents (See verse 21-23)

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★In the parable of the talents what was the reward of the first two servants? Were they equally pleasing to their master? What was the fault of the one-talent man?

Is Increased Opportunity — The faithfulness of the five-talent man qualified him for larger service. Our callings are in proportion to our capacities, but if we are faithful in our first tasks, we enlarge our capacities so that we become qualified for larger responsibilities. Even when the Lord comes He will not retire us to blissful inactivity (if there were any such thing), but He will put us to work in fields of service the scope of which we now can little imagine. Eternal life will not be passive, but active. God's

two best rewards will be His *"Well done!"* and His appointment of us to more noble tasks. Happiness is only found in work that challenges one's full capacities for creative service.

"Well done, good and faithful servant," was the commendation spoken. The Lord is looking for faithfulness, even in the little things. Some of the most valuable service ever rendered has been by those whose names have never been recorded here on earth.

Is God's Smile of Approval — The two-talent man received the same commendation and the same appointment to larger tasks. God may apportion work in proportion to our capacities, but He rewards, not in proportion to the importance of the assignment, but in proportion to the faithfulness of the servant. Let no one bemoan the level of his appointment, but rather let him see the wisdom of God in it. It is better to be faithful in a small task which fits one's capacity than to be given a big task at which one would fail. The size of one's office is no indication of the blessedness of one's reward. God's only yardstick is faithfulness, and His best prize is the smile of His approval.

The Punishment of Neglect of Talents (See verses 24-30)

Is Deprivation of One's Talents — Perhaps the most outstanding truth Jesus taught in the parable we are studying is the necessity of using what He has given. It is not enough to hide what our Lord has entrusted to us so that we may return it to Him as it was. He wants us to use it or else we will lose it.

In the Mammoth Caves of Kentucky there is a variety of fish that appear to have perfectly formed eyes, but when examined more closely it is seen that the cells of the eyes are withered and useless. The fish used to see with them, but they have lived so long in the subterranean darkness, where they have had no use for their eyes, that the eye has withered and died. Nature has her own code of retribution which declares that anything that is neglected sufficiently will be lost. There is danger that many Christians will lose the sacred abilities which God has given to them unless they use their talents in the service of the Lord. This matter of Christian service, then, is more than one of doing for others. It assumes the degree of self-preservation. We must serve if we would survive in our Christian lives.

Peter admonishes, *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"* (1 Peter 4:10).

Is God's Disapproval — The one-talent man who sulked over the insignificance of his appointment brought only the one talent. Being aware of his failure, he begins to accuse his lord of severity of character. People who fail nearly always try to excuse themselves by belittling or accusing others. They suppose that they elevate themselves by pulling others down to their level. No excuse at all is a much better defense than a foolish excuse. It has been pointed out that there was some truth in what he said, inasmuch as the Lord was exacting from him more than the investment, but it is only half a truth. The master

had in store for him a reward of which the slave knew not. Further he was expected to invest not his own talent but that which his master had freely given him. Some today look more upon the requirements of Christianity than upon its opportunities for joyous service. Christian service is not drudgery, but glorious opportunity. True, what we do, we do not for ourselves, but for God; however, we must remember that we would be the slaves of the tyrant, Satan, had not the Lord redeemed us with His precious blood. The unfaithful servant like many today did not know that the most miserable life, in the long run, is the one that is lived exclusively for one's self.

Perhaps this man told the truth when he said he hid his talent out of fear of failure or loss. Fear is a very common ailment of mankind today, and a very common cause of failure. His fault was lack of love for his master. "*Perfect love casteth out fear*" (1 John 4:18).

The one-talent man returned the talent he had received just as he had received it. He felt some justification in the fact that he had not lost it. He is a picture of all those whose goodness is negative. They are good because they do not offend or stray from the path. They are good only because of what they do not do. This kind of excellence, however, is not real Christian victory. There are many things, of course, that a Christian must avoid, but mere negative avoidance of wrong is not positive righteousness. Victorious Christianity is positive service for others and for the Lord. God does not want our graces returned unsoiled so much as He wants our graces invested in others in the winning of souls. Let no one infer from this that the value of a spotless and holy life is being underestimated, but we do affirm that no one is above reproach before Him who has not rendered faithful service. A surgical instrument must be clean, but a perfectly sterile instrument never used to save a life is of no practical value.

PERSONAL WITNESSING

We have emphasized the need of each Christian finding a place of service, but this is the one great special service in which all Christians should seek to excel. Jesus said to His first disciples, "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*" (Matthew 4:19). These words still ring out as an invitation and a challenge to every believer today.

Robert Speer in one of his books said, "A person is duty bound either to propagate his religion or change it." In other words, if your religion is worth anything to you it is worth passing on to others, and if it is not worth anything to you, you had better change it and get something that is worthwhile. Salvation is the greatest possession of mankind and each Christian should rejoice to tell others of it.

It has been affirmed that there are very few persons won to Christ in mass evangelism who were not first deeply stirred by the word or influence of one or more Christian individuals. The success of practically all the great revivals on the foreign missionary fields has been made

possible by the person to person communication of the gospel message by native believers.

Yet another important aspect of personal evangelism, which merits our attention, is the influence that it exercises upon the life of the person who gives himself to personal witnessing. Perhaps nothing is a truer index of sincere Christian experience and love for God than the impelling urge to share Christ with others. But not only is sharing Christ with others an indication of deep spirituality; it is, furthermore, a means of continued spiritual growth and a certain insurance against spiritual retrogression or decay.

What is Personal Witnessing?

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*Define personal witnessing.*

By personal witnessing we mean simply telling others of what Jesus Christ means to you. This involves an earnest endeavor to lead them to know the same Saviour. It is dealing with men and women individually, in a personal manner, concerning the things of God in contrast to the public proclamation of God's truth.

The Purpose of Personal Witnessing

Keep clearly in mind that the purpose of this type of service is not to get people to believe what you believe, nor to get them to join your church, but to lead them into a personal, experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. We have more than enough churches and various creeds. "What the world needs is Jesus"! What individuals need is to be brought face to face with Him.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*What is the supreme task of the Church and thus of every Christian? Give some examples of this as found in Scripture.*

In John 1:42 are found the words, "*And he brought him to Jesus.*" These words picture the very ultimate in Christian service. Bringing people to Jesus is the supreme task of the Church and thus of each Christian.

This expression was used of Andrew, one of the first disciples of the Lord, in regard to his brother, Simon Peter. Andrew had been introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist through those thrilling words, "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" (John 1:36). Immediately Andrew went and found Peter, testifying to him, "*We have found the*

Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.” How Andrew accomplished this we are not told, but he succeeded, and the meeting of Peter and Jesus was the turning point in that man’s life and the beginning of his outstanding ministry.

Peter was not an easy man with whom to deal. We are well aware of his impulsiveness even after he was following the Lord, so we can imagine what he was like before. But we are not told that Andrew argued with him, nor tried to force any opinions on him. He simply brought him to Jesus. This is what each one is asked to do — bring people, through your testimony, your consistent Christian life, or some gospel tract — bring people to Jesus.

You read nothing else concerning Andrew than that he brought people to Jesus. Not a word of any sermon that he preached is recorded. We are not told that he ever held any high position in the Church, but each time we do see him he is bringing someone to the Saviour. In John 6:8, 9 it is only a little lad with a lunch of five barley loaves and two small fish that Andrew brings to Jesus, but the meeting of Jesus and that little lad led to the feeding of five thousand people — the most outstanding miracle Jesus performed in that more people partook of its results, and the only miracle that is recorded by all four Gospel writers. It pays to bring people — even little lads — to Jesus.

Again you see Andrew, in John 12:20-22, bringing someone to Jesus. Certain Greeks had come up to worship at Jerusalem. Because he had a Greek name, no doubt, they approached Philip and *“desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.”* Philip was not quite sure that these Gentiles should see Jesus. Had He not said, *“I am not come but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”*? So Philip consulted with Andrew, and Andrew brought them to Jesus. He seemed to have an all-compelling conviction that if he could only once get anybody into the presence of the Lord, every need would be met and every circumstance would be amply taken care of — and this is still perfectly true today.

The Importance of Personal Witnessing

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30). *“He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”* (James 5:20). The supreme importance of personal witnessing can be summed up in the following six thoughts:

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★Why is it important for every believer to be a diligent witness?

It Establishes the Christian in His Own Faith

One of the absolute essentials to the establishing of a new convert is that he shall immediately tell others of what he has experienced. There is almost a universal desire on the part of those who have just been saved to share the good news with others. Unsaved loved ones, friends and associates in school and at work must know of the grace of God that has come into the life of the one who has been saved. It is spiritual suicide to try to live a victorious Christian life and not tell others of your faith. It is important that the new convert bear testimony immediately after his conversion so that he will not be found trying to live a double life. Young people often feel that they will be scoffed at by their associates, but even the rankest sinner or the most abusive scoffer secretly respects, and even admires, one who declares his position proudly and then lives a real Christian life without compromise with the world.

Daniel 12:3 states, *“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”* Here is indeed a privilege — to *“turn many to righteousness”*! Here is great reward, *“shall shine as the stars for ever.”*! There is positively no joy that can equal that which fills a man’s soul when he has been able to win someone else to Jesus.

It is Probably the Only Method of Christian Service in Which All Can Have a Part

It is not possible for every Christian to be a preacher or an outstanding teacher in spiritual things, for these are special gifts given by God. (See Ephesians 4:11-12.) Only certain ones are chosen for these offices; but there is no Christian, however humble he may feel himself or others may esteem him to be, who is not appointed of the Spirit to be a winner of souls.

Every Christian should realize that it is not only a high honor, and a blessed privilege, to be associated with the Lord Jesus in the eternal salvation of the souls of men, but that a solemn responsibility rests upon him to be a “steward” of the “manifold grace of God.” The true Christian, having found Christ to be precious to his own soul, at once seeks to get others to *“taste and see that the Lord is good.”*

It Reaches Those Who Cannot be Reached in Any Other Way

Those who are earnest in their endeavors are finding it more difficult all the time to get unsaved people to come to church with them. Folk have the idea that they are going to be embarrassed if they come to a public service; but they cannot be embarrassed as the result of an earnest, tactful, personal approach regarding their soul’s eternal welfare.

A missionary tells how they went about winning souls in Burma. She said they never expected the unsaved to come to the church. Church services were for Christians. But, when it could be conveniently arranged, all the Christians met together and went to visit in the homes of the neighborhood and talked to the unsaved personally about accepting Christ. We go about the

matter in just the opposite way. We put up a sign saying, "Come to Church" and then sit down and wonder why people do not come.

Someone has imagined the following verses in the Bible: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature whom you can induce to come to church," or "Do not bother about folks who will not come to church when they have the chance." These thoughts are ridiculous, nevertheless we are practicing this sort of thing every day.

It Can be Done Anywhere, at Any Time

There is probably no time when it is not possible to witness for Christ. Paul exhorted: "*Be instant in season, out of season.*" He set us just that kind of an example. He spoke to women by the river side, to the philosophers in the market place at Athens, to the jailor at midnight, to the barbarians on Melita where he was shipwrecked, and to his fellow-prisoners at Rome. Here is a method of evangelism that is not confined to time or place.

It Reaches People Where They Are

The first and most important requisite of good salesmanship is said to be "putting yourself in step with your prospect." In the days when streetcars had open platforms it was quite usual to run and jump on after the car had started. In doing so you never ran at right angles to the car nor in the opposite direction. You always ran along beside the car, increasing your pace until you were moving as rapidly as the car and in the same direction. Then you stepped aboard easily, without danger or any jolt.

Jesus set us the great example of dealing with people by first conversing with them regarding what they were most interested in. Personal work enables one to get next to a man's thinking and experience. The preacher

in a church service may preach all around an individual's need and never touch him, but with this method you can come right to grips with his particular problem.

It Produces Large Results

It is doubtful if anyone is won to the Lord in a public service who has not been first influenced toward Christ by a personal contact. Many unsaved people automatically erect a mental barrier between themselves and an ordained minister. They seem to feel that he is expected to talk about the things of God and they accept what he says with a good deal of reserve. But when he finds people with whom he works every day, students with whom he is familiar in the classrooms, telling of the reality of a living Christ, the impact is tremendous. Personal witnessing certainly does bring large results for eternity.

The Baptism With the Holy Ghost and Personal Witnessing

If there is one group of people who should be earnest and industrious in this matter of personal witnessing, it is those who have received the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is strange, however, to note how many never seem to think that this is the purpose for which they were endued with power from on high. (See Acts 1:8.)

The Lord does not fill His saints with the Holy Ghost just for their personal blessing and edification. The Spirit certainly does all this, but it is for the purpose that the message of Christ might be spread abroad. Too many are simply enjoying the experience of the Baptism and not using it for the glory of God. The Holy Spirit came to speak of and glorify Jesus. Let us yield to Him and put ourselves in the position where He can accomplish this ministry through our lives!

CLOSING ACTIVITY: The story of Philip and the Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 contains all the elements of instruction and encouragement for personal evangelism. Every believer who aspires to share Christ with greater success should read this portion often, pray over it, and meditate upon its salient truths.

Read Acts 8:26-40 and write down on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson at least one thing we can learn from this passage about personal evangelism under each of the following topics: 1) The Summons to Personal Evangelism; 2) The Guidance in Personal Evangelism; 3) The Starting Point in Personal Evangelism; 4) The Method in Personal Evangelism; 5) The Subject of Personal Evangelism; 6) The Aim in Personal Evangelism.

THE PLACE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE AND PERSONAL WITNESSING IN THE DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. *Why does God fill us with the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to be yielded to the Holy Spirit?* _____

2. *In the parable of the talents whom does the man journeying to a far country represent? Whom do the servants represent? What do the talents represent?* _____

3. *In the parable of the talents what was the reward of the first two servants? Were they equally pleasing to their master? What was the fault of the one-talent man?* _____

4. *Define personal witnessing.* _____

5. *What is the supreme task of the Church and thus of every Christian? Give some examples of this as found in Scripture.* _____

6. *Why is it important for every believer to be a diligent witness?* _____

THE PLACE OF LOVE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

AIM: To emphasize the place of love in the daily life of the Christian and to show how that love is the secret of a holy Christian life.

KEY VERSES:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40)

OPENING ACTIVITY: In a class setting, the following verse about “Love” should be displayed on a chalkboard or overhead projector, in view of each class member. After providing opportunity for everyone to read through the verse, the class should be divided into groups. Each group should come up with a practical example of each of these characteristics of a holy life as displayed through love. A time of sharing their examples should be provided.

“JOY IS LOVE EXULTING.
PEACE IS LOVE REPOSING.
LONGSUFFERING IS LOVE UNTIRING.
GENTLENESS IS LOVE ENDURING.
GOODNESS IS LOVE IN ACTION.
FAITH IS LOVE ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
MEEKNESS IS LOVE UNDER DISCIPLINE.
TEMPERANCE IS LOVE IN TRAINING.”

If you are working alone, write an example of each of the characteristics of a holy life as expressed in the saying on “love” listed above. You may use the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson.

THE GOSPEL OF LOVE

The one great outstanding characteristic which has been manifested through the gospel of Jesus Christ is love. Herein is the gospel of Jesus Christ supreme over every other religion of history. It began in the realm of love, in the heart of the Father: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). It was revealed through the love of Jesus Christ, and continues to be manifested through love in the hearts of the followers of the Saviour. Love can truly be said to be the secret of a holy Christian life. We emphasize the place of love in the daily life of the Christian, in the following manner:

Love is the Fulfillment of the Law

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What is God’s supreme commandment? In what ways does this fulfill the law?

When one of the Pharisee lawyers asked Jesus the oft-repeated question, “Which is the great command-

ment in the law?” Jesus replied, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

The apostle Paul enlarges on this thought in Romans 13:8-10, “Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

A moment’s reflection, and one can readily see that the principle which Jesus gave, and which was amplified by the apostle Paul, is certainly true. If our hearts were but filled with perfect love we would need no other commandment. If we perfectly loved God we most certainly would not need to be told that we should have no other gods besides Him. It would not be necessary for us to be told not to take His name in vain, nor to fail to keep His day holy. Likewise, if we perfectly loved our neighbor we would not need to be told it was wrong to kill him, steal from him or commit adultery with those who belonged to

him. We would be sure to honor our father and mother, and we would not covet that which belonged to our neighbor. Love would rather see him have things than ourselves. How true are the words, *"Love is the fulfilling of the law!"*

Henry Drummond has said: "In those days men were working their passage to heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments, and the hundred and ten other commandments which they had manufactured out of them. Christ said, I will show you a more simple way. If you will do one thing, you will do these hundred and ten things, without ever thinking about them. If you love you will unconsciously fulfill the whole law . . . It is the rule for fulfilling all rules, the new commandment for keeping all the old commandments, Christ's one secret of the Christian life."

Love is the Test of Our Experience of Salvation

"Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love . . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:7, 8, 12). *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him"* (1 John 3:14, 15).

The same love which was in the Father and in the Son, inspiring them to make salvation possible, is found in the heart of every one who is born of God. This is a vital test of our experience and a real measure of our closeness of fellowship with the Lord. It is not just a general love that is referred to here, but a love for the brethren in Christ. It takes a spiritual love to love those who are spiritual, and this comes only from a personal relationship with the Lord. This kind of love is not produced otherwise. It is God's love in the human heart, placed there by His Spirit.

Love is the Evidence to the World That We Belong to Jesus

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). The unsaved understand very little about the beliefs and doctrines of the Christian faith. They do not comprehend much with regard to our attitudes or forms of worship; but they can understand the language that love speaks in the everyday-life of a Christian. What a grand recommendation for the gospel is a man or woman who is filled with the radiance of the love of God! On the contrary, what a sad thing it is when a professing Christian fails to reveal this divine characteristic! Surely this grace of love is the essence of a truly consecrated life. It is a sacred perfume that comes from fellowship in the secret place of communion with the Lord.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*Explain how that love is the essence of true holiness.*

We like to think of holiness as being the fruit of the Spirit. It is not just the result of human effort, but it is a positive impartation of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22 describes the fruit of the Spirit as: *"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."* These indeed are characteristics of a holy life. Every one of these words can be included in the one great word "Love." As someone has said:

Joy is love exulting.
Peace is love reposing.
Longsuffering is love untiring.
Gentleness is love enduring.
Goodness is love in action.
Faith is love on the battlefield.
Meekness is love under discipline.
Temperance is love in training.

Thus, if one has love he will possess all of the other characteristics which make up the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The question of what is right for a Christian to do will be easily answered if the love of God fills the heart. The uncertainty regarding these matters usually arises from a conflict between self and the will of God. One who perfectly loves God will quickly yield to the will of the One whom he loves with all his heart. It is love of self that hinders so much, and is responsible for so much unconsecrated living among Christians.

The one who perfectly loves others will be ever anxious to let his light shine before them that his life might be an inspiration to lead them to the Lord. We are told to *"avoid the very appearance of evil"* because of the effect it might have on those weaker in the faith. A real love for others will guide us in this regard as no code of ethics ever could. The shortest cut to a real life of Christian holiness is to be filled with the love of the Saviour. Love will be perfectly at ease wherever it is.

Jesus instructed His disciples, *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you"* (Matthew 5:44). This is completely impossible apart from the love of God in the heart. We must have His love for such as this. Romans 5:5 says, *"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What is the real test of our love for God? What Scripture expresses this?

Fruitful service is the result of obedience to the commands of the Lord, and love is certainly the motivating force behind all obedience. Jesus said, "If ye love me keep my commandments . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: . . . he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings" (John 14:15, 23, 24). The real test of love is obedience and submission to His will, and a readiness to spend and be spent in His service.

We do not think much of the love of the young man who wrote to his sweetheart, "My love for you is so great I would climb the highest mountain, I would cross the widest desert or swim the greatest ocean, just to be with you." Then there was added to the note, "P.S. I'll be over Wednesday night if it doesn't rain." True love counts no sacrifice too great and no service too much for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Before a Christian can win men to Jesus Christ there must be in his heart a real love for souls. It is possible to render professional service apart from any personal love, in the realm of medicine or law, that will be very effectual, but when we deal with souls regarding their eternal welfare we must have a deep compassion for them. Even warnings of judgment will be fruitless unless they are tempered with love.

A LOOK AT LOVE AS REVEALED IN 1 JOHN 4:7-12, 16-21

The Present Urgency of Love

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7, 8).

God is Love (Verse 7)

The appeal to Christian love here is based on the divine character of love. Love is of God. Love is a divine characteristic. The sons of God are expected to portray the character of God. One who loves his brethren (the other sons of God) gives evidence of being born of God. He who is born of God will certainly love. He who loves knows God, and he who says he knows God proves this fact by his life of love. Love is here expressed as being continuous in practice or manifestation. True believers (born of God) not only come to love the brethren, but go on loving them day in and day out, in spite of their imperfections. There is no such thing as loving in principle and hating in practice. For the believer, principle and practice are the same thing.

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★Can one truly know God and not love? Why or why not?

Not to love is to betray ignorance of God. One may know a great deal about God without knowing God by experience. Perhaps far too many who know about God come short of knowing Him in experience. John teaches, unmistakably, that intimate experimental knowledge of God has as its result the practice of love. Can one know God who is by very nature "love," and fail to portray this predominant divine characteristic?

The Historical Example of Love

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★How is God's love manifested in history?

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9,10).

Christ Dying for Sin (Verse 10)

The manifestation of love is not from man Godward, but from God manward. God does not love us as a reaction of human love; God loves man because love is His nature. It is man's love which is a reaction, a reaction to the loving work of Christ which is love's perfect manifestation. Love for God is not native to man's nature, but is created in his nature at the new birth. The fact is that God has by means of Christ's work of redemption shown us how to love.

Christ Imparting Life (Verse 9)

The fact that God is love is clearly revealed in the sending of His Son to die for us. Christ on the cross is love in capital letters. It is love engraved indelibly upon the most enduring page of history. It is love written so plainly that the most simple can scarcely fail to read its meaning. It is love in a language that all races of men can translate. It is love made visible in unmistakable example. Christ crucified is love manifested in the flesh. Can anyone go to the cross for life and not come among men radiant in love?

The Practical Development of Love

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:11,12).

If God Loves Us, We Should Love Others (Verse 11)

The point here is that our love for God can best be shown or expressed in love one for another. We ought to love those whom God loves. The people of the world do not know God, but they do know that the Bible story of the crucifixion is a story of God's love. It is generally known that love is the great work of Christianity, so it must seem quite inconsistent with Christian principles that there should exist so much contention and strife among professing believers. And it is just as inconsistent as it seems. Let the church wake up and see that its last opportunity for self-sacrificing Christian service to humanity is rapidly slipping away. Perhaps a new surge of creative love will be in time to restore some of the church's lost prestige.

God Dwells in Us (Verse 12)

All our emphasis is on loving God, but do we make clear what is really meant by loving God? We have not seen God and we have vague ideas about God except as He is seen in Christ His only begotten Son. Love is not just an attitude, it must also be a practice; it is more than a state of mind; it is a state of service. But, God can be served only by serving the human beings whom God loves. (See Matthew 25:41-45). If God truly dwells in us He moves us to practice love one to the other. We criticize the social gospel, but we fail to see the sin of an unsocial gospel.

God's Love is Perfected (Verse 12)

If we do practice love as we should, then God takes up His abode in us and perfects love in us so that practical holiness is the blessed result.

The Glorious Assurance of Love

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:16-18).

Love Gives Boldness (Verse 17)

God's love is perfected (brought to maturity) in us ("with us," Greek) in order that we may have confidence in face of the day of judgment. If love does not come to fruition in us in the form of practical holiness, we cannot have confidence in respect to the day of judgment, for it is this very disposition of love toward the brethren that makes us know that God — who is love — abides in us. When love is shed abroad in our hearts we cannot but have confidence in approval before the throne of God, because he who practices love (practical holiness)

shares God's nature. The more one is like God, the more he has confidence before Him. The more one is unlike God the more he feels condemned in His presence.

Love Casts Out Fear (Verse 18)

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★According to 1 John 4:18, what casts out fear? To what kind of "fear" is this verse referring?

That "fear," in this connection, has reference to fear of punishment or condemnation is made clear by its relation to the preceding verse, and by the use of the word "torment" which actually means "dread of punishment." He who walks in love, and in whose heart the love of God is bestowed, has escaped the fear of judgment; he has in his walk of love attained unto assurance. It is the right of every true believer — who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit — to attain unto assurance. Many in reacting from the non-biblical doctrine called, "once saved, always saved," have gone to the opposite extreme of dread and uncertainty, which is equally unscriptural. "There is no fear (dread) in love." If one lives selfishly and contentiously, he has cause for dread; but if one walks in the love of God performing unselfish services, with his hope fixed in Christ's consummate work of atonement, he has passed beyond fear to assurance. Perfect love casts out fear of condemnation. (See Romans 8:1). If one is beset by fear and dread, the only remedy is that of going on in Christ to perfect love which is synonymous with practical holiness. The state of dread is a clear indication that one has not achieved perfect love.

The Conduct Inconsistent With Love

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What is he who says he loves God, but hates his brother?

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

Christian Profession Without Love of the Brethren

This verse makes a very severe judgment regarding the professing believer who hates (envy, jealousy, scorn, despite, slight) his brother. Such is declared to be a liar, a hypocrite, a sham Christian, a pretender, a fraud. Rather than to face the naked truth of this verse, we try to tone down its meaning or give another name to our

actions. The only way around this verse is to stop hating. Further, no one can desist from the negative attitude of hate, without embracing the positive quality of love.

Hatred of a Brother While Pretending to Love God

If we cannot be benevolent toward our visibly needy brother, how can we pretend to love the invisible God who needs nothing but vessels to convey the Divine Love from man to man?

The New Commandment of Love

“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:21).

God's new all inclusive commandment is that men love Him and love one another. He who violates this commandment violates the whole law of God, and he who keeps this commandment keeps the whole law of God.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: We are told in 1 John 4:21 that if we love God then we must also love our brother. This is not a choice, but a commandment.

Ask all members of the class to reflect on the place that love occupies in their daily Christian life. Have them to focus in on at least one person whom they have difficulty loving. Then allow them time to write down several ways that they can begin to express love to that person, with God's help. It may mean that first they will need to ask God to remove the hate or dislike they have for that person. When all members of the class are finished ask them to share what they have written down with one other person in class and then to pray with one another for strength to follow through with their plans.

If you are working alone, you may follow the directions above. Write down your plans on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson and then take time to pray over them. You may want to post them some place where you will be reminded of your commitment throughout the week.

THE PLACE OF LOVE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. *What is God's supreme commandment? In what ways does this fulfill the law?* _____

2. *Explain how that love is the essence of true holiness.* _____

3. *What is the real test of our love for God? What Scripture expresses this?* _____

4. *Can one truly know God and not love? Why or why not?* _____

5. *How is God's love manifested in history?* _____

6. *According to 1 John 4:18, what casts out fear? To what kind of "fear" is this verse referring?* _____

7. *What is he who says he loves God, but hates his brother?* _____

WATER BAPTISM

AIM: To show through Scripture that water baptism is a command of the Lord. To discuss what is meant by water baptism, why it is necessary, and what its significance is in the life of a believer.

KEY VERSES:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3,4).

OPENING ACTIVITY: To acquaint yourself with the Scriptures that will be used in this lesson, complete the following statements regarding water baptism. (Note to teacher: You may choose to have your class work individually or in groups. If they do not have their own books, provide a copy of the following statements for each student or write them out on a chalkboard, to be copied down and completed by the student.)

1. We are to be baptized in the name of _____ (Matthew 28:19).
2. Water baptism signifies a taking of our place with Christ in His _____, and _____ (Romans 6:3,4).
3. We are _____ to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48).
4. The Bible clearly teaches that water baptism was by _____ rather than by pouring or sprinkling (Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:38).
5. _____ is our example in water baptism (Matthew 3:13-17).
6. In the early church water baptism almost always followed immediately after _____ (Acts 2:41; 10:45-48; 16:33).

(The answers can be found at the end of the lesson, following the closing activity.)

INTRODUCTION

The Lord Jesus instructed His disciples in the keeping of two ordinances — two outward observances which were planned to be of blessing and assistance to them in their Christian life and ministry. The one was Water Baptism and the other The Lord’s Supper.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★Why is the study of baptism important?

Perhaps no Christian subject has been more widely debated than that of water baptism, yet, in spite of its frequent discussion, the average church member understands very imperfectly its true significance. On the other hand, if baptism is deemed to be one of the

necessary ordinances of practical Christianity, one should perceive clearly and accurately its meaning and purpose. If it were true, as some believe, that baptism is merely an outward sign of an inward work, it still would be a necessary ordinance of great practical importance, for the reason that the meaning of inward works or experiences is conveyed to the mind only by means of outward signs, figures or symbols. Therefore, if one does not understand the meaning of baptism, he will understand only dimly the meaning of his inward experience. One sooner or later matures to the point of not needing symbols or visible helps to comprehension, but it should not be forgotten that symbols were quite necessary to the early stages of growth and learning. Just as the Lord’s supper is a constant reminder of Christ’s work of redemption, so is baptism a reminder of Christ’s regenerating work in the life of the believer. Baptism, unlike the holy communion, is administered only once to the believer; yet every time a new convert is publicly baptized, the ceremony is a reminder to all present of that death, burial, and resurrection together with Christ, by which they gained admittance into the kingdom of God.

THE EXAMPLE IN BAPTISM — OUR LORD

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:13-17).

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*Who is our example in baptism? How was he baptized?*

In all things Jesus is our chief example. Never did He command His followers to observe anything that He, Himself, had not first observed. The very first recorded act of Christ's public ministry was His submission to baptism by the hand of John. The Lord, our example, did first what He commands all believers to do as their first outward act of obedience.

John was reluctant to baptize Jesus, because he felt unworthy; he felt a need to be baptized by Jesus. He could see no reason why Jesus who was the promised Messiah should be baptized at all. Herein is the strong argument for the necessity and importance of baptism for all believers. Jesus needed not to be baptized, for He had no sin from which to be washed; but if He submitted to baptism who had no need, dare we neglect it who have great need to be cleansed? Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. This means that Jesus identified Himself with mankind, accepting the guilt of mankind. His baptism, therefore, was a prophetic picture of His own death, burial and resurrection in which He would bear away the sin and guilt of man. The Lord identified Himself with man in his defeat, in order that man by faith might identify himself with the risen Christ in His victory. When the believer is baptized, he is identifying himself with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Jesus was baptized publicly as a witness of the redemption that was future; we are baptized publicly as witnesses of the redemption that is past.

The fact that Jesus “went up out of the water” proves beyond question that Jesus was immersed. Immersion was the only form of baptism which could symbolize death, burial and resurrection. It seems logical to us that baptism should be administered in the same form in all cases, for any other mode would fail to portray the real significance of our conversion. (See Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:12).

THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER BAPTISM

Christ's Ministers Were Commanded to Baptize

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). The great importance of baptism is shown here by the relationship which it has to the other phases of practical evangelism. The commission is threefold: 1) Go, 2) Teach, 3) Baptize. The servants of the Lord, in the light of this great commission, have no choice but to obey and baptize those who believe.

Individual Believers Were Commanded to be Baptized

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you” (Acts 2:38). “And He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). Here is double insurance. The minister is commanded to baptize the believer and the believer is commanded to be baptized, so should request this ordinance to be performed.

It is a Preparatory Step to the Fullness of the Holy Spirit

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit in the bodily form of a dove came and rested upon Jesus as He came from the waters of baptism. (Luke 3:21,22.)

It is a Privilege to Follow Our Lord

“Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). It is our privilege to follow our Lord in a similar baptism. There is in every true Christian's heart a desire to be more like Jesus. There are some ways in which we do not know how to follow Him and be more like Him, but here is one step we can take. If we will take every step we are able to take, He will lead us in those in which we do not know how to follow.

THE MANNER OF BAPTISM — BY IMMERSION

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★*Why is immersion the only proper form of baptism?*

We believe that the Bible clearly teaches that water baptism was by immersion rather than by sprinkling or pouring. The early church, likewise, observed this method and must have been so taught by those who were with the Lord Jesus during His lifetime.

It will be noted that John the Baptist, who seems to be the first to use this ordinance, baptized by the river Jordan, rather than by a well or small pool of water which would have been sufficient had he only desired to

sprinkle those who presented themselves to him. Matthew 3:1-6 describes the multitude who went to John and we are told that they “were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” The wording indicates that they actually went into the river. Jesus was baptized by John and we read, “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water” (Matthew 3:16). In John 3:23 we read, “John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there.” The significance of baptism representing burial and resurrection, which we will study later in the lesson, has no meaning unless the method employed was immersion.

“And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38).

This passage is conclusive as to the manner of baptism. Both Philip and the eunuch went down “into” the water and afterward came up “out of” the water. If sprinkling had been the object, they need have gone only to the edge of the water. R.J. Knowling (Expositor’s Greek Testament) comments as follows: “The context (Acts 8:38) indicates that the baptism was by immersion, and there can be no doubt that this was the custom in the early church.” (See 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.) Many point out that the church even during the apostolic period permitted pouring as a means of baptism in cases where water in abundance was unobtainable. This we will admit, but it only makes a stronger case for immersion, because immersion was to be the usual manner whenever water in abundance was available. We quote here the “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” the oldest authentic church history known. Chapter VII: “But if thou hast neither (cold nor warm water in abundance) pour thrice upon the head in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This concession was made in desert sections where water was extremely scarce. Here is a case where the exception proves the validity of the rule.

BAPTISM IS NOT SALVATION

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★Would you consider baptism absolutely essential to salvation?

In this verse baptism is made a necessary condition of salvation; however, nowhere else is it made such except, perhaps, in Acts 2:38. Paul nowhere speaks of salvation as being contingent upon baptism; however, inasmuch as there are two passages where it seems to be a condition, we should be very cautious about minimizing its importance. We all know that we are saved by faith rather than by works or ordinances; but if we have true faith, will we not be eager to do all which the Lord has commanded in His Holy Word?

Lesson 7

While we believe it is very important that every believer be baptized in water, we do not hesitate to say that there will be many redeemed saints in heaven who have never been thus baptized. If baptism were essential to salvation, surely Jesus Himself would have baptized. Yet He never immersed a person (See John 4:1,2.) If a man could not be saved unless he were baptized in water, surely we would not hear the apostle Paul saying, “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; . . . and I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:14-17).

THE PROPER SUBJECTS FOR BAPTISM — BELIEVERS WHO HAVE REACHED THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway” (Acts 16:31-33).

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★Why do we not baptize infants?

We now introduce this passage on the conversion and baptism of the Philippian jailer and his family, because this account is often quoted in defense of infant baptism. Now, we contend that baptism, being an emblem of an inward experience, can have no significance unless the person baptized has had the experience of which the outward act is a figure. We hold that infants are innocent and in no need of baptism; however, we admit that the Bible is silent on the subject. If the Bible says anything about the state of innocent children in relation to God, it is contained in the words of Jesus, “Forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:16). If a child is too young to exercise faith in Christ, he is reckoned to be innocent (of such is the kingdom of God). If he cannot believe, he need not, and if he is incapable of an experience of regeneration, of what value would a rite of baptism be?

Now we contend that the families which were baptized in this passage and in Acts 16:14-15 were composed of members old enough to exercise faith. Paul spoke the word to all who were in the jailer’s house, so we safely assume that each believed the Word. In Acts 18:8 it clearly states that all in the house of Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed before being baptized. Some assume that infants were present in these households, but if so, it certainly is nowhere expressly stated. Do we have a right to defend a practice by reading into a text what is not there?

We do believe in the dedication of infants to the Lord, which act our churches practice, but it is not baptism, for baptism is the figure of a work which the infant has not experienced. Furthermore, we prefer dedication to baptism because the latter has two objectionable results: (1) It confuses the meaning of baptism, and (2) It tends to give the impression that no definite act of faith is necessary for persons who were baptized as infants, and such persons are often indifferent to any challenge to vital Christian experience.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM — DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION

“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12).

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3,4).

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★Of what is baptism a figure? With whom does baptism identify us?

Water baptism is first of all a testimony of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an outward testimony to the world around that we have accepted Him as our personal Saviour. Particularly, water baptism signifies a union — a taking of our place — with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

Some theologians argue that the form of baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, is unimportant inasmuch as baptism is only an emblem of cleansing. We answer that baptism cannot be merely the emblem of washing, for conversion means more than washing; it means death to sin, the burial of the old nature, and rebirth in newness of life, in which we are sustained by the resurrection power of Christ. (See Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13.)

It is a wonderful thing to be able to reckon the old sinful nature crucified and buried with Christ. This is true for those who have believed, and water baptism is a significant ordinance in helping us to realize this fact. The water is a very real grave. Were the one who is administering the ordinance not to bring the candidate up from the water it would indeed be his grave.

The important thing is to realize that we rise to “newness of life.” Oh, if each one could only grasp this fact and enter into it in its fullness! God wants us to expect to have and live a new life as a result of faith in Christ and obedience to His command. Those who do so believe,

find water baptism not merely a form but a very real and vital spiritual blessing. Thus thousands have received the Baptism with the Holy Ghost as they have come up from being baptized.

THE FORMULA OF BAPTISM — THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★What is the correct formula for baptism?

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

Matthew 28:19 gives the only authoritative formula for baptism, for it is according to the command of Christ Himself and it is a specific instruction. We are enjoined to baptize those who become disciples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That baptism in this same manner is continually to be practiced is proved by the fact that the nations are to be taught to “*observe ALL THINGS whatsoever I (Christ) have commanded you*” (Vs. 20).

However, in Acts 19:3-5 and Acts 10:48, the exact formula is not important to the purpose of the narrative, so it merely says that they were baptized in the name of Jesus. There would be no point in the discussion of the formula if everyone followed the pattern of the Lord, but the fact is that in many parts of the country there are those who take issue with the Lord’s formula, contending that believers should be baptized only in the name of Jesus. The doctrine held by these people is called “Jesus Only” or “The New Issue.” This is not a “new issue” but an old heresy called “Sabellianism,” according to which, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are only terms referring to the same person, and Jesus is the only real name for God. The “Jesus Only” groups (there are many with various shades of belief) deny the doctrine of the Trinity and baptize in the name of Jesus only. John 1:1 clearly refutes this false doctrine. (See also Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; John 17:5; John 17.) Could Jesus have been praying to himself in John 17? (See 1 Corinthians 15:28.)

But some will ask why it says several times in the book of Acts that believers were baptized in Jesus’ name. In Acts 19, the Ephesian disciples had already been baptized in John’s baptism, so it only needed to be said that they received the Christian baptism. “Name” in the Bible means “authority” or “power.” Baptism in Jesus’ name simply means that one upon believing and being baptized enters into Christ and has standing with God through His authority. Similarly we are told by what authority devils can be cast out, in Mark 16:17 — “*In my name shall they cast out devils.*” It is by the authority of Jesus that these things are done.

We do all in the name of Jesus, inasmuch as God deals with men only by virtue of the authority invested in the Son who redeemed us by His blood. However, the proper formula is that given by Jesus Himself in Matthew 28:19, *“Of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*

BAPTISM IN THE EARLY CHURCH

A quick survey of the record of the early church, as given in the book of Acts, serves to show that there was hardly one recorded conversion, either of an individual or of larger numbers, but the converts were almost immediately baptized. The regularity with which this fact is recorded is a tremendous testimony of what the disciples considered was God’s will in those first days of evangelism.

Of the three thousand saved at Pentecost we read, *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”* (Acts 2:41).

Of Philip’s converts at Samaria we are told, *“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”* (Acts 8:12). At the same place we are told of Simon the Sorcerer that, *“himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip”* (Acts 8:13).

The Ethiopian Eunuch believed Philip’s exposition of the passage in Isaiah concerning Christ and cried, *“See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? . . . and he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him”* (Acts 8:36-38).

Concerning Saul of Tarsus, whom we better know as Paul, we read, *“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized”* (Acts 9:18).

The saints at Cornelius’ house in Caesarea were baptized right after their conversion. (See Acts 10:47, 48.)

Lydia and her household at Philippi were baptized. (See Acts 16:15.)

The Philippian jailer was baptized the very night of his conversion after the great earthquake. (See Acts 16:33.)

The converts at Corinth. (See Acts 18:8.)

The disciples at Ephesus. (See Acts 19:5.)

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Ask everyone in the class to choose a partner. One person should act as if he was a new Christian with questions about water baptism. For example, he may wonder why he needs to be baptized (immersed) in water if he was already sprinkled as a child. The other person should attempt to answer his questions, drawing from what he has learned in this lesson. Then ask them to switch roles. You may want to choose one or two of the pairs to share their dialogue in front of the class.

If you are working alone, write down on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson at least three questions people may ask you about water baptism. Now, write down how you would respond to their questions.

★Answers to Opening Activity: 1) the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; 2) death, burial, and resurrection; 3) commanded; 4) immersion; 5) Jesus; 6) conversion.

WATER BAPTISM

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. Why is the study of baptism important? _____

2. Who is our example in baptism? How was he baptized? _____

3. Why is immersion the only proper form of baptism? _____

4. Would you consider baptism absolutely essential to salvation? _____

5. Why do we not baptize infants? _____

6. Of what is baptism a figure? With whom does baptism identify us? _____

7. What is the correct formula for baptism? _____

THE LORD'S SUPPER

AIM: To explain the origination, purpose, and perils of the Lord's Supper. To recognize the Lord's Supper as a holy ordinance with spiritual significance and to understand how and when it is to be observed.

KEY VERSES:

"... the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:23-31).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Read through the following excerpt from the Foursquare Declaration of Faith, regarding the Lord's Supper. List all that can be observed in this statement relating to the Lord's Supper (i.e. the juice of the vine serves as a reminder of the shed blood of Christ).

We believe in the commemoration and observing of the Lord's supper by the sacred use of the broken bread, a precious type of the Bread of Life, even Jesus Christ, whose body was broken for us; and by the juice of the vine, a blessed type which should ever remind the participant of the shed blood of the Saviour who is the true Vine of which His children are the branches; that this ordinance is as a glorious rainbow that spans the gulf of the years between Calvary and the coming of the Lord, when in the Father's kingdom, He will partake anew with His children; and that the serving and receiving of this blessed sacrament should be ever preceded by the most solemn heart-searching, self-examination, forgiveness and love toward all men, that none partake unworthily and drink condemnation to his own soul.

—Declaration of Faith
Aimee Semple McPherson

(Note to teacher: The excerpt above should be written out on a chalkboard or overhead projector in view of the class. You may have them complete the activity individually or in groups.)

If you are working alone, you may complete your list on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson.

THE LORD'S SUPPER — A HOLY ORDINANCE

The Lord's supper is the only perpetual sacrament observed by evangelical believers, unless one should consider the regular church service of worship a sacrament, which has never been so considered. A sacrament is an outward rite instituted by Christ which is typical of an inward grace or experience of grace. The Roman church observes seven sacraments, but the Protestant church finds only two such ordinances taught in the New Testament by Christ and the apostles, which are baptism and the Lord's Supper. The word sacrament is never, itself, used in the Bible, but is a Latin word to signify a holy ordinance. These sacraments, or holy ordinances, were at first called "mysteries," not, however, because they were difficult to comprehend, which they are not; but because they typified exper-

iences of grace which were the privilege only of those who belonged to Christ and whose value could be discerned only by converted persons.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*Is outward observance of the Lord's supper sufficient? Explain.*

The Lord's supper was instituted by the Lord Himself, who commanded that His followers observe it until He should again come in the realization of His universal

kingdom. An ordinance so instituted, we recognize to be unquestionably binding upon all believers and churches. Whatever Christ has expressly commanded as a perpetual observance, the church must continue to practice in obedience to the Lord's will. We cannot, however, assume that we have obeyed or are obeying the precept of Jesus merely because we adhere to the outward form of the sacrament. The external observance of religious rites has no value whatever, unless the devout person discerns and enters into the real spiritual reality of the divine grace which the sacrament typifies. The value of the outward form is that it reminds one of the inward reality. That which destroyed the power of Judaism was that frame of mind of the Jews and their leaders, in which the rites of their religion came to mean only an external act of ritual, the physical practice of which was sufficient to fulfill God's will. Yet before we are too loud in our condemnation of Judaism, let us make sure that, in our simple rite of holy communion, we are not observing only a form whose spiritual significance we ignore. Thousands of our evangelical people come away from the services on communion Sunday completely unmoved by the spiritual truths and powers of which the "bread" and "wine" are emblems. This condition should not exist, and if it does, we should do something to rectify it.

THE ORIGATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The ordinance of the Lord's supper had its origination during the last Passover feast which Jesus ate with His disciples before He was crucified. All Jews were instructed to observe this feast in commemoration of the night of their great deliverance from Egypt when the death angel passed over the houses whereon had been sprinkled the blood of the slain lamb. (See Exodus 12:2-14.)

"Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover" (Matthew 26:17-19).

It was during the Passover feast that Jesus made known to the disciples that one of them should betray Him. Each one diligently inquired, "Lord, who is it?" "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. . . He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night" (John 13:25-30).

Most students feel that it was after Judas had departed that Jesus established the ordinance which has come down to us today: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28).

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*In what ways are the Jewish Passover and the Christian communion service connected? How are they in contrast?*

It seems quite apparent that there is a definite connection between the Jewish Passover and the Christian communion service, or the Lord's supper. It is a connection that is also a contrast. Paul wrote, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7,8). As Christians, we do not keep the passover feast. Christ is our Passover. The first Passover meant, to the children of Israel: Freedom from judgment, as the death angel passed over; deliverance from Egypt; strength for the journey which they were about to take. We experience, in a spiritual way, all these through Jesus Christ who was slain for us.

Think what this last Passover meant to Jesus as He gathered His disciples in that upper room, and various cups of the feast were consumed. He knew what it all signified. Every Passover lamb, and every other lamb that had been slain in sacrifice — even this lamb before Him on that night — pointed to Himself, the Lamb of God. To Him this Passover was not just another annual observance. This was to be the last Passover for Him and all who believe on Him — indeed the last truly significant Passover ever to be kept. Today, though probably they do not realize why, the Jew only has a bone on the Passover table instead of a lamb. The Lamb has been slain so there is no use to sacrifice any others — but of course Israel's eyes are blinded even as they bear witness to this fact at their annual feast.

As Jesus looked on the table where the lamb was prepared, that night, He saw the sum and substance of all His suffering. The lamb was the sign of the love of God who once permitted the destroying angel to pass over the house where its blood was sprinkled on doorpost and lintel. To all the children of Israel the Passover lamb meant that if they believed they would escape the destroyer, but to Jesus it was a token of all the suffering and punishment He would have to bear. The destroyer would not pass over Him. And it was with all this in mind that He took the bread and took the cup, establishing a service that would cause mankind — and especially His own children in grace — ever to remember what He was about to accomplish for them in the suffering and sacrifice of the next day.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or any other appropriate method.

★*The purpose of the Lord's supper is three-fold. What are these three reasons? Briefly explain how each one relates to the observance of the Lord's supper.*

"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:24-26).

To Commemorate Calvary

"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death." Our Lord's predominant thought was that we remember "this concerning Him" above everything else. He did not call attention to His teachings, for we cannot keep them. He did not refer to His holy, sinless life for it would only condemn us. But He asked us to remember His death. We are to remember His body, not glorious, but broken; His blood not coursing through His veins in life-giving victory, but poured out in sacrifice. *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"* is to be our cry through all eternity. He would have us remember that He died that we might live. The memory is of a work accomplished once and for all on a memorable day in the past. The day of the cross is the great day of heaven's intervention, the great day of God's condescension. At the communion table there must always be a backward look to the supreme act which makes all impartation of divine grace possible. There can be no vision of the future until there has been a beholding of the past. All flows from the moment in which the dying "Lamb" cried, *"It is finished."* The observance of communion in which we do not descry the cross outlined on the profile of history is empty ritual.

To Feed Upon the Sustainer of Our Life

"This is my body, which is broken for you . . . This cup is the new testament." We are to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He is the sustainer of our life. *"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life"* (John 6:54). He is our food. Not a luxury, but a necessity. We must feed upon Him.

We seek a deeper spiritual reality as a present moment experience. We do not believe superstitiously that the bread and wine actually become the physical body and blood of Christ, nor do we believe that there is any virtue in the physical elements themselves apart from their power as figures to point us to the deeper reality which they typify. We do believe, however, that an act of faith in partaking of the elements results in the real operation of

the Spirit in us to strengthen us in the inner man and to heal us in our physical bodies. We, furthermore, believe that the reality which the Lord's supper signifies is our "daily bread" of which we partake day by day. Salvation is not only the act of the past, nor only the hope of the future, it is in addition the glorious ever present fellowship and the impartation of resources for adequate Christian living. The bread and wine of the communion tell me that there is something for me today and every day.

To Watch For His Coming

"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." The communion service renews our faith that He is coming again. The Holy Spirit would have us see beyond the symbols of which we partake and know that one day we shall see Him face to face. There are some who virtually worship the symbols. God would have them but remind us of our Lord in glory. Jesus said, *"Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God"* (Mark 14:25). Evidently He is looking forward to that heavenly feast when we shall sit down, not with emblems of bread and wine, but with our Saviour Himself. Until then, let us keep the feast in remembrance of all He is to us both in the past and present and yet to be in the future.

We are to commemorate Christ's death until He comes to establish His everlasting kingdom. Every communion service is a prophetic service, a heralding of the glorious hope, a milepost in our heavenbound pilgrimage. When we come together around the communion table, only God discerns the many problems which vex us. Some are tempted and tried, some are weak and afflicted, a few are lonely and forsaken, many are weary in manifold labours, and some barely contain the tears of sorrow; but when we break the bread and drink the cup, our minds transport us beyond the years and we contemplate that happy day when sorrow is forever past and temptation out of reach, where service is without weariness and friends are a multitude.

THE PERILS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:27-31).

Unworthy Observance

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★In 1 Corinthians 11:27 we are exhorted to partake of the Lord's supper only after self-examination. For what purpose is the examination?

Because of the great importance of the Lord's supper and the danger of unspiritual participation which always exists, we are exhorted to partake of the communion only after self-examination. But for what purpose is the examination? Are we to look for some fault of the past or some imperfection of character which might disqualify us for the Lord's table? No, such an idea is foreign to this passage. The sin of the Corinthians was not that of partaking with imperfections in their lives, but because they celebrated the ordinance in an unchristian manner. They made a carnal feast out of the communion with no thought of its significance. They, like some modern Christians, saw no more in it than form and ceremony. They were condemned because to them it had no spiritual significance; they profaned the blood of Jesus. It is unfortunate that the common version of our Bible has the word "unworthily" which has been interpreted to mean "unworthy." Scores of sincere Christians refrain from participation in the holy communion, because of some fault or failure of the preceding month, fearing to be unworthy to eat. The blood of Jesus was shed to cleanse of sin, therefore, any true believer has a right to the Lord's table if he comes sincerely seeking pardon. Did Jesus refuse to give the bread of the last supper to Peter or even to Judas? Was Peter really worthy as some count worthiness? Nothing is said in verse 27 of the person's being unworthy; what was unworthy was the manner in which the ordinance was observed. In the Williams translation we read verse 27, "So whoever eats the bread and drinks from the Lord's cup in an 'unworthy way' is guilty of sinning against the Lord's body and blood." This is an exact translation of the Greek.

Presumptuous Spirit

If some eat and drink judgment upon themselves it is so because they fail to "discern the Lord's body." That is, they fail to see in the elements their spiritual meaning. It is much better to refrain from partaking, if we do not do so as an act of faith. "All that is not of faith is sin." If we do have faith, we see in the blood provision for pardon, and in the bread, or the body of the Lord which was broken for us, healing and strength for our physical bodies. (See Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24.) Many hundreds have testified to bodily healing as a result of partaking of the bread of the Lord's supper, and in the very same moment. What a blessing the Lord's supper is to the faithful! It is, indeed, a spiritual feast. All great privileges, however, entail responsibility and have their dangers if they are perverted. Let every true believer celebrate the communion in remembrance of

the Lord until He comes. All may partake freely provided that, after self-examination, they can partake by faith with a true discernment of the spiritual values.

THE LORD'S SUPPER — A COVENANT IN BLOOD

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★What is meant by "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20)?

"This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). The word "testament" is the same as "covenant." Jesus was saying, "Through the shedding of my blood I am establishing with you a new covenant and this cup signifies this to you."

There were many forms of covenants which were used in the East by which men made agreements. The most sacred and most binding of these was the blood covenant through which men entered into an unbreakable agreement which they signed with blood taken from their own veins. Jesus has made an everlasting covenant with all those who will be His followers. It is signed with the precious blood that flowed from His sacred body. The cup of communion, filled with the blood of the grape, is the symbol of this eternal agreement. The Lord's supper constantly reminds us of that new and gracious covenant God has made with us.

THE LORD'S SUPPER — HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord's supper is often called "Holy Communion." "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). The thought of communion, of fellowship runs strongly through the keeping of this blessed ordinance — communion with God and communion with one another.

There is a fellowship, even in the natural, through eating and drinking with one another that is not experienced just through mere conversation. Thus, as we eat and drink in His presence we find a closeness of communion which is not possible in any other way.

THE LORD'S SUPPER — WHEN IT IS TO BE OBSERVED

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★How often should one observe the Lord's supper?

Some might ask, "How often should one observe the Lord's supper?" The Bible does not stipulate any special times. Jesus said, "*This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*" "*For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup,*" Paul adds, "*ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26). "*As often*"! The early church observed this ordinance quite frequently, it would seem. "*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*" (Acts 2:46). It seems that later they

partook of the supper on the Lord's day — the day of His resurrection. "*Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread . . .*" (Acts 20:7). The early church fathers record that this was the custom during the years following the death of the apostles, and a great many churches still follow this order. Some churches observe the communion only once every three months. Many, as our own church, partake of the Lord's supper on the first Sunday of each month. Let every one be persuaded in his own mind. Jesus simply said "*As oft as ye do it*"!

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have each student turn to the person sitting next to him and ask him to share with that person what new meaning the Lord's supper has for him since studying this lesson. If you find it appropriate and are able to plan accordingly, you may wish to have the class observe the Lord's supper at the conclusion of your classtime.

If you are working alone, write a poem, song or thank you note to the Lord in appreciation for the privilege of observing the Lord's supper. You may do this on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. *Is outward observance of the Lord's supper sufficient? Explain.* _____

2. *In what ways are the Jewish Passover and the Christian communion service connected? How are they in contrast?*

3. *The purpose of the Lord's supper is three-fold. What are these three reasons? Briefly explain how each one relates to the observance of the Lord's supper.* _____

4. *In 1 Corinthians 11:27 we are exhorted to partake of the Lord's supper only after self-examination. For what purpose is the examination?* _____

5. *What is meant by "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20)?* _____

6. *How often should one observe the Lord's supper?* _____

CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

AIM: To emphasize the necessity of the organized local church by viewing how the church as an ecclesiastical system arose in post-biblical times and by showing that the church was in fact an organized church. Other areas to be covered will be the duties and responsibilities of a visible organized church and the position of the church and believer in relation to the state.

KEY VERSES:

“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”(Acts 2:46, 47).

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Romans 13:1-8).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Divide the class into discussion groups or have them work individually. Ask them to list several reasons why people would hold the view that no church organization whatever is necessary nor biblical. Then ask them to list reasons why church organization is important. Discuss their responses.

If you are working alone, complete the following two statements on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson:

- 1) Some people believe that no church organization is necessary whatever because . . .
- 2) I believe church organization is important because . . .

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the church is one of the major doctrines of the New Testament. In systematic theology it is called “ecclesiology” and matters pertaining to the church are called “ecclesiastica.” Our biblical word “church” is used in the New Testament to translate a Greek word which means “the called out.” It is found 115 times. The Church is composed of those who are *called out* of the world of sin into fellowship by faith with the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the Church is the fellowship of the reborn who have come out from among the unregenerate. He who is in the Church is not of this world.

THE CHURCH — UNIVERSAL AND LOCAL

There are two aspects to the church: the invisible and the visible; the organism, and the organization; the universal and the local. Christ puts us into the invisible, universal Church, which is His own body, at the moment we are born again. We unite with the local church by submitting to water baptism and by entering into fellowship with the local brethren. Christ is the head of the

universal Church which is known only to Him. Our earthly responsibility is to the local church which is definitely established and sanctioned by the Lord. Every member of the ideal Church should also become a member of the local church if such affiliation is available. Relationship to a local church does not save one, but the saved are most definitely obliged to unite with other brethren for Christian service.

At various times during the history of the Church, there have been reactions away from church organization. Such reaction has usually been the result of corruption of the ecclesiastical systems. There are two extreme views regarding church organization: (1) that no organization whatever is necessary nor biblical, (2) that there should be one authoritative ruling body over all the local churches. The Bible clearly teaches a position half way between these extremes. In the Bible there were local churches with local church offices and appointed places and times of public worship. There was, furthermore, a certain bond of fellowship between the various local churches, with a common adherence to doctrine

and practices set down by the apostles. Obviously, therefore, there existed both local and general organization of a loose sort. On the other hand, the Bible certainly does not portray any all powerful hierarchy ruling over the local churches. The church as an ecclesiastical system arose in post-biblical times.

The Church Established

Acts 2:46-47

“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method:

★When was the Church founded? Explain.

The day of Pentecost is frequently referred to as the birthday of the Church, although there are various opinions regarding the date of its beginning. Some think of the church as a carry-over from the Jewish synagogue; some say that it began with the ministry of John the Baptist; others that it dates to the sending forth of the seventy. The first use of the word “church” occurs in Matthew 16:18 where Jesus said, “upon this rock I will build my church,” and the future tense of the verb shows that the Church was not yet in existence at that time. The next reference to the Church is that found in Acts 2:47 where it is said to be already in existence. The conclusion is that the Church was born sometime between Matthew 16:18 and Acts 2:47. Myer Pearlman writes: “The church of Christ came into existence as such on the day of Pentecost, when it was consecrated by the anointing of the Spirit. Just as the tabernacle was built and then consecrated by the descent of the divine glory (Exodus 40:34), so the first members of the church were assembled in the upper room and consecrated as the church by the descent of the Holy Spirit.” The church is inherent in the group of disciples which began to meet in the upper room after the crucifixion. It was there the Lord organized the Church’s nucleus in preparation for the descent of the abiding Holy Spirit. (See John 20:19-31.) However, the body of believers is initially constituted as a Church on the day of Pentecost, on which same day the Church made its public debut. Peter refers to the day of Pentecost as the “beginning” in Acts 11:15, and Paul in Ephesians 1:20-23 makes clear the necessity of Christ’s resurrection and ascension before the establishment of the Church with Christ as the Head. On the day of the Church’s inauguration, three thousand souls were added to the original nucleus. (See Acts 2:41.)

The day of Pentecost marked the establishment of both the universal Church and the local church. The Lord

added the new believers to the invisible Church (verse 47). They were initiated into the local or visible church of Jerusalem by the act of water baptism (verse 41). The word “Church” as used in verse 47 definitely refers to the universal body of Christ, not merely to the visible organized church. Only Christ can add one to the true Church. Obviously, a person may not be added to the visible church by water baptism who has not been added by the Lord to the true Church. See the case of Simon in Acts 8:13. It is equally obvious that true believers were organized into local assemblies or churches under the guidance of the Lord. The word “church” usually refers to the local visible assemblies, but there are a number of definite references to a universal invisible body of Christ which is composed of all genuine believers. (See Ephesians 1:22; 3:10; 3:21; 5:23-32; Colossians 1:18; 1:23; Hebrews 12:22,23.)

Acts 9:31

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”

This verse has reference to the local churches which were units in the visible organized Church.

Acts 13:1-3

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

Here we have a glimpse of the organized efforts of the Gentile church at Antioch which was a hub of missionary activity. While it is possible for one to belong to the invisible Church without being a member of any organized local church, such independence is not God’s will. We are to be banded together so as to be led as a group by the Spirit into mutual efforts for evangelization of the world. There was obviously a group of official prophets and teachers who gave themselves to prayer, who had authority to ordain for service by the laying on of hands. The church at Antioch was in some definite sense an organized church with a burden for the founding of other churches.

Acts 14:21-23

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”

Notice that Paul and Barnabas established local churches in various cities. They did not leave the individual believers in each place to struggle alone against pagan opposition, but organized the believers into assembled churches, each with its elders to govern and to promote the spiritual welfare of all. The result of evangelization and missionary work can hardly be permanent without the establishment of local churches.

Acts 10:47

“Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”

Here again it is plain that while faith in Christ is that which qualifies one for membership in the invisible Church, water baptism is that act which ushers one into membership in the visible church. Members should not be baptized into the local churches unless they show evidence of having been truly ushered into the true Church of Christ.

Acts 15:22

“Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.”

Here, where there are matters of doctrine and practice involved, the apostles at Jerusalem in a council meeting of church leaders agree upon policies which affect all the church. Here we have central authority at Jerusalem, and regional oversight at Antioch. The conclusions reached at Jerusalem through mutual prayer and deliberation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are binding upon all the churches.

It cannot be denied that the New Testament churches were mutually affiliated. Local churches need central guidance in matters of doctrine and practice, and mutual assistance, just as individual believers need to be united under the leadership of elders.

Acts 20:17-28

“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church . . . And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house . . . Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

The word “church” never in the New Testament refers to the building used for worship. In the book of Acts meetings were usually held in private houses (vs. 20). In a large church like that at Ephesus there was no central meeting place large enough for the assembly of all believers, yet the church at Ephesus included all the Christians of that city. The elders had the oversight of all the local meetings at Ephesus, and Paul, in a larger sense, being the founder, exercised authority over the

elders, for he charged them to be faithful in their nurture of the church (vs. 28).

In conclusion, let it be noted that the New Testament church organization was guided by the Holy Spirit. No arbitrary decisions were made by the apostles, by Paul and Barnabas, nor by local elders. All officers were made such by the Holy Ghost and the results seemed good to all the body. The New Testament church government was both democratic and theocratic. The people ruled the church but the Spirit ruled the people.

Opposition to Church Membership Answered

Sects have arisen at various times in the past and continue to arise who oppose church organization. Some of these have been and are sincere in their opposition to organization, having been overly sensitive perhaps to the abuses that inevitably arise in connection with organizational procedure. This fact is not surprising for administrative difficulties had arisen even in New Testament times; and since apostolic times the trend in the structure of the visible church has been away from the simple, spontaneous, spiritual order of the early church, toward a worldly, political and unduly complicated order. However, in spite of the sincerity of some of the “anti-organization” groups, they do sooner or later become organizations due to the necessity for central leadership. Several large denominations of today were in their beginnings opposed to organization or denominationalism.

Charitable opposition, through the proper channels, to undue complexity, overly powerful central authority, or unscriptural methods is logical and beneficial, but objection to all organization is both futile and unscriptural. Nothing is plainer to unbiased Bible readers than the fact of an organized church in biblical times. That there was organization in the early church is obvious from the following facts.

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★What evidences are there of church organization in the book of Acts?

Uniformity of Doctrine

The apostles were recognized by the first converts as the leaders of the church and their doctrine was accepted as the standard of belief and testimony. The writer of Acts (Luke) describes this uniformity of belief and practice as follows: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). As soon as there is a regular gathering of people for a common purpose with a common doctrine, and with recognized leaders, there exists organization.

Church Offices and Officers

From the beginning the apostles were recognized as the governing body. (See Acts 6:2,3.) As soon as there existed complications in the administration of the affairs of the church, such as, for instance, the charities for the widows (Acts 6), additional officers were elected to administer. The seven deacons or stewards, including Stephen and Philip, were elected by the people to fulfill the newly created offices. (See Acts 6:3,5.) The deacons were chosen by the people and then presented to the apostles who ordained them (vs. 6). When other churches were established too distant to be supervised directly by the apostles in Jerusalem, "elders" were appointed over such churches to oversee the meetings and to direct their affairs. (See Acts 14:23.) In the New Testament we read of the following officers: "apostles" (Acts 6:6); "elders" (Acts 20:17); "prophets" and "teachers" (Acts 13:1); and "bishops" and "deacons" (Philippians 1:1). It is not our purpose here to explain the nature of the various offices; they have been enumerated in order to demonstrate the fact of an organized church.

Recognized Discipline

As the church grew larger there was a need for uniform patterns of worship and decorum. The epistles are largely devoted to the establishment of principles of sound doctrine and sound practice. The writers of the epistles had authority to make their recommendations binding upon the churches. When the discipline of the church was violated, there was a definite procedure for dealing with the violators. (See 1 Corinthians 5:13 - 6:5; Romans 16:17; Matthew 18:17; 3 John 6-11.)

Regular Time of Meeting

In memory of the resurrection of Jesus, the first day of the week became the regular day of meeting, worship, and almsgiving of the early church (See John 20:19; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 20:7.) No doubt there had been mutual agreement among the apostles and leaders to meet for worship on the "Lord's Day" (the day of His resurrection), which is our Sunday. Such mutual agreement on a set meeting day and a specified time for bringing offerings for the poor speaks clearly of organization.

Inter-Church Charity

That the Christian churches in all places felt a mutual relationship to all other churches is made clear by the fact that all of them participated in collections to aid the poor in Jerusalem. This relationship was not merely one of feeling and sympathy, however. Paul had given orders to the church in Galatia as well as to others to bear their part of the responsibility. (Read 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; Acts 24:17; Romans 15:25-28; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7; 2 Corinthians 9:1-8.) That there were organized plans for the management of the collectors is made clear in Paul's instructions to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:3) in which he says, "*And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.*" Here we have central authority planning the distribution

of collections for the needy, and local democratic action in the manner of carrying out the plans. When large groups of churches cooperate in the execution of centrally planned activities, that is organization; not a hierarchy, of course, but certainly a form of organization.

Inter-Church Communication

A further indication that the local churches felt a common bond of fellowship in the same universal society is seen in the practice of writing letters from church to church to commend individual believers. (See Acts 18:24-28; 2 Corinthians 3:1; Romans 16:1, 2; Acts 15:22-29.)

Let us note by way of summary what the New Testament churches had in common: a) a common doctrine; b) a common day of worship; c) a common pattern of worship (1 Corinthians 14); d) a common kind of offices (Acts 14:23); e) a common discipline; f) a common plan for mutual aid; and g) a common system for the commendation of sincere members who transferred from church to church.

Such uniformity could not have been achieved without organization. It is not to be denied that the uniformity was largely due to a common leading of the Spirit, nor that the Holy Spirit was the real director of their activities, but it must, at the same time, be recognized that the Spirit works through individuals and appoints individual persons to offices and ministries. God has always had His appointed leaders. Organization is definitely of God. Our attitude should be not that of opposing organization, but that of preserving our organization in conformity with God's plan and with the Holy Spirit's leading.

Duties and Responsibilities of a Visible Organized Church

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★What are the duties and responsibilities of a visible organized church?

To Preach the Gospel

The Church has been commanded by Christ Himself to preach the Gospel to every creature. This great commission set forth the central objective of organized Christianity. Nothing can be more important. Christ made salvation available by His victorious death upon the cross. It is now the task of the Church to declare the fact of a plan of salvation and to urge its acceptance upon all men: for the Church, being the body of Christ, is the continuation of Christ through history. The Lord can make effective His plan of salvation only through His body on earth.

It should be obvious to all that the most efficient evangelization of the whole earth can be accomplished

only through the combined and mutual efforts of all believers. Only a brotherhood of believers can provide an arrangement whereby men are converted, established in the faith, taught, ordained, sent forth to unevangelized areas, and supported. Paul and Barnabas were sent forth to evangelize Asia Minor by an organized church in Antioch.

To Provide for Christian Worship and Culture

It is a further responsibility of the church to provide services at specified places and times for worship and teaching as well as for evangelistic preaching. The newly converted must be established and taught in the Christian faith. Believers must band themselves together for mutual admonition and encouragement. (See 2 Corinthians 14:3-5.) God is to be worshipped not only by individual worshippers, but by the whole congregation in unison. (See Matthew 18:19, 20; Psalms 22:22; Hebrews 10:25.) Provision must be made for the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. These sacraments speak of an organized church, for only by mutual worship and by mutual effort can they be administered in such a manner as to fulfill their purpose.

To Provide for the Fellowship of Believers

One of the most precious aspects of the Christian life is that of Christian fellowship. (See 1 John 3:14.) The Psalmist said, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psalm 133:1). The writer of Acts portrays the life of the early church as follows: "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers . . . And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*" (Acts 2:42, 46). Only an organized church can provide a sufficiently wide circle of Christian fellowship.

To Maintain Right Standards of Life and Belief

Jude, writing to the Christian community said, "*It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3). Paul wrote to Timothy, "*These things write I unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God*" (1 Timothy 3:14, 15). Writing to the Philippians, Paul admonished, "*But whatever happens, make sure that your every-day life is worthy of the gospel of Christ*" (Philippians 1:27, Phillips Translation). Only by united efforts in preaching, teaching, and worship can a uniformly high standard of belief and practice be maintained.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHURCH AND STATE

Church and State in History

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*Explain some of the theories regarding the church's relationship to the state. What is our position?*

There are various theories regarding the church's relationship to the state. The attitude of the Jews in Christ's time was that of non-cooperative submission to the Roman Empire. They submitted to the Romans because of their inability to resist, but under protest. Their attitude was that of resentment and hatred.

Inasmuch as the early church was very largely composed of Jewish converts, that same spirit of resentment, and antagonism toward the Roman government, persisted for some time in Christian circles. Both Paul and Peter, however, as well as the Lord Jesus, Himself, taught the church to cooperate with the governors for the sake of good government and a peaceful society.

After the establishment of the Catholic hierarchy, the church began to think of itself as identical with the kingdom of God on earth, and to pretend to have authority over the various national governments. For a time the Roman church succeeded in exercising authority over the governments of Europe, but when the European states became powerful enough to throw off the yoke of Rome, a new relationship was worked out by which the church and the state were united. The church became supreme in religious matters, while the state was supreme in secular matters.

After the Reformation, some of the Protestant churches and the Church of England became state churches, receiving the protection and support of the state, and permitting the state to appoint the highest church officials. If the church was powerful, the archbishops ran the state, but if the state was all-powerful, the church was often a department of the government.

Some of the reformers demanded complete separation of church and state. They believed that the church should be a completely separate organization owing allegiance to Christ as the head, and that its attitude toward the governmental authority should be that of voluntary submission and cooperation in all matters not contrary to the will of God and the plain teaching of Scripture. With this viewpoint we are agreed. The Anabaptists, an early Protestant sect, took the attitude of non-cooperation with secular governments, teaching that Christians should reject any governmental offices, refuse to vote, swear oaths, or take part in war. With the latter view we are not in agreement, holding it to be extreme.

The Role of the Christian in the Church and State Relationship

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*What should be the Christian's attitude toward the state? In what one thing may a Christian resist civil authority?*

The Christian who desires to be separated from the world may be inclined to take a completely passive attitude toward his government and even to shirk his duties of citizenship, for he may reason that the majority of the public servants are entirely worldly, and that modern politics are corrupt and in league with shady influences. There are Christians who decline to vote for public officials, reasoning that all political office holders become corrupt sooner or later and that it makes no difference who is elected.

The Bible, however, lends no encouragement to anti-social and anti-civil attitudes. The believer is not of this world in the sense that his higher interests are not here, but on the other hand he is of this world in the sense that he has an obligation to it as long as he resides here. It makes no difference that some or many public officials are unchristian, dishonest, despotic or even criminal; civil government is ordained of God and is necessary to order and civilization. Any kind of government is better than anarchy. Even the worst officials serve to preserve order. Submission to government is a discipline which develops character. He who is disobedient to civil government will in all likelihood disobey divine government. He who submits to civil authority will likely submit to divine authority. Every type of human government is defective, but nevertheless essential. Because it is futile to look for perfect government in this present dispensation is no reason to retire from participation in the essential and basic duties of citizenship. A Christian is not prohibited from working for a better government or for a better form of government, but while the present form exists, he must obey its laws as long as they are not opposed to the clearly revealed will of God.

The large part of the Protestant church in America has stood strongly for the separation of church and state, but in favor of participation in the duties and privileges of citizenship. We believe that Christians, while avoiding the deceptions and insincerities of party politics, should work for, vote for, and exercise influence for good government. We further believe that Christians should respect and obey the laws enacted by responsible government, inasmuch as laws are for the benefit of good and for the suppression of evil. If a Christian feels that a law is wrong, he may work for its repeal, but he should obey it while it is in force. If a law directly contradicts the will of God and the conscience of the church, then Christians will obey God rather than men. Ordinarily Christians are bound to uphold authority rather than to weaken it.

The government of Rome under Nero in Paul and Peter's day was a despotic, cruel, oppressive regime, yet the Christians were admonished to obey its laws and to honor its rulers. The believers resisted the edicts of government only in refusing to give up Christianity and in denying worship to pagan deities, which edicts clearly violated Christian conscience. The Christian tends, therefore, to be on the conservative side politically, but not to be reactionary. He respects established authority, but he does not resist progress. The Christian church definitely should not become identified with any one kind of government or society. The church is not rightist nor leftist; the church works for what is more just and more humane, but obeys and respects the powers that be while they are in authority. Christians should be good citizens, but they should not become carried away with unreasoned emotions in times of civil conflict. We cannot be isolationists from the civil sphere, but our most important duty by far is that of bringing individual human beings into the kingdom of God. Civil affairs are important but not all important. We honor the king and pray for him; we serve God with body and soul.

Church and State Relationship Explained in Scripture

Romans 13:1-8

Verse 1 — *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”*

Submission to the powers of state does not mean union with the state, but voluntary cooperation with civil authority. It does not mean submission to edicts contrary to the aims of the gospel, but submission to the laws of organized government that are enacted to preserve a peaceful society. Here it is declared that God is the author of civil authority and that it is His will that rulers be respected for the sake of world order. Daniel revealed in his prophecies concerning world empires that God sets up and puts down the rulers according to His plan of the ages. Civil governments are a part of the plan of God for this earth. This does not mean that God is responsible for the evil that tyrannical rulers perpetuate, nor that He condones it. God does not uphold the man, but the office behind the man.

Rulers are called higher powers because they represent divinely appointed authority. The ruler as an individual person is not necessarily appointed of God, but his office is of God. He is to be respected for his office's sake. While he occupies the seat of rule, he is appointed of God. Because of his office the civil magistrate is a servant of God as much as if he were directly sent from God. God stands behind the authority which the ruler represents. The word “power” means literally “authority” (exousia). Rulers who misuse their authority must answer to God.

Verse 2 — *“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”*

To set one's self against the constituted civil authority, except in matters violating the Christian conscience, is to set one's self against God who ordained civil powers. The condemnation here mentioned does not refer directly to eternal damnation, but rather to the punishment meted out by the civil authorities to law breakers. However, punishments inflicted for lawbreaking are in a sense from God, for God wills the punishment of lawbreakers.

Christians who are lawless are no better than lawless unbelievers nor are they deserving of a lighter condemnation. He who breaks man's law at the same time breaks God's law. If a law is opposed to the best interests of the whole society the Christian ought to work for its repeal, but he ought to obey it while it stands. Christians have a much more effective testimony who are above condemnation. We are to think more of the effectiveness of our testimony than of our personal rights and interests. Rulers are a terror only to the lawless. Law abiding Christians need fear no ruler, nor law; the law terrorizes only the guilty. The believer need not fear even the despotic tyrant who kills the Christians, for we are to fear not him who has power to destroy the body, but only Him who can destroy the soul in hell.

Verse 3 — *“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.”*

Civil law and authority is the enemy only of evildoers; it is the friend of the righteous. A lawless society would benefit only the lawless. The law abiding people are unafraid of laws.

Verse 4 — *“For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”*

It is the duty of the ruler to rule for the good of his subjects, not for his own benefit only. Paul's teaching sets forth the responsibility of the state as well as that of the citizens. The ruler is God's minister to benefit the good and to punish the evil. The benefits conferred by good civil government are God's benefits, and the punishment meted out by civil agency is God's punishment even though indirect in its administration.

Along with civil authority goes the power to use the sword if necessary to back up that authority. The sword belongs to the office. Capital punishment of incorrigible criminals and enemies of society is not contrary to God's law when the sword is legally wielded by constituted authorities. The executioner acts not as an individual, but in the name of organized society and in the interest of the public.

Now it may happen that certain nations become guilty of criminal behavior. It may become necessary for the peace loving nations to discipline the guilty nation in the interest of the world's well-being. If the guilty nation is an aggressor nation, violating the peace of the world, and the law abiding nations find it necessary to use force to

restore order, the governments may call upon their citizens to arm themselves as international policemen to exercise the discipline. In such cases the individual soldier acts not on his own initiative, but in obedience to his government's law. His government is responsible for his use of force and for the taking of life. Unless a war is clearly a war of unjustified aggression or selfish exploitation, a Christian citizen need feel no reluctance to serve as a soldier when he is drafted for military service. The admonition to the Christian to take not the sword applies to him as an individual. A Christian should not resort to force on his own initiative, but when he serves as a soldier in obedience to his nation's law, he acts not on his own initiative, but in subjection to higher powers which are ordained of God. In wars of aggression or exploitation, the Christian may follow his conscience and object to being made a party to unjustified violence. In such cases the whole church should be courageous and back up the individual believers in the following of Christian conscience.

We believe in the separation of church and state. Only an independent church can submit voluntarily to civil law. If the church is free it can act in defense of Christian conscience in the cases in which the state acts contrary to the clearly revealed will of God. The early Christians were law abiding citizens in all matters except those which were contrary to the worship of God and to the preaching of the Gospel. On the other hand the whole church stood together in opposition to pagan worship and in defiance of orders to close the work of the Gospel. While America acts in accord with the United Nations in the preservation of world order and in the necessary discipline of aggressor nations, a Christian may feel he is on scriptural ground in military service when his nation calls upon him. For whatever he does in the line of duty, the state is responsible before God. If our country ever acts as an unlawful aggressor nation, let the whole church rise up and voice unequivocal opposition.

Verse 5 — *“Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”*

A Christian's keeping of the law is not merely that he may escape punishment at the hand of officials, but principally in order that he may maintain a clear conscience, for lawbreakers are guilty not only before the civil courts, but also before the court of heaven. Even if the violator escapes the policeman, he cannot escape his own conscience which is one of God's policemen.

Verse 6 — *“For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.”*

If magistrates are needed and are ordained of God as agents of righteous government, they are entitled to reasonable support. There can be no civil government without taxation, therefore it is right to pay taxes. This does not mean that rulers are entitled to great personal gain from public money. Taxes are for good government, not for the enrichment of public servants; such servants are, however, deserving of reasonable support in line with the services they render. A Christian,

therefore, ought not to evade the payment of necessary taxes.

Jesus made clear His position on taxation when He exercised miraculous power in taking the coin from the fish's mouth to pay tribute. A Christian should not pay his taxes grudgingly, for law and order can be maintained only at considerable expense. If government is ordained of God, then taxes should be paid cheerfully to the state as tithes are paid to the church. There is nothing wrong about a Christian's voting for the reduction of taxes if he sincerely believes that tax money is being squandered on unnecessary projects or unnecessary officials, but let him pay such taxes as are currently in force cheerfully. Public servants are responsible to God for their expenditure of public funds. There would, perhaps, be less exploitation on the part of irresponsible officials, if Christians were more faithful in their duties as citizens.

Verse 7 — *“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”*

This is reminiscent of the command of Jesus, *“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.”* A good society depends upon everyone's performance of the tasks of good citizenship. Our first duty is to the kingdom of God, but that does not exempt us from our duties of citizenship.

Verse 8 — *“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth one another hath fulfilled the law.”*

That which all of us owe to mankind is love. We must pay our debts whether they be financial, political, social, moral or spiritual. We are all debtors to a lost world to love men and to point men to the way of salvation.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*What should every Christian do for the rulers? Why is it important? What Scripture is this instruction found in?*

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

The Christian's attitude toward rulers and public servants should be one of prayerfulness. We as Americans have a right to criticize any public official, but idle criticism is not becoming a Christian. We behave in a more Christlike manner when we pray for our leaders that God may use them to benefit the community.

1 Peter 2:13, 14, 16, 17

Verses 13, 14 — *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.”*

Peter expresses here substantially the same thoughts expressed by Paul in Romans 13. The two great church leaders were in agreement regarding the Christian's duty to be law abiding and respectful of civil leaders. The early Christians came into conflict with the rulers only in the matter of freedom of worship, and in this the rulers took the initiative. The Christian should not rashly provoke persecution. On the other hand, he must not compromise with anyone on the matter of the worship of God through Jesus Christ. Even when we are persecuted, we do not resist the persecutors with force. God is our help and stay.

Verses 16, 17 — *“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.”*

Our Christian liberty or religious liberty does not mean liberty to do evil nor to live selfishly at the expense of others. Our liberty ends where the neighbor's rights begin. Living under grace does not mean liberty to violate the law, but liberty to keep the law voluntarily. Under grace we do good not because we have to, but because we want to. But we must remember that no one is under grace except the one in whose heart the will to do good is created by the experience of regeneration; all others are under law.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Reread Romans 13:1-8 regarding the relationship between the church/believer and the state. Paraphrase this Scripture in your own words, drawing from what you have learned in this lesson. You may complete this activity on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson, if space permits.

CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. *When was the church founded? Explain.* _____

2. *What evidences are there of church organization in the book of Acts?* _____

3. *What are the duties and responsibilities of a visible organized church?* _____

4. *Explain some of the theories regarding the church's relationship to the state. What is our position?* _____

5. *What should be the Christian's attitude toward the state? In what one thing may a Christian resist civil authority?*

6. *What should every Christian do for the rulers? Why is it important? What Scripture is this instruction found in?*

FOURSQUARE MEMBERSHIP

AIM: To take a closer look at membership in the Foursquare Church as outlined in the Declaration of Faith:

Applicants for membership shall be first examined as to their faith by the Board of Elders, prayed with and encouraged. Such applicant must show evidence of having a genuine born-again experience, and of living a Christ-like life, a deep love for the winning of souls, and the furthering of the cause of Foursquare Gospel Evangelism throughout the earth, and must declare his loyalty to, and willingness to assist in the support of this association, both with his substance, as well as his undivided effort. Each such applicant shall express his recognition of the fact that "a house divided against itself cannot stand," and his adherence to the policy of this association, that there shall be no disloyalty, insubordination, whispering, criticizing, or backbiting of this association, or its leaders, and that if at any time any member feels that he is no longer loyal or in unqualified sympathy or one accord with this association, he shall ask for a letter of dismissal, and quietly withdraw from membership, and that if he should fail to do so, the authorities of the association reserve the right to tender such member such letter of dismissal; that the love of souls and the passion for soul winning must be the great undergird and supreme end toward which all efforts lead and that side lines, non-essential issues and hair-splitting of doctrines which tend to break the unity and detract from the great white-heated flame of soul winning must be checked wherever found, and that Christ must be made the central figure and be lifted up till all men will see, love and be drawn near unto Him.

— Declaration of Faith, Aimee Semple McPherson

KEY VERSES:

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

OPENING ACTIVITY: (The opening activity puzzle is designed on the next page so that it can be xeroxed for class use, if necessary.)

OPENING ACTIVITY: In the puzzle below are hidden seven characteristics of good church members. They may be horizontally or diagonally hidden. Circle each characteristic and then list them at the bottom of the page.

K B B A M N H T T L X P D F G
Z S O U N D D O C T R I N E P
J O R Q X S B Z B H I N T U P
V K N S A M U W Z S A D G S T
T T A L U K R C C U V Z D P T
A C G F H J D M Q P R U W A M
L A A U H G E T R P K H C P P
Z W I L L I N G T O W O R K C
S A N L O O F V V R B E G G K
B B M V Y Y O L S T D J J O Q
S I M E A C R C C I E E Z K B
H P P A L Y S S O V M W E R E
Y K L M T A O W B E P O K L T
O A Y K Y S U A D B N A E B W
M C L E A N L I V I N G I C H
T Y S O C E S H N R I N S C T

*Answers may be found at the end of the lesson, following the closing activity.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STANDARDS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*Are standards of membership important? Why or why not?*

Standards of membership are important in any organization, but they are exceedingly important to the church. In respect to service, the church, more than any other kind of society, is open to men of all kinds, levels, and conditions; but in respect to membership, the church must be the most discriminating of all societies; that is, discriminating as to faith, experience, and sincerity. The church ought to accept whom the Lord accepts, but also exclude whom the Lord excludes. It is not that the church wishes to place barriers in the way of anyone in the quest of salvation. Actually, salvation and membership in the local church are related only in the sense that the local church is composed of those who are saved and who at the same time desire to band themselves together for the more effective winning of other souls. However, the effectiveness of the visible church in the winning of souls and in the development of Christian character depends upon the lives and testimonies of the members.

Someone has suggested the following question as an appropriate self-examination for every church member: "What kind of church would my church be, if every member of it were just like me?" Such a question would prove embarrassing to some and encouraging to a few, but if asked sincerely and objectively it might serve all of us as a stimulus to more earnest cooperation in the inestimably valuable and urgent work of the church. We have right to expect that the church will do more as an organization than we members do as individual Christian workers.

Membership in a church secures for one advantage, benefits and blessings; however, a church member is responsible to benefit the church as well as to be benefitted. An unconverted, self-seeking, or contentious member undermines the health and effectiveness of the church. As members of the body which are diseased must be either healed or removed, so likewise, church members who are infected with sin, unbelief or rebellion must be healed (preferably) or removed, lest the whole body become prostrated. We cannot withdraw the church from the world, but we must, as far as is possible, keep the world out of the church.

The success of a church depends upon the sincere, active cooperation of the majority of its members, for a church is no more, in reality, than the total active membership. It is important that a church have a pastor who is earnest, wise, spiritual and active; that it have proper facilities for worship, evangelism, education and recreation; and that it be well organized; but unless the

members are cooperative, faithful, and active, all the rest is of little value. Now, a church does not have to be a large one in order to be a good one. A church with a thousand listless and complacent members may do much less to extend the kingdom of God than a church with one hundred cooperatively active members.

It is important for every Christian to understand the true relationship between the local church and its membership. One does not join a church, if he is spiritually understanding, with the sole object of benefitting himself, nor does he do so with the aim of benefitting solely the church. The avenue between the church and the member cannot be a one-way street. The member works for the church's upbuilding and advancement and at the same time he is blessed, encouraged and nourished spiritually. In the services of worship, the church as a whole benefits the members as individuals. In the work of evangelism, the members as individuals work for the church in the winning of souls. The financial burden of the church is borne mutually and proportionately by all the members, for without a church there could be no benefit nor blessing for anyone. The church, like any organization, renders a service to each member, but it also provides an opportunity for each constituent to do a constructive work in behalf of others. He who works most benefits most. Fortunately there are hosts of true, loyal, spiritual members of our churches whose principal aim is the extension of God's kingdom.

NECESSARY STANDARDS OF MEMBERSHIP AS VIEWED IN SCRIPTURE

Sound Doctrine

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*What are our doctrinal standards?*

2 Timothy 1:13

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

There has been much thoughtless and unintelligent criticism of doctrine and doctrinal preaching by those who hold that belief is of little importance. With such a position we cannot agree. Sound living is based upon sound thinking and sound believing. Those who say, "We have no creed but Christ" are merely mouthing vain words. Christ is, indeed, the center of our creed, but it makes a vast difference what we believe about Christ. The extreme liberals (modernists) are often as eloquent in the praise of Christ as any conservative, yet what the liberal believes about Christ is radically different from what we full-gospel people believe about Him.

Paul had a carefully conceived doctrine which he exhorted Timothy to hold fast and to teach faithfully. The acceptance of Paul's doctrine and gospel was un-

questionably held to be requisite for membership in those churches which Paul founded or influenced. We hasten to add that Paul's gospel and doctrine differed in no respect from Christ's doctrine or that of the apostles. Everywhere Paul is recognized as the God called and inspired teacher of the church. That Paul recognized and presented Christ as the only savior from sin, the healer of our bodies, the baptizer in the Holy Spirit and as the coming King, no one can seriously doubt. (See 1 Timothy 4:10; Acts 28:8; 19:2; Ephesians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9.) These fundamental doctrines are our standard which we expect all members to believe along with those others included in the Declaration of Faith. We do not split hairs doctrinally, leaving considerable latitude of belief on non-essential matters, but we expect unity on the fundamentals.

Acts 2:41, 42

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The early Christians continued in the apostle's doctrine, a fact mentioned along with the affirmation of their worship and their service. This apostolic doctrine we hold today as important. Three things are outstanding in apostolic Christianity: the apostle's worship (prayer and breaking of bread), the apostle's service (Acts 5:42), and the apostle's doctrine. Powerful is the modern church that follows the apostolic pattern in these three respects.

Clean, Victorious Living

2 Timothy 2:19

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

In addition to sound doctrine, we hold clean, victorious living to be a standard for Foursquare membership. Let everyone who aspires to membership depart from iniquity. Now, of course, all make some mistakes, and many live short of God's perfect will, but we must insist upon departure from the practice of sin and abstinence from any deliberate un-Christian conduct. The church is powerful in proportion to its practical holiness. The toleration of sub-Christian behavior demoralizes the church, destroys its influence and leads to the quenching of God's Spirit. The church that enforces biblical standards of living will be respected of men and blessed of God.

Willingness to Work

2 Timothy 4:2

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Local churches are organized in order that believers, through mutual cooperation, may be more effective in the winning of souls and that each believer may grow in grace through mutual encouragement. The church's biggest objective is that of soul winning. It is not at all unreasonable to expect that each member of the church work for or contribute in some manner to the winning of men to Christ, nor to expect that each work for the upbuilding and advancement of his church organization. Our motto might be "Every member a working member."

Material Support

1 Timothy 5:17-19

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."

The local church needs competent, fulltime leadership. Such leaders who are called of God to pastor the flock are worthy of respect, honor and adequate support. As each member of the church benefits from the untiring, impartial services of such godly leaders, each ought to do his part in the material support of the church, the organization, and its missionaries.

Strive for Unity

Ephesians 4:1-3

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★What is one of the greatest services a member may render to his church? In what ways can this be accomplished?

One of the greatest services a member may render to his church is that of keeping unity of the assembly. He can do this by being loyal to the leadership and to one another, treating others as he wishes to be treated, and striving to put the fairest and most charitable interpretation upon the acts and motives of all. Contentiousness, retelling harmful gossip, and disloyalty are destructive to unity and cannot be long tolerated by any society without disaster. If one disagrees with the policies of the church, he may seek change through properly established procedures. If one's opinions are only a minority opinion or contrary to the permanent constitution of the church, he must make his opinions

secondary to the accepted policies. If he cannot do this, he ought to withdraw quietly and join a group whose policies are in accord with his.

2 Timothy 2:14

“Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.”

Fundamental issues are important, and for their preservation we ought to contend; but contention over minor issues and argument over private interpretations of Scripture are destructive of unity and contrary to Paul’s inspired teaching. Zealous service is a sure cure for doctrinal hairsplitting.

Exalt Christ

1 Corinthians 2:2

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

John 12:32

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

Let every member beware of side issues. One may have a number of interests, but may our central interest ever be that of exalting Christ. Lifting up the Saviour and keeping one’s eyes upon Him will prevent the majority of troubles that beset churches. Let us exalt Christ for then in the day of His coming shall He accomplish our exaltation before the Father and the holy angels.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MEMBERS

A Christian Experience

A basic, indispensable requisite for membership in the Christian assembly is a born-again experience or relationship with God. One must first be a child of God. The unconverted are welcome in the house of God, in fact, their attendance is earnestly sought; but until the unsaved accept Christ and dedicate their lives, they lack the spiritual life for the kingdom of God. While one is dead in trespasses and sins, he does not belong among the company of the immortal. The local church, being an outward representation of the kingdom of God, acts inconsistently if it accepts as members those who do not belong to the true Church and the true kingdom. *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3).

Christian Character

An applicant for membership is examined not only as to his experience, but also as to his Christian character. A Christian organization is judged in the community by the people who make up its membership. Those who live lives inconsistent with the principles and ideals of Christianity are a hindrance to the progress of the kingdom and exercise a detrimental influence upon the young people of the church. We are eager to see the growth of our Foursquare church, but we prefer to grow

only by the addition of worthy material. To solicit members without discrimination is to invite disaster. Furthermore, if standards of membership are the high biblical standards, they will serve as an incentive to new converts to go on with Christ to the victorious life. It must be remarked, in addition, that it is important for those who are already members to maintain constantly the same standards of Christian character that are expected of applicants for membership. With the spiritual assistance of the whole assembly, one ought to find it natural to grow and mature in Christian character and in spiritual life.

A Burden for Souls

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*What is the chief aim of our churches? What happens when members neglect this aim?*

The principal business of the church is that of soul-winning. The members who most effectively serve the church are those who constantly win souls or seek their salvation. Soul-winning Christians are happy Christians. A soul-winning church is a spiritually powerful church. Seldom do serious problems threaten the peace of a church where the accent is on personal evangelism. When believers neglect to witness for Christ and become seekers after personal blessings, dissension and strife usually enter. Furthermore, unless we seek to win the world to Christ, we will soon compromise with the world and then we will embrace it.

A Mind to Work

Soul-winning is the first business of the church, but it also has much other work to do. It must encourage the weak, heal the sick, console the bereaved, counsel the young, train the children, care for the orphans and widows, visit the imprisoned, the infirm and the helpless, assist the poor, guide the straying, warn the wayward, and lend support to every influence that works for the good of the community, the nation and the world, and these do not complete the list. The church has much more work to do than it has hands to do it. The church members are the hands and feet of the organization, in fact, they are hands and feet for Christ. Every non-working member increases the burden of the few who labor, yet when all work no one is unduly burdened. The church was commanded to reap the whitened harvest fields where laborers were few. Their number is still few, so that there is a great need that every Christian believer be an earnest and conscientious worker.

Unselfish Cooperation

Basic worship of God is worship in spirit and in truth, but we also worship Him with our material substance. We must recognize God as the giver of all good things, including health, breath, and strength to earn our living.

As the children of God we belong to Him, and therefore all that we possess belongs to Him. When God bestows upon us material substance, it is not to make us possessors but stewards. Blessed are those church members who are faithful stewards of God's money, who through their faithfulness make possible the success of the church as a soul-saving agency. A member has not done his part in the total work of the church until he has done his financial part. In urging every constituent to tithe, we are only urging what the Word urges and what will bring great blessing to the giver. A deep Christian experience takes the drudgery from giving and makes one a joyful giver; joyful because he is aware that he is making an unselfish investment, along with other Christians, in the greatest cause and enterprise on earth. He is truly laying up for himself treasures in heaven.

Unity of Spirit

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*Why is unity important?*

The importance of unity cannot be over-emphasized. So important is it that persistent dissension and destructive criticism cannot be tolerated in the Christian assembly. Good members do not disrupt the unity of the body for selfish ambition or sensitiveness. Of course, church leaders at their best are human, and subject to errors of memory, judgment, and speech. Some slights and inequalities are unavoidable, but Christ-centered persons are capable of making allowances for imperfect judgment, for they have overcome their egocentricity. The unity of the whole work of God is far more important than any individual person's temporal interest.

Now we are not saying that there is no means of righting real wrongs or correcting real abuses that the majority of members wish to remove. If we wish to make constructive criticism, there are times and places provided for its expression. If changes need to be made, they can be made intelligently and unemotionally through constitutional procedure. Individual rebellions in an unchristian and unconstitutional manner which cause dissension cannot be tolerated. Blessed is the member whose interest in the gospel cause is greater than his self-interest.

Loyalty

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*How must disloyalty be dealt with?*

Loyalty is one of the highest of the Christian virtues. It has been said that one cannot develop a mature personality without loyal attachment to a cause. Disloyalty and divided allegiance are responsible for much personality disorder. Persons who cause contention around them are divided and troubled within.

Now, loyalty does not demand perfection. There are no perfect churches, just as there are no perfect church members. We are loyal to the church because we are loyal to Christ. Any betrayal of the church is a betrayal of Christ. Every church, no matter how ineffective, is doing some good and deserves to be boosted. Whenever one cannot conscientiously be loyal to a local church, or to a church organization, the noble thing would be to go quietly to another to which he can be loyal without doing anything to harm the church he has left. However, one ought never to leave a church he has loved without first taking every constitutional and Christlike measure for bringing it up to his standard for loyalty. One ought never to speak ill of any church before the world. If one can improve a church, let him do it; if he cannot help it nor longer be loyal to it, let him go elsewhere, saying nothing that he cannot say charitably.

Adherence to Truth

Yet another characteristic of a good member is conformity to the established fundamental creed, especially in the main doctrines. If one differs from the majority in small matters, let him avoid disputes over them. We are, indeed, to "*contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints,*" but we are not to split hairs nor elevate minute differences to a place of prominence. Great revivals have taken place among people of all shades of differences on minor doctrines. The important thing is soul-winning. "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty." Let us "*keep the unity of the faith.*"

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups and ask them to discuss how low standards weaken a church. Then ask them to list the characteristics of good church members, drawing from the lesson and adding any others they may think of. Each person should then individually write down those characteristics they feel they need to improve on in order to become a productive member of their church. In conclusion, class members could pray for one another regarding those things they have written down.

If you are working alone, list several ways low standards may weaken a church. Now list the characteristics of good church members, drawing from the lesson and adding any others you can think of. These lists may be written on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson. Finally, on a separate piece of paper write down those characteristics you feel you need to improve on in order to become a productive member of your church. Make it a matter of prayer this week.

*Answers to Opening Activity

K	B	A	M	N	H	T	T	L	X	P	D	F	G	
Z	S	O	U	N	D	D	O	C	T	R	I	N	E	
J	O	R	Q	X	S	B	Z	B	H	I	N	T	U	P
V	K	N	S	A	M	U	W	Z	S	A	D	G	S	T
T	T	A	L	U	K	R	C	C	U	V	Z	D	P	T
A	C	G	F	H	J	D	M	Q	P	R	U	W	A	M
L	A	A	U	H	G	E	T	R	P	K	H	C	P	P
Z	W	I	L	L	I	N	G	T	O	W	O	R	K	C
S	A	N	L	O	O	F	V	V	R	B	E	G	G	K
B	B	M	V	Y	Y	O	L	S	T	D	J	J	O	Q
S	I	M	E	A	C	R	C	C	I	E	E	Z	K	B
H	P	P	A	L	Y	S	S	O	V	M	W	E	R	E
Y	K	L	M	T	A	O	W	B	E	P	O	K	L	T
O	A	Y	K	Y	S	U	A	D	B	N	A	E	B	W
M	C	L	E	A	N	L	I	V	I	N	G	I	C	H
T	Y	S	O	C	E	S	H	N	R	I	N	S	C	T

FOURSQUARE MEMBERSHIP

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. Are standards of membership important? Why or why not? _____

2. What are our doctrinal standards? _____

3. What is one of the greatest services a member may render to his church? In what ways can this be accomplished? _____

4. What is the chief aim of our churches? What happens when members neglect this aim? _____

5. Why is unity important? _____

6. How must disloyalty be dealt with? _____

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

AIM: To realize that the method ordained of God to sustain His ministry and the spread of the gospel is tithing. To gain insight into the ways that the giving of tithes and free-will offerings not only takes care of the material and financial needs of His church, but also raises the spiritual morale of His people to the extent that God must bless them.

KEY VERSES:

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38).

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to make two lists. One list should include examples of some of the material needs of a church that could be met through tithes. The second list should include examples of needs beyond the local church that could be met through free-will offerings. Have the groups share their lists with the class.

If you are working alone, complete the lists mentioned above on the back of the Individual Worksheet at the end of this lesson.

TITHES

Tithing is the financial plan accepted in all Foursquare churches and in by far the majority of all full gospel churches. A more satisfactory or more scriptural plan has not been devised, nor is any other plan suggested in the Word of God. When the tithing system is not used, a church in nearly every case resorts to a method of raising money that is irksome and spiritually deadening.

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★Does God's cause need money? Why or why not?

Now the work of God cannot be done without material means. In a material world, material objects are essential to all activity, even spiritual activity. In a complex world, every material thing has a value and must be purchased by a medium of exchange called money. The Lord's kingdom requires buildings, full-time servants who must live in a material world and who are worthy of their hire, transportation, literature, means of communication, etc. Of course, it might be remotely possible for the church to return to very primitive conditions and to reduce material needs to a minimum, but such a church would be little effective in presenting the gospel to a modern world. The more elevated the standard of living becomes, the more it costs to

advance the Lord's work. Never was it more urgent than it is in these times that the means available for the presentation of the gospel be abundant.

We believe in tithing as a matter of practical theology. It is one of our doctrines, though one seldom finds it treated in books on Christian doctrine. But, how likely are our people to think of giving to God as an act of worship, as a privilege as well as a duty, unless the stewardship of material goods is taught by our pastors and teachers as a doctrinal tenet? Just as one is taught to worship, to pray, to sing the praises of the Lord or to draw strength from the Word of God, so also must he be taught to give of his material income to the work of God.

Examples of Tithing in Scripture

Malachi 3:8-11

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Tithing was prescribed by the law of Moses (Leviticus 27:30, 32). It was paid to the Levites in compensation for their surrender of any landed inheritance. They in turn tithed to the priests. Every Israelite was to tithe of his flocks, herds, grain and fruit. The animals were tithed by passing the herds and flocks under a rod and separating every tenth animal to the Lord. The animals had to be tithed in kind, but the fruit and grain could be sold and redeemed by a payment of one-fifth more than its market value. Storehouses were provided for the keeping of the tithe. In times of revival the people were faithful in tithing; but in times of spiritual decline, the tithes declined also.

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*Do we tithe to men or to God? Is it possible to rob God?*

Malachi preached to the people in a time when spirituality was on the decline and he found it necessary to upbraid the people for their unfaithfulness in neglecting to bring in the tenth. He, in fact, charges the people with having robbed God. Now, his charge was perfectly just. The provision for the needs of the cause of God is inseparable from other acts of worship. It is the obligation we have to God in material things to sustain His cause. When men give to the temple or to the church, they do not give to men but to God. When they neglect the temple or the church, they are not robbing men so much as they are robbing God. The church today needs the tithes as much as or more than the Levitical system needed them in Old Testament times. When the members cease to give faithfully in proportion to their abilities, God's cause suffers. The practice that some have of withholding tithes from the church whenever the minister displeases them, betrays the sad fact that they were giving to men more than to God; but their failure to cooperate actually constitutes robbery of God. Let every giver give to God; and whatever may be his feelings toward individual servants of God, let him continue to give to God that the cause of Christ suffer not.

God has promised us that if we are faithful to provide the needs of His kingdom, He will bless us with the provision of our personal needs, whether they be material or spiritual, and that the blessing will be exceedingly abundant. This promise is, no doubt, as valid for us today as it was for the people of Malachi's day. Let us, however, not look upon tithing as a means of personal material gain. Material benefits come to us most surely when we do not seek them. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Our tithing should be motivated by a desire to see the kingdom of Christ gloriously extended without any other expectation of reward except that of the joy of seeing souls saved and the Christian army triumphant. Yet, the promise is there, and there are any number of examples of God's abundant blessing of those who lovingly tithe to prove beyond question the fact that the promise of Malachi is valid today. (See Matthew 23:23, 24.)

The ceremonialists of Christ's day had come to regard the letter of the law more than its true spirit. Men rent their garments, but not their hearts. They gave of the tithes, but not themselves. They were careful to strain out minute legal gnats, but they inconsistently swallowed whole camels of pride, scorn, avarice, and falsehood. The legal practice of tithing can never compensate for a sinful or negligent spiritual life. Tithing cannot buy anything for a man who does not give his whole heart to God. Note that Christ made clear the fact that tithing was good and ought not to be left undone. The Jews were not reprimanded for tithing, but for failure to have faith and to show mercy. We take from our Lord's words that He intended for tithing to continue. The same incident is recorded by Luke in 11:42

Hebrews 7:1-3, 5-9

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace . . . And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth."

The author of Hebrews is arguing for the superiority of Christ as our spiritual High Priest over the Levitical priesthood. Christ is a High Priest forever, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchisedek. He shows that there was in the Old Testament a priesthood of a higher order than that of Aaron's, a priesthood fulfilled in Christ. A whole treatise could be written on Melchisedek, but our purpose here is to observe the facts on tithing. Note that Abraham paid tithes to this King of righteousness long before there was a Mosaic law. Tithing belonged to a system of priesthood fulfilled by Christ. As tithing existed before the law, it does not pass away as a divine method with the passing of the law. As Abraham voluntarily paid tithes to the King of Peace who was a type of Christ, it is also appropriate that we should voluntarily pay tithes to Christ as long as His cause has a blessing from our Lord who is a priest after the order of Melchisedek

Now, there are many today who argue that tithing is legal and not a part of the gospel of grace. We do not argue that tithing is essential to salvation, but we do affirm that tithing existed before the law and pertained to that higher order of priesthood which Christ fulfills; therefore, it did not pass away with the law, and will be God's financial plan as long as there is a need for the material support of the gospel enterprise. Those who oppose tithing cannot suggest a better or more biblical financial plan. We believe in it; let us be faithful to practice it.

Why One Should Tithe

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*Why should we tithe?*

To Support the Church

The visible church cannot sustain itself nor carry on an aggressive program of evangelization and Christian culture without some sort of financial plan. In the original sense the Church is the invisible universal body of Christ composed of all true believers. However, the Holy Scriptures recognize and establish the identity of a visible, local church. The Lord, Himself, sustains the invisible Church which is spiritual; yet the invisible Church comes out of the local churches which are earthly societies in need of being sustained by material support just as any earthly societies are sustained. The spiritual provisions for the church come from God, the "giver of every perfect gift," but the material provisions must come from the voluntary contributions of the members.

To Follow Biblical Precedent

There must be some kind of pattern or blueprint for giving. The members of the local church cannot of themselves discern the exact financial responsibility of each without some predetermined plan of giving. Moreover, the patterns of giving by which the believer is guided must be biblical and equitable. The church is made up of the rich and the poor, yet the merit of one's gift must not be reckoned by its amount, but by the faithfulness and love which motivated it. Of all the systems of giving to the support of the church, only tithing is both biblical and equitable. Being based on a percentage principle, it imposes no more of a burden upon the poor than it does upon persons of more ample means. Furthermore, tithing is biblical and commends itself to the conscience. While it existed as a legal responsibility under the Levitical system of the Old Testament, it still recommends itself as a moral and spiritual responsibility. If we recognize that our strength to earn our living comes from God and that He supplies our needs, then the return of an equitable percentage of that income to God for the support of His church is both a moral duty and a joyful privilege. Any other system of supporting the church must be enforced by the human leaders and for that reason will become irksome, or if not, it will be inadequate and undependable. Tithing is enforced by the conscience and each member clearly sees his just responsibility.

To Worship With Material Substance

Tithing occurs to one as a spiritual act of worship, rendered not unto men, but unto God, and for that reason does not become irksome. While the church definitely has its earthly aspect and needs material

support as much or more than the average human society, its ideals are spiritual and anti-materialistic and therefore, it is quickly criticized for any means of raising money that too closely resembles the self-centered and openly competitive methods used in commerce. Yet who can criticize the biblical system which is a voluntary spiritual act of worship to God? When the church finds it necessary to go into competition with business or to use promotional pressure methods for its financing, it imperils its spiritual influence and must not resent the inevitable criticism that will come.

Where One Should Tithe

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*Where and to whom are tithes to go?*

The New Testament Scriptures recognize the local church as the basic unit of Christianity. Every believer should belong to and serve a local church and every believer's first earthly responsibility is to the local church. There are a great many good causes related to the kingdom of God that deserve the support of Christian people, but the tithe belongs to the local church. Our support of causes must be of the nature of free-will offerings. We are to bring the tithes into the storehouse. Dividing a tenth part of one's income among a number of worthy charities or causes does not constitute tithing, for tithing belongs to the house of God and its service. None of the good causes could continue without the basic foundation of local churches. What strengthens the local church strengthens all of Christendom and whatever robs the local church deprives the total cause of Christ on earth. When we bring our tithes into the local church and support the duly called, discerned, and ordained servants of God who are truly worthy of their hire, we are strengthening the edifice of Christianity at its very foundation. Tithes should never be paid anywhere except to the local church, and we are well advised to withhold even the free-will offerings from any cause that is not recognized by at least some segment of the local churches.

To Whom One Should Tithe

The tithes go for the support of those servants of God who have given up the commercial world to devote their lives totally to the cure and care of souls, and to the support of the local church, but they are never given directly to any man. We actually give the tithe to God. He who gives to God never gives grudgingly, but he who gives his tithe to men will be cheerful in proportion to his esteem of those men.

Tithes should be contributed always through recognized channels which the local church provides for their collection. When one dedicates the tenth to God, he no longer is sovereign over the gift; it belongs to God and must be entrusted to those who are duly appointed to be

guardians of God's money. Tithes must not be given with strings tied to them.

Now tithes do not go to radio programs, to missionaries, to publishers of books, to the poor, to needy relatives, to evangelists, to orphans, to institutions, to good causes, to persons attending a Bible school, nor to personal friends. Tithes belong to God first and by course to the local church. One may and should support with offerings above his tithe any or all such causes as those mentioned above, but not with his tenth. The local churches provide for all good Christian causes which are doing a worthy cooperative work. It is not proper to tithe into the dresser drawer and then to parcel it out according to one's personal whims. The local church, not the kitchen cabinet, is God's storehouse. One does not enjoy the citizenship privileges of America and pay his taxes to the government of Argentina, or vice-versa. Likewise let us pay our tithes in the local church where we receive our spiritual food.

When One Should Tithe

The tithes are to be paid regularly, as often as one receives his weekly or monthly salary. The tithe is not an occasional gift, nor is it in response to special appeals. No one should find it necessary to appeal to the believer for his tithe. Tithing is a habit, a normal, regular part of one's Christian program. We pay our tithes as often as we are paid. The bills of the local church come due as often as those of any individual member, and no society is so quickly criticized as the church is when the bills are not paid or are deferred. Paul recommends to the Corinthians that the gifts of the people be brought into the church every first day of the week. (See 1 Corinthians 16:2.)

FREEWILL OFFERINGS

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★How is the giving of an offering a greater mark of generosity than the payment of tithes?

Too much cannot be said about the importance of paying tithes. As no government could exist without taxation, so no church could be an effective instrument of evangelization without the consistent and responsible payment of tithes by the members.

Tithing is the basis of the believer's giving, but not the full extent of his giving to the cause of Christ. The tithe is for the support of the local church; however, there are many worthy and urgent needs beyond the local church. The tithe is, we may say, an obligation which one has to his local assembly, for from that assembly he is sustained spiritually and benefitted in all respects. He who helps the church directly helps himself. Therefore, tithing is not necessarily a mark of great generosity.

On the other hand, the believer's offerings which he gives to missions, to pioneer evangelism, to the relief of the poor, etc., from which he derives no direct personal benefit, are freewill acts of generosity and marks of special grace. Almost anyone can comprehend the wisdom of sharing in the maintenance of the local church which benefits each member and each home as well as the whole community. Blessed are those deeper Christians who love the whole cause of soul-saving, who are burdened for the lost of distant places, who love the souls of men whom they will never see and from whom there can come no return of the favor. Those who tithe reveal themselves to be fair-minded and willing to share the upkeep of a mutually beneficial institution, but those who give their freewill offerings reveal themselves to be rich in the grace of God and filled with the love of Christ.

Examples of the Giving of Offerings in Scriptures

Philippians 4:14-19

Verse 14 — *"Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction."*

The apostle was writing from Rome where he was imprisoned. His trial had imposed upon him added sufferings and needs. Offerings from the churches would have lightened his burdens considerably; however, when such offerings were not forthcoming, his need had been supplied by the Lord in other ways, and he had learned in whatever state he found himself to be content. He had spiritual grace and resources sufficient to make him adequate for whatever trials came to him. But at least the Philippians sent an offering to him by Epaphroditus, their leader.

Verses 15, 16 — *"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."*

The church at Philippi had the reputation of being generous and thoughtful. No people had assisted Paul and his companions so much or so frequently as had the members of the first Christian church on the continent of Europe. Paul had gone to Philippi in response to the beckoning of the Macedonian man who appeared to Paul in a vision. The missionaries were not treated hospitably by the city leaders, but they were profoundly appreciated by the nucleus of believers who found Christ through their ministry. The Philippian believers seemed to be trying to make up to Paul his sufferings at the hands of their city officials. Considering the world's hostility to evangelical Christianity, true believers do well to assist one another and to care well for those servants of God who forsake all to serve the cause of the gospel.

Verse 17 — *"Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account."*

Paul was not a seeker after gifts. He did not permit himself to become dependent upon the gifts of men. He often worked with his own hands, but when this was not possible, he fixed his trust in the Lord as the provider. However, he realized, at the same time, that it was good for the believers to support the gospel, and that he was actually depriving them of an opportunity for blessing when he supported himself by his trade of tentmaking. He could have done without the offering of the Philippian church because he had no great esteem of material things and his faith in God was great, but he rejoiced in the grace and generosity of the senders, because he knew the blessing and reward that would come to them. Giving benefits the giver as much as it benefits the receiver.

Verse 18 — *“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”*

It would be foolish to say that Paul did not enjoy the gift for the comfort it brought to him in his imprisonment. The apostle was no hermit and attached no virtue to unnecessary suffering. He was as capable of enjoying good things as anyone else, but his deep joy over the remembrance brought by Epaphroditus was prompted by the manifestation of love and Christian thoughtfulness. Here was a proof that the church loved him and likewise a proof that it loved God. God counts all help rendered to His servants or to the needy as rendered directly to Himself.

Verse 19 — *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★Whose needs does God promise to supply?

We often take this promise to be general and equally applicable to all believers. The fulfillment of this promise to supply all one's needs, however, is conditional. The apostle was writing to a people who had given an offering to supply his pressing needs. He was assuring them that God would supply, in turn, their needs. We have the promise that our needs will be supplied only if we are generous in the supply of the needs of God's servants and of God's cause. On the other hand, if we neglect the work of missions, and of evangelism, and overlook the needs of God's servants; if we shut our hearts to the appeal of the poor and the suffering, then we have no certain assurance that God will supply our needs. Let us remember that one cannot impoverish himself giving to God.

2 Corinthians 8

Verses 1, 2 — *“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of*

Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”

As the Macedonian church of Philippi had been most prompt and regular in the supply of Paul's needs, so too had this church been quick to discern the needs of the poor. Even while Paul was laboring in Corinth to establish the church, he had been supported, in addition to that which came from the pursuit of his trade, more by the Macedonians than by the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:7-9). Paul is now gathering an offering for the poor in Jerusalem. In order to stir up the Corinthians who were slow to bear their share of the burden, he calls attention to the voluntary generosity of the Macedonians with the hope that the example of the latter will stir the Corinthian church to cheerful giving. He attributes the spontaneous giving on the part of these churches to the grace of God which was operating among them. Beyond question, cheerful giving is a divine grace, a mark of true hospitality. The apostle is hopeful of an outpouring of this grace upon the church to which he is writing.

The writer makes clear that the more abundant giving of the Philippians was not to be attributed to their greater material wealth. In fact, the Macedonian churches were poor and at this time were passing through a trial of poverty. How much they gave is not important; that which was praiseworthy was the fact that they gave when, in the natural, they could afford to give nothing. The true church has always been supported more by the poor than by the rich. The Corinthians were much more prosperous, but much less unselfish.

Verses 3, 4 — *“For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of ministering to the saints.”*

It was not necessary to urge the Macedonians to give. They urged their offering upon Paul, giving more than they could afford; yet they had already learned that God could supply all their needs. They could not be happy knowing that the less fortunate saints at Jerusalem were in dire need. When one member suffers, the whole body suffers. Blessed are they who have concern for the health of the whole body.

Verse 5 — *“And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”*

This is a remarkable statement. The greatest gift to God one can make is that of his own self. It is a small thing for those who have given themselves to God to give of their means. Paul hoped for an offering for the poor, but they exceeded his expectations, surrendering themselves and the sum total of their possessions, which were meager, unto Paul and unto the Lord. Here, indeed, is the grace of God. (See Romans 12:1, 2.)

Verse 7 — *“Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.”*

The Corinthians prided themselves in the possession of every spiritual gift. Their founder now exhorts them to seek also the grace of giving. This makes one wonder how effective the gifts of the Spirit can be, or how pleasing to God, if those who exercise them are selfish and lacking in that grace of sharing that springs from divine love. Though I have all gifts . . . and have not love!

Verse 9 — *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”*

This is one of the great verses of the Bible. Who can read this passage and then withhold anything from God. For our enrichment, Christ impoverished Himself. The example of the Macedonians should have moved them to give to such a worthy cause, but if that was not sufficient, then surely the precedent set by our blessed Lord in becoming poor for our sake should quicken the grace of giving in every heart. *“Let this mind be in you, that was also in Christ Jesus.”* (See Philippians 2:5-8.) Cheerful givers are those who possess the grace of the Lord Jesus. May God grant to a greater number of us the gift (grace) of giving.

Sometimes we express a willingness to share in the support of Christ's cause, but that professed willingness never quite becomes action. We often are hearers of the Word more than doers of it. God is pleased to find a willing heart, and when the will is present it renders the gift acceptable even though it may be very small. It is not the size of the gift but the depth of the willingness that pleases God; but even willingness falls short when there is no action. The occasions for giving are a multitude; if there is willingness in our hearts of a genuine character, it will break out into action at the moving of the Spirit.

Our Giving

Our Model of Giving

The most sublime example of giving ever seen was that set before us by our blessed Lord when in His matchless condescension He robbed heaven and impoverished Himself, in respect to heavenly glory, in order to enrich fallen humanity. (See 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-9; John 10:11.) As Christ is our example in all things, so He is in respect to giving, and, perhaps, in giving more than in any other respect, for the greatest achievement of Christ was His redemption of sinful man through incarnation, humiliation, complete self-sacrifice and death. The very soul of Christianity, therefore, is self-sacrifice; not mere self-sacrifice, as such, but the giving of one's self for the sake of others. It must be invariably true that he who saves his life shall lose it; and he who loses his life for Christ and for others shall save and glorify it.

Unfortunately the world does not follow Christ's example. The unconverted world is a grasping, selfish world in which wealth and success are the goals most highly esteemed. Even more unfortunate is the fact that too many Christians are thoughtlessly following the pattern of the world more than that given us by the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, finding similar tendencies, warned, *“Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* Again he said, *“Let this*

mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.” To have the mind of Christ is to be minded to serve, to give, and to bless, more than to grasp and receive. A Christian need not be a pauper, but he distinguishes himself as a follower of Christ by manifesting that it is more blessed for him to give than to receive. Someone has aptly said that our riches in heaven will consist of what we have given away.

The Grace of Giving

Cheerful giving is more than a mere human generosity. It is a divine gift. It flows out of a life into which has been poured a large measure of true spirituality. In fact, may we not say that divine grace is another way of speaking of genuine spirituality. If faith and love are gifts of God, is not the grace of cheerful sharing a gift of God also? The Macedonian churches had received a large measure of the grace of God and, as a result, they took the initiative in aiding the poor in Jerusalem in spite of the fact that they were quite poor themselves and notwithstanding the further fact that the poor they were eager to aid were of another race. Here the “grace” of God overcame natural tendencies to self-interest and to racial prejudice. They did not begin to plead that “charity begins at home;” as many do when they are called upon to contribute to foreign missions, relief, or to any cause beyond the locality. One does not display such lack of self-interest without divine grace, without the flesh having been mortified by the Spirit.

That which was outstanding about the giving of the Macedonians was their voluntary insistence on giving. They demanded the privilege of participating in the offering. Paul had a mind to exempt those churches because of the poverty of their area. He felt hesitant to appeal to them, feeling that they themselves needed help. But such exemption they would have considered a deprivation of privilege. They were poor in the world's goods, but rich in virtues that money cannot buy. Though lacking material things, they were not looking for help, but the opportunity to share their little with any who had less. They were poor in silver, gold and land, but they were rich in everything else but the gold that perisheth.

In a time when men measure everything in the terms of dollars and cents and when the universal desire is “gain,” there is a need for more of the manifestation of a genuine spirituality that manifests itself in the grace of sharing, the bigness of generosity, and in the concern for the well-being of others. How futile and foolish it is to heap up treasures on earth for the rust to corrupt, for thieves to steal, and for atomic explosions to dissolve, when the true riches that can stand the test of fire are the riches of grace, of character, of love and of service. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the “things” that he possesseth, but in the abundance of the grace of God.

The Highest Form of Giving

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★What is the highest form of giving? Why?

The noblest giving is that of giving one's self. In fact, one's giving is of little merit until he has first given himself. The giving of money, while it helps to further the cause of Christ regardless of the motive behind it, is not always prompted by divine grace. One may give because he wishes to be esteemed by men. Some give because they are lacking in other talents and find giving substantial sums a means of gaining favor or praise. Others give in order not to be outdone by fellow-members. Yet others, while not spontaneously generous, are provoked to giving by strong appeals. Finally there are many who give out of a sense of duty without doing so cheerfully. These last make up the large body of givers, who like those who pay taxes contribute to the spread of the gospel because it is the dutiful thing to do; and we are bound to admire such persons for their sense of responsibility. However, those whose giving springs from a rich possession of divine grace give freely and cheerfully of their means, even recklessly, because they have first given themselves to God. The giving of a million dollars would be a small gift in comparison to that represented by the gift of one's self. Unfortunately, some persons give of their means only

because they find it easier to give their silver than to give themselves. When God was moved to benefit the human race, He did not give "something"; He rather gave us "Somebody." God's gift to the world was that of His only begotten Son, a drop of whose precious blood is worth more than the accumulated riches of the material world. Likewise, a human life is worth more to God than anything. A man is a loser who gains the whole world at the loss of his eternal soul. One who gives himself to God and to His sacred cause gives more than he would, could he give the world. Yet he who first gives himself to God considers it a delightful privilege to give anything he possesses for the extension of God's kingdom. When God possesses the man, He also possesses his means.

The Spirituality of Giving

All true believers have some desire to be spiritual; that is, to have spiritual fruits, gifts, and capacities; yet in the quest for enduements, we often overlook the grace of giving. Paul had to remind the Corinthians that, while they had realized the operation of all the gifts, such as faith, utterance and knowledge of deep mysteries, they had fallen behind in the grace of giving. They understood all mysteries, but having not love as they ought, their spiritual gifts were failing to bring the results they were intended to produce. It is hardly reasonable to covet the moving of mountains when we cannot be moved to give as we should give to the eternal cause of Christ. When the apostle urges us to grow in "grace" and the knowledge of the Lord, he seems to say that one ought to have first the grace that manifests itself in divine love as a steppingstone to the knowledge of the Lord. May God grant us indeed the gift of "giving."

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Everyone should complete the following statement individually:

"As a result of what I have learned in this lesson, the Lord is speaking to my heart the following things in regard to my personal giving of tithes and offerings . . ."

You may want to provide opportunity for them to share those things that they have written with at least one other person in class and then encourage them to remember each other in prayer throughout the next week as they put the things they have learned into practice.

If you are working alone, you may complete the statement written above on a separate piece of paper for your personal reference and to serve as a reminder to you of the things the Lord is teaching you in regard to tithes and offerings.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. Does God's cause need money? Why or why not? _____

2. Do we tithe to men or to God? Is it possible to rob God? _____

3. Why should we tithe? _____

4. Where and to whom are tithes to go? _____

5. How is the giving of an offering a greater mark of generosity than the payment of tithes? _____

6. Whose need does God promise to supply? _____

7. What is the highest form of giving? Why? _____

MISSIONS

AIM: To emphasize that the aim of Christianity is missions, of which God recognizes no national boundaries. To understand the motive, aims, power for, hindrances to, and rewards of missions.

KEY VERSES:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand” (Romans 15:20, 21).

“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Prior to classtime, prepare a large sheet of butcher paper by writing at the top in large letters “MISSIONS IS . . .” Also, provide markers or crayons. As the students come into class have them write on the butcher paper what they think missions is or what they think of when they hear the word “missions”.

If you are working alone, write down all that comes to mind when you hear the word “missions”. You may do this on the back of the Individual Worksheet provided at the end of this lesson.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MISSIONS

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★ *Why must the church be a missionary church?*

Christianity is a missionary enterprise. He who came to seek and to save the lost, has commanded all His followers to seek the lost. Every believer has a sacred mission and his spiritual profundity depends upon his continued consciousness of a sense of responsibility to fulfill that mission. A distinction is usually made between the regular work of the church and that of foreign missions, as if they were separate aims. It must be doubted that such a distinction is scriptural. The aim of Christianity is missions, whether home or foreign. It is the purpose of every local church, as soon as it is solidly founded, to send out workers for the unsaved. It is for the Holy Spirit to direct the workers to places far or near but the church, in order to serve its intended purpose, must send its heralds out. God recognizes no national boundaries. “Go ye into all the world” is Christ’s irrevocable command. When a church no longer seeks the lost, both near and far, it has outlived its usefulness. When a church relegates missions to a secondary position, it relegates, at the same time, the will of Christ to a position of less importance than that of its own will. A

church’s spirituality depends upon its soul winning burden. The Spirit little blesses a church without a vision for the salvation of the world.

MISSIONS PORTRAYED IN SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:8

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*For what purpose was the Spirit given on the day of Pentecost?*

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

The power of the Church is the power of the Holy Spirit; power such as was bestowed on the day of Pentecost; power that made the difference between a fearful church behind closed doors and a missionary church undaunted by any form of opposition or persecution. The power of the Church is that promised by Christ as recorded by Luke in Acts 1:8. It is power to be witnesses; power to lead men to Christ. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is divine enablement, but an enablement for soul

winning. The abiding presence of the blessed Third Person empowers the believer and the Church in many ways, but, according to the words of Jesus, the principal reason for the Spirit's descent was that of making of the Church a missionary enterprise beginning in Jerusalem and Judea and spreading to Samaria and ultimately to the uttermost part of the earth. Until that uttermost part is reached by the gospel, the very first business of Spirit-filled people will be that of witnessing to the unevangelized.

John 10:15, 16

"As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Even before His ascension Jesus was deeply concerned for His sheep who were without a fold. The Master looked ahead to a fold composed of all peoples, races, and tongues under one Good Shepherd. Even Caiaphas, the high priest, speaking by knowledge of prophecy and by the inspiration of his office, said of Jesus, "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:50-52). Our Lord died for all men, in order that a holy people for His name's sake might be taken out of every nation. We who know Him are commanded to bear the news of His redemption to the sheep without a fold.

Jesus said, according to John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." By this Jesus did not mean that all men would be saved, but that all who were to be His sheep would hear the Shepherd's voice and follow Him. The "Acts of the Apostles" reveals the manner by which the sheep scattered abroad are to hear the voice. The Lord speaks through us to the heathen world. Observe the Lord's dealing with Paul who was one of the greatest missionaries, "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10). The Lord had many sheep in Corinth who were to follow the Good Shepherd and Paul was the agent by which the voice of the Shepherd was heard among them. Let us so live in communion with the Good Shepherd that He may be able always to direct us to some of His lost sheep who are strayed.

Matthew 8:11

"And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

Here is a clear prophecy, quite contrary to Jewish expectation, that the Gentiles from the east and the west would be admitted by faith into the kingdom of God. God

is sending us to the east and to the west in search of His people who are yet to sit down with Abraham at the heavenly banqueting table. But if they are to come from the east and west, we must go to the east and west.

Acts 13:2-4

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."

As soon as the church at Antioch became well established, the Spirit began directing the leaders to set apart men for the work of missions. If missionary concern is diminished among us, it is obviously caused by a coldness because of which the Spirit cannot direct us. When we are given to prayer and to self-denial, the Holy Ghost will direct us to the work of seeking the lost. To be spiritual, a church must be able to see beyond its own local borders.

Romans 1:14-16

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★Why are believers debtors to the unsaved? Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel?

"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Paul was a debtor to preach; he was ready to preach, and he was not ashamed to preach the glorious gospel of Christ. Every one of us who are recipients of the redemptive grace of God is indebted to those who are yet unevangelized. Any Christian who is unconcerned for the salvation of others is ungrateful for the effort made by the person by means of whose witness he himself was converted. "Saved to serve" should be the slogan of every Christian. Not only ought we to feel our obligation to others, but we ought to be, at all times, ready to go or to witness, as the Spirit directs. Surely no one can be ashamed of that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation.

Acts 16:9, 10

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."

It has been suggested that the man of Macedonia of Paul's vision was the Philippian jailor. Of his identity we can never know certainly; but may there not be a "man of Macedonia" calling to all of us pleading that we "come over" with divine help? The man of the vision represents in a sense the mass of lost sheep who wait for the good news of salvation, although, at present, they are not aware of the significance of the deep yearning within their souls.

Romans 15:20, 21

"Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand."

How much better it would be for the church and for the world of lost sheep, if all believers were more eager not to build on another man's foundation. Of course, some are called to lay foundations and others to build upon those foundations, but too many are trying futilely to build on buildings where the workers are in one another's way. The world still has great areas where no foundation has yet been laid; may God raise up more like Paul who are burdened to preach the gospel where Christ is not named.

THE MOTIVES FOR MISSIONS

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★What should be the sincere motives of those going as missionaries or giving to missions in other ways?

For all things that human beings do, they have a motive or motives. The explanations that we give to account for our actions are not always the true motives. It is not necessarily a fact that we purposely conceal our true motives, nor that we purposely invent fictitious explanations. The real fact is that we seldom understand perfectly our motives due to their complexity. When we explain our motives to others, we subconsciously give the explanations that put us in the best light. In the light of these facts, let us be perfectly honest with ourselves and perfectly objective in the study of our motives in missionary endeavor and support.

Before considering the most worthy motives, let us note some of the less worthy motives which are sometimes behind missionary work. The missionary himself may go to another land partly out of a desire for adventure, travel, new experience, or for the praise that comes to those who make unusual sacrifices. These motives alone, however, will not sustain a missionary for a long period of time under severe trials. Those who give to or support missions in other ways may often be motivated by a spirit of competition, desire for praise, or the urge to

compensate for sins or negligence by the offering of a gift to God's cause. Those who support missions for these reasons alone, needless to say, cannot be counted upon to give, pray or work consistently and cheerfully. Even the most earnest and sincere may be motivated partly by the above mentioned considerations; but in laying a permanent foundation for the motivation of our people to support foreign missions, we ought to avoid appealing to less worthy impulses. Consistent and enduring work in and support of world evangelization must arise from truly divine urgings.

Our men and women who go as missionaries should respond to their responsibilities from a desire to do the will of God perfectly, the desire to obey the Lord in all things, the desire to do that which the Word of God enjoins. In other words, they should love God so deeply and sincerely that their only passion is that of pleasing Him who gave Himself a ransom for many.

However, inasmuch as he who loves God, also loves his neighbor as he loves himself, he is deeply concerned for the well-being of others. The believer ought to be so grateful for his own redemption and conversion that he will yearn to communicate the blessings to another. Inasmuch as every man's conversion was effected through some human instrumentality, each ought to feel that he is, in turn, a debtor to others who are yet unconverted, even to the Lord's potential fold beyond the seas. The more completely benighted and ignorant of the gospel men are, so much the more Christians ought to feel responsible to them to enlighten them. Such purely divine motives as these kept Judson in Burma, Morrison in China, Williams in the South Seas, and C.T. Studd in China, India and Africa. Only such God given urging has kept millions of dollars flowing into the cause of missions generation after generation.

THE AIMS OF MISSIONS

The aim of missions is that of leading men to Christ and nurturing them to a stable Christian experience so that each in turn may win his neighbor. It is especially the aim of missionary work to carry the gospel to those who have not yet heard the story, or who have not heard it in its true meaning. The work of missions has its immediate aim and its more remote aims.

The immediate aim is to effect conversions, to lead to Christ. To accomplish this is not always as easy as it may sound. Carey in India and Morrison in China labored seven years before seeing a single person converted. Others have labored as much as ten, fifteen, and twenty years before they won one soul to Christ. However, no matter how difficult the winning of the heathen may be, nor how much other more remote aims are being striven for, personal soul winning should always continue to be the principal objective.

Other more remote objectives are the exploration of the country, the building of mission buildings, the establishment of schools, the training of native workers, the building of prestige for Christianity through godly character, the setting up of any institutions that abet evangelization, and the translation of the Scriptures into

the native tongue. This latter is in some cases, of necessity, the first step to be taken. The more remote aims are of vital necessity so that the results of revivals may be made permanent and our support of missions should be sufficiently generous to make possible the realization of these objectives. Materialistic, gadget minded America gives very little, comparatively, to this, the greatest cause of time and eternity. When our coveted gadgets have long since perished, we shall bewail the fact that we did so little to rescue the perishing.

THE POWER FOR MISSIONS

The great incomparable work of world evangelization has been possible only through divine power. The men and women who have borne the gospel to the ends of the earth and whose lives are among the most noteworthy of history have been, in most cases, very ordinary persons. Their superhuman achievements have been possible only because they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. The disciples of our Lord were commanded to go into all the world to make men Christ's disciples, but they were told to tarry first until they were endued with power from on high. Now the Lord expressly explained that the power of the Holy Ghost would be given in order that His followers might be witnesses to the ends of the earth. Every one who witnesses needs the Spirit's power and may receive it. Many deny that this Pentecostal power to witness is still available, but we who teach, as one of our cardinal doctrines, that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is still being poured out upon us, ought to be among the most zealous and efficient witnesses. The Pentecostal experience is of little value to us unless our first business is witnessing both near and far.

THE HINDRANCES OF MISSIONS

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*What are some of the hindrances to missionary success? In what two categories could these be placed?*

There are two classes of hindrances to missionary success, or: those without and those within. External obstacles are numerous. Among them are the opposition of foreign governments, the unbelief of pagan peoples, the difficulty of tropical and frigid climates, and the opposition of Satan. These we cannot avoid, but by God's help they can be overcome. The more serious hindrances are those within the church and within our hearts such as indifference, spiritual laxity, selfishness, lack of faith, prayerlessness, ignorance of the Bible, materialism, nearsightedness, prejudice, ingratitude, fatalism, and lack of a burden for souls. A whole treatise could be written on these hindrances alone, but it suffices, perhaps, to remark that God blesses most the local church that has a world-wide vision and benefits most the individual whose concern is for others. God keeps most securely the man who is his brother's keeper. He who loses his life shall save it.

THE REWARDS OF MISSIONS

Perhaps the greatest reward of all is the satisfaction of knowing that we have done well the will of God. No man can be truly happy who is aware of having neglected to do what was his duty. No doubt our greatest joy on the day of our glorious entrance into life will be that of having sheaves to lay at the Master's feet. Paul's most satisfying testimony was that recorded in 2 Timothy 4, in which he said, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.*" He had kept the faith because he had communicated the faith. Whatever may be the rewards implied by the figure of "crowns," we may be sure that the best are reserved for the men and women who have left all to carry the news to the lost and to those who have given their means, like C.T. Studd, to the furtherance of world evangelization. Invest now for eternity.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups. Ask each group to plan a special missions project to be completed by their group. Listed below are some suggestions, or they may create their own.

Ideas for Projects

1. Each member of the group sign up for a particular time to pray for specific missions' needs each day throughout the week. While in the group, discuss what needs each member will be remembering in prayer.
2. Become missionaries to your community by scheduling a day of witnessing.
3. Write letters of encouragement to a missionary family.
4. Plan a project to raise a special offering for Missions International.
5. Provide a food basket for a needy family in your area, and use the opportunity to share Jesus with them.

*Note to teacher: It is recommended that you contact Foursquare Missions International ahead of time to obtain information about Foursquare missionaries, special missions' projects or needs. (Foursquare Missions International, 1100 Glendale Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026 (213) 484-1100). This information may prove helpful to the groups as they plan their projects.

If you are working alone, ask the Lord to give you a burden for a particular country. Then contact Missions International at the address above and ask them to send any information they have on that country, the missionaries that are laboring there, the needs of the people and nation, etc. Make a special prayer list from the information you have gathered that can be posted somewhere to remind you to pray daily for missions in that country.

MISSIONS

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. *Why must the church be a missionary church?* _____

2. *For what purpose was the Spirit given on the day of Pentecost?* _____

3. *Why are believers debtors to the unsaved? Why was Paul not ashamed of the Gospel?* _____

4. *What should be the sincere motives of those going as missionaries or giving to missions in other ways?* _____

5. *What are some of the hindrances to missionary success? In what two categories could these be placed?* _____

EVANGELISM

AIM: To cause believers to understand that evangelism is not only the first business of the church, but that every truly redeemed person has a duty to the unevangelized. To motivate each student to seriously consider his personal place in the spreading of the gospel message to the world.

KEY VERSES:

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth” (John 4:35-37).

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:18-20).

OPENING ACTIVITY: Ask everyone to reflect for a few minutes on their own salvation experience and the importance of evangelism in their decision to follow Christ. Have them to recall those people who influenced their decision and cared enough about them to share the gospel with them.

Now, ask them to write a letter to that person(s) expressing their appreciation for their part in leading them to Christ. Or, they may write a poem or paragraph of praise to God for that person's influence on their life.

If you are working alone, simply follow the instructions above, applying them to yourself.

INTRODUCTION

Evangelism is the first business of the church. To evangelize means literally to make aware of the good news of God's plan of salvation. In the Greek testament the words "evangelize" and "gospel" have the same root. To evangelize is to gospelize. The gospel is God's good news to men; it is God's propaganda. Before the church can perform any of its functions, it must first convert men to the Christian way. Evangelism is not the only work of the church, but it is the work that has the highest priority. A world of lost men is dying for want of God's redeeming plan and power. It is the truth of God that sets men free, but how shall they hear the truth without a preacher? As long as there are those who are yet unsaved, unliberated, and uninformed, evangelism will be urgent. No matter how great a work a church may be doing for the Christian family in a community, it is not completely fulfilling its divinely ordained mission unless it is reaching the uninformed, the unchurched, the unredeemed. Every spiritual decline in history has been marked by a decline in the church's burden for the salvation of lost men. Likewise every great revival and spiritual awakening has manifested itself in a renewed activity in evangelization. Though there are thousands of churches in our land, the world is still largely

unevangelized. The constant resurgence of warfare, greed and hatred demonstrate the unchristian condition of the world. Perhaps more than ever the church needs to "go all out" for the spreading of the gospel.

THE WORK OF EVANGELISM COMMANDED AND EXPLAINED IN SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 3:17-21

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★Paraphrase Ezekiel 3:17-21.

Verses 17 - 19

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not

warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Here the Lord likens the prophet to the watchman or sentinel whose responsibility is that of warning the city of approaching dangers. The sentinel has no power in himself to save the city from the danger; but his function is highly important, because he keeps the people informed of the location and nature of impending perils so that they may save themselves. Failure to warn of coming danger is a capital offense for a watchman; however, if he performs his duty faithfully, he is guiltless even though the people do not take heed and are overthrown.

The true prophet is God's watchman and sentinel. He walks close enough to God to sense impending spiritual danger and he is sensitively aware of the ever present perils. When Israel hearkened to the prophets, the nation prospered and every danger was averted; but when the people scoffed at the prophets and paid no heed to their prophecies, enemies overran the land and the people suffered humiliation, slavery, and death. Usually the prophets were much more faithful to God than were the priests and kings. But when the prophets prophesied falsely for gain, or were asleep at the post, the land fell indeed into a lamentable state. When the prophet failed to warn of the consequences of sin and idolatry or to warn of advancing danger that led to disaster, the blood of the people was upon the hands of the faithless prophet.

It is the responsibility of the church to provide the prophetic voice and the evangelistic ministry to warn of sin and danger, to point out the remedy for sin, greed, hate and lust, and to guide the penitent to the way of life. The church will not save the world, nor avert the death of the stubborn unbeliever, but the church will succeed, if it is faithful to its first business, in revealing the dangers and in guiding the responsive into the eternal body of Christ. The church will not be guilty for the perdition of the unrepentant masses, provided it does all within its power to bear the news and the warning to all the unevangelized; but if, on the other hand, the church concerns itself only with sectarian interests and material values, while the world perishes in darkness, the ministers and prophets will stand before God with bloody hands.

Verses 20-21

"Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou has not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."

The evangelistic ministry is principally directed to the unconverted, the irreligious, the spiritually ignorant; however, it indirectly exercises a beneficial effect upon those who already believe. One is not altogether beyond danger because he is a Christian. The righteous man has at his disposal the mighty keeping power of God to sustain him in times of testing and strain, but if he is careless and fails to apply the resources at his disposal, he may fall again into sin. It is the responsibility of the pulpit to warn both the sinner and the saint of the dangers of sin, of prayerlessness, of materialism, of greed, of selfishness, of carnality. An evangelistic campaign has the double effect of winning the unsaved to Christ and of establishing more firmly in the way of righteousness those who already follow Christ.

Daniel 12:3

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

The clause "*they that be wise*" should read "they that make wise." Blessed is he who makes men wise in the things of the Lord. The greatest ministry open to a man is that of turning men from sin to righteousness. Such will shine forever before the throne of God.

2 Timothy 4:1-2

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Paul urges upon Timothy the great responsibility he had to warn, rebuke, exhort, and to preach the Word to all men in all seasons. If such admonition was needed to stimulate the faithful Timothy, it is doubly needed today. The church must go all out to stem the tide of sin and unbelief. With more than half of our youth completely outside the influence of Christianity, there can be no seasons for labor. We must work unceasingly and untiringly for the conversion of our future generation.

John 4:35-37

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth."

Not only are the fields white unto harvest, they are now in danger of the frosts of winter. It is later than many think. But early or late, the fields await the reaper. This entire age between the two advents of Christ is a time of reaping. This is the age of opportunity both for the individual and for the evangelist. There will be no second chance after death. The millions who are dying are passing to their eternal destiny. Could their destiny have been different had the reapers of God been more faithful to their responsibility? About the past we can

now do nothing, but what are we going to do about winning those whose day of opportunity has not passed? Our greatest danger is that of losing our sense of responsibility for the salvation of the lost.

Matthew 9:36-38

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into His harvest.”

The unconverted world is like a flock of sheep having no shepherd. The tragedy is the wandering sheep of the world tend to follow false shepherds who lead them to their destruction. If we do not bring men to follow Christ, they will eventually come under the influence of a deceiver and exploiter.

If we lament the fact that we have so few opportunities to reap the harvest, let us pray earnestly that God will send forth laborers into the fields. However, God may command us to answer our own prayers. As long as anyone has an unconverted neighbor, fellow workman, or fellow student, he is responsible to that person as an evangelist. Not all of us can be evangelists of the masses, but there are countless ways we can back the reaping efforts of God's duly appointed evangelists. What we can do, we are obligated to do. God help us all to catch the vision and bear the burden!

· THE NATURE OF EVANGELISM

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★What is “evangelism”?

Evangelism is the communication of the good news of salvation with the object of soul winning. To evangelize is to “gospelize.” Gospel comes from two old English words “good” and “spell” (which meant “story”). This English word is quite a literal translation of the Greek word “evangelion” which is likewise composed of two words, “en” which means “good” or “well,” and “angelion” which means “message.” Evangelism, then, is the publishing of the glad message or good news of Christ's consummate work of redemption and its gracious offer to all men on the basis of their faith in and acceptance of that finished work. Paul defined the gospel quite adequately in Romans 1:16, when he said, *“I am not ashamed of the glad-message, for it is the enablement of God unto salvation for all who are believing, for the Jews first and also for the Greek. For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is unveiled from faith unto faith, even as it is written, ‘The righteous one out of his faith shall live’ ”* (Literal Translation).

The gospel is the means by which men are born into the kingdom of God. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 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, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”* (Romans 10:13-15). When the majority of believers live sufficiently consecrated lives to be sent of God as heralds to their neighbors, how fortunate is their community. Observe Paul's commendation of the Thessalonian Christians: *“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith Godward is spread abroad.”* Such communication of the good news is the method God has ordained for the salvation of the world.

THE URGENCY OF EVANGELISM

The urgency of evangelism stems from the utterly fallen condition of the human race and the hopelessness of man apart from Christ. Because man's eternal life depends upon his knowledge of and acceptance of Christ's redemptive work, the world-wide dissemination of the message of redemption is of highest priority. If it is true that “they shall not call upon Him of whom they have not heard,” then how urgent it is that the church make possible the hearing of the gospel message in every inhabited spot on the earth! Unless a man hears and believes in the gospel of Christ, he is an eternally lost soul. There can be no doubt that this is the teaching of the Scriptures.

If we believe this teaching of the Word that man's eternal destiny depends upon his obedience or disobedience of the gospel during his earthly life, we must surely be impressed with our responsibility to evangelize. If anyone perishes in darkness whom we might have enlightened, can we be guiltless before God? If others are ignorant of the truth, and we are in possession of redeeming truth, can we be silent?

Now, if we come to believe that man is not really sinful by nature, that he is not, after all, eternally lost, that he will have another chance after death, that death is only annihilation, or that all men will finally be restored to heavenly bliss, then evangelism becomes less urgent or even of little importance.

If modernism, humanism, and liberalism are the true point of view, evangelism is not particularly urgent; but if historic evangelical faith is the true viewpoint, evangelism is of the utmost urgency. We identify ourselves with the fundamental, historic, Christian position; we believe implicitly in the inspiration of the Scriptures; we believe, indeed, that he who believeth shall be saved and that he who believeth not shall be condemned; but can we not see that failure to evangelize, that failure to have a deep passion for souls is flagrantly inconsistent with our doctrinal position? If we believe, we must evangelize.

THE HINDRANCES OF EVANGELISM

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*What are four hindrances of evangelism? Give examples.*

Paul said to the Corinthians, *"If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power: but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 9:12). An exaggerated concern for material reward may hinder the gospel. Every pastor, missionary, evangelist, and full time Christian worker have the perfect right to be supported by those who benefit from their ministry. A preacher should never need to urge his people to care for his needs; this they should do voluntarily and adequately; but when the preacher betrays an undue concern for material reward, when he puts reward ahead of his first duty to Christ, when he puts a price on his ministry, when he covets a life of ease inconsistent with the example of Christ and the apostles, he hinders to some extent the effectiveness of his ministry of evangelism. Tragically, evangelism has suffered in prestige because of the exaggerated materialism of some evangelists. Fortunately there are very many to whom this observation does not apply.

Exaggerated doctrinal prejudice may also hinder the gospel. *"Not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully . . ."* (2 Corinthians 4:2). Our duty is to preach Christ and to make His redemptive work prominent. To put minor doctrines ahead of the central message, or to harp on pet doctrines is to handle the Word deceitfully. Evangelism has often been hindered by doctrinal hair-splitting.

Undue projection of one's own personality into gospel preaching hinders its effect. *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord . . ."* (2 Corinthians 4:5). There is room for but one personality at the center of gospel preaching and that is the personality of the Son of God. We must not preach "I" but "He."

Finally, too much attention to form and to manner of expression at the expense of earnestness and the Spirit's unction may hinder the effectiveness of evangelism. Beauty and exactness of expression are not by this discouraged. If good form comes naturally, it may enhance one's preaching or witnessing, but form alone, no matter how fine it may be, is inadequate. Paul, a preacher of which there has been no greater, said, *"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake"* (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

THE EFFECT OF EVANGELISM

One of the results of gospel preaching is that men are given a sure hope. *"If in this life only we have hope . . . we*

are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). The truth of the gospel makes life significant. It shows men that this life is but a dressing room where one readies himself for a fuller life. Evangelism dispels the gloom of death. It reveals the fact that sin and selfishness are not the victors over the human spirit; that there exists that which cleanses from all sin. It was the fact that Christianity offered a glorious hope that made its advance so irresistible in the first three centuries.

Furthermore evangelization results in the transformation of character. It results in men being made new creatures in Christ Jesus. The continued preaching of the gospel in a community has never failed to effect the transformation of some of the vilest sinners into upright and godly men and women.

But perhaps the most important effect of the gospel is that it unites men with God, forming on earth an ever growing body of Christ. Evangelism is making ready a people for the eternal fellowship in heaven.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Great Commission In the Four Gospels

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*In how many gospels is the great commission mentioned? What is each version?*

The great commission of Jesus is the very heart of evangelism. Without it evangelism would lack urgency, with it no true believer can be at ease who is not a soul winner. As long as there are any nations that are unevangelized or any creatures who have not heard the glad message of redemption, this great mandate will continue to echo in the consciences of all Christians.

The great importance of this commission is evidenced by the fact that every one of the writers of the four gospels has recorded it, and though each has phrased it a bit differently to suit the purpose and theme of his gospel, the commission itself is substantially the same in each narrative. No doubt the actual commission was longer than the translations given by any of the evangelists, and it is quite possible that Jesus may have repeated it on several occasions, wording it a bit differently on each occasion. At any rate, when we put the four accounts together, we have a quite full and detailed recording of those momentous and historic words of Jesus which have had such a powerful and formative effect upon the subsequent history of the world. No single mandate in all history has had such a powerful effect upon human affairs as that voiced by Jesus to His eleven humble disciples and through them to all Christendom.

Verse 18 — *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”*

These are the words of the risen Christ, the triumphant Redeemer who has been given a name above every name, sovereignty over the church, and all power in heaven and on earth. The hands that were fastened to the Roman cross now hold the sceptre of power; the mouth that was before the executioners dumb now speaks with infinite authority; the brow that was crowned with thorns in humility now wears the diadem of the universe. He who seemed helpless on the scaffold now has power to grant to His disciples whatsoever they may ask in His name and according to His will, in faith believing. He whom the Jews rejected is now to be presented to all nations and men for acceptance, and as many as receive Him, to them He gives the power to become the children of God.

Verse 19 — *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*

This “therefore” has great meaning. The command to teach all nations is the only logical result of His being invested with all power and authority in the redemption of mankind. If to someone there has been delegated infinite sovereignty in the salvation of souls, then all the world must be informed of it. If the truth of God has been committed to one who is the incarnate Son of God, then all men everywhere must be taught His truth and be made His disciples. In view of the power and divine personality of the risen Christ, to herald His redeeming message is the highest calling to which any man may devote himself.

Here *“teach all nations”* means literally “make disciples of all nations.” It is not the duty of the church, according to the great commission, merely to teach men religion or Bible doctrines, but first of all, to make men the disciples of the Lord Himself. It is true of course, that believers need to be indoctrinated and that sound living is related to sound thinking, but our obligation to every unconverted person is, first, to make of him a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, to lead him to accept, love, serve and adore the Christ who is the personal center of our gospel.

When men have become disciples of the Lord, they are then to be baptized in the name of the triune God. The ceremony of baptism does not make them disciples, but is a public testimony of the fact that they have become disciples.

Verse 20 — *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

When men have been made into followers of the risen Christ and have witnessed the same by the ordinance of baptism, they are thereupon to be taught all the deeper truths of the Christian life in order that they may practice all that the Lord has commanded. The Christian life is

more than affiliation or assent to a system of truth; it is definitely a life to be lived in loving obedience to and service of the Lord whose disciples we are. We teach men not only to believe, but to obey. *“Obedience is better than sacrifice.”*

One of the most important clauses of the great commission is the promise of the Lord to be with His heralds at all times and in all places where they carry the good news. Without this promise and this reality of God’s presence, the gospel enterprise would have waned and vanished long ago. The carnal human heart has constantly resisted the truth of the gospel and has motivated men to persecute its heralds. Only an ever present, powerful, divine companion could have kept a steady stream of preachers going forth into a hostile world, and could have protected them from the full fury of Satan. We live today in a world as hostile to Christ as it has ever been at any time; great trials face those who follow the great commission to preach to every creature; but the promise to be with us always is as gloriously real as it ever was; perhaps more real, for the power of His presence is proportionate to the need.

Mark 16:15-18, 20

Verse 15 — *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”*

Mark uses a stronger word than Matthew, yet Matthew’s word “disciple” speaks more plainly of the result of the preaching. Putting the two versions together we get the result — *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel, making all nations be my disciples.”* We are to preach with the aim of making men Christ’s disciples. Here is a different kind of gospel preaching.

Verse 16 — *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

Mark brings out the need of believing as a requisite to salvation. The emphasis is more on the believing than upon the being baptized; however, the latter is important, being a witness of the former. Mark, further, adds the consequence of failure to believe and to become Christ’s disciples, which consequence is condemnation. True gospel preaching presents to men momentous alternatives. Every hearer of the gospel message is placed at the crossroads of destiny.

Verses 17, 18, 20 — *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover . . . And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following. Amen.”*

Great signs of divine power are to accompany gospel preaching. The redeemer of men is also their protector, their healer and their source of divine power. The signs here mentioned, which are the evangelist’s credentials, are not spoken of as if they were to be temporary. This is Mark’s version of the promise *“Lo I am with you always.”*

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

Luke does not make any direct quotation of the Lord's commission but mentions it indirectly. He adds that one theme of the gospel message is to be that it is the means by which sins are remitted. It is indeed good news to the world that God through Christ remits graciously our sins.

Those who are to fulfill the great commission are in need of supernatural power for preaching. This power is supplied through an experience of enduement called the “*promise of the Father.*” This power from on high is actually the fulness of the Holy Spirit which the disciples received on the day of Pentecost. The promise is for all flesh, that all believers may be witnesses of gospel truth.

John 20: 21-22

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

John gives the most brief statement of the mandate, “*Even so send I you.*” The word “apostle” means “sent.” In this sense all believers are apostles; but in the special sense, only the founders of the church were apostles. Every believer should feel a sense of being commissioned. Every one of us is sent somewhere to someone.

The Authority of the Great Commission

The opening words of the great mandate are without parallel. “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” No mere human being in his right mind would speak such words. They could come only from the lips of very God. Even the most holy saint who ever lived could not repeat them without becoming guilty of blasphemy. Not even during His years of ministry had Jesus declared so plainly His deity. Our Lord certainly gave every evidence of His divine person, power, and origin in His mighty works and teachings, but He waited until He had defeated death and hell before He affirmed the full extent of His authority. Now, the power He claims is not mere force or ability, but divine authority. Williams' translation reads, “*Full authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*” God's entire program of evangelization and redemption is under the jurisdiction of the Son of God. Furthermore, whatever resources of heaven are necessary for the accomplishment of the gospel enterprise are freely at the command of the Christ. The great commission is backed by the full force of God's power and authority under the administration of the crucified and risen Lord. He who wrought redemption, purchasing it with His own precious blood, and who is, Himself, the central fact of the glad

message, has been given the authority to commission evangelists and to invest them with adequate power. Needless to say, everyone who has heard the call “*go and tell*” may feel honored, but at the same time soberly responsible to be faithful. Believers have been given a great task, but they are backed by heaven's authority.

THE CONTENT OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

★NOTE to instructor:

Question to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*Explain the content of the great commission.*

The actual commands of the mandate are “teach” (Matthew) and “preach” (Mark). The word “teach” in Matthew's gospel needs some explanation. The Greek word behind it means literally “make disciples.” Rotherham translates, “*Go ye, therefore and disciple all nations.*” Williams renders the verse, “*Go then and make disciples of all nations.*” Matthew uses the verb form of the word for “disciple.” Men are to be made disciples of Jesus by whatever means, whether by teaching, preaching, singing, conversation, example, printed publication or any other means imaginable. The point is that the final aim of the gospel enterprise is not merely the lesson or the sermon, but the actual making of disciples. We may teach the most orthodox lessons and preach the most eloquent sermons, but they fail if they do not make men disciples of Jesus or contribute to that result.

Mark's word is “preach,” but not merely “preach” as some understand it. Believers are not merely to preach religion, or philosophy, or a good life; they are not merely to scold, declaim, subdue, nag, or moralize; they are to “*preach the gospel,*” the “*evangel,*” the “*good news.*” They are to proclaim to the whole creation the glad message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ and His consummate work of redemption. We make men disciples of Christ only by preaching Christ and His finished work.

The word “go” is not actually a direct command, but it is an indirect one. Literally rendered it reads, “*Having gone into the whole world, preach . . .*” It is not enough to merely go somewhere, even if it be to the remotest corner of the earth, unless one preaches the gospel and makes disciples. Unfortunately a considerable amount of gospel activity today consists of “much ado about nothing.” There is sometimes much running to and fro, but little preaching of the glad message and few disciples made. Certainly nothing should be said today to discourage any kind of gospel activity, but, on the other hand, if we are going to engage in evangelism, let us so do it that we may fulfill the great commission: “*Preach the gospel,*” “*Make disciples.*”

The Application of the Great Commission

Bible scholars are quite agreed that the commission was delivered at least on one occasion to the whole body of upward of five hundred brethren in Galilee. (See 1 Corinthians 15:6; Matthew 28:7; Matthew 28:16.) Evidently a meeting had been arranged where He could meet with all His followers, the greater number of whom were in Galilee. When Jesus said to His followers in Luke 24:49, on the occasion of a giving of the same commission, "*Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem,*" He was obviously in Galilee and obviously speaking to more than the eleven, because at least 120 obeyed the command to tarry. It is quite clear that the great mandate to preach the gospel applies to all believers. As long as there remain in God's creation those who are ignorant of the good news of redemption and forgiveness of sin through faith in Christ, it will be the solemn duty of all who have heard the gospel to proclaim it to the unevangelized. All four of the gospel writers have preserved the commission in order that it may be often read and faithfully obeyed by the greatest possible number.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Evangelism is never more successful than it is when every believer is an evangelist. There is a tremendous need today for top ranking evangelists, giants of the pulpit. But their need would not be nearly so urgent were a greater number of laymen evangelists to their neighbors, fellow students, fellow workmen, business associates and to all the unconverted.

Ask each class member to make a list of those they know who have not yet accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord. Have them to place a check mark by those with whom they have shared Christ in the past three months. Encourage them to reflect on those they come in contact with, but with whom they have never shared Christ. This list is to serve as their "prayer and share" list. It should be posted someplace where they will be reminded daily to pray for those on the list, and then to make every effort possible to share Christ with those people, believing God for results.

If you are working alone, make out your "prayer and share" list, following the instructions above.

The Scope of the Great Commission

★NOTE to instructor:

Questions to be answered by class discussion and/or other appropriate method.

★*To whom are we to witness for Christ? What power is needed in order to be an effective witness?*

The Holy Spirit's power is given to enable men to be witnesses in "*Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*" The invitation is to "*whosoever believeth.*" The command is that we preach to every creature. The field of endeavor is all the world. The boundary of the kingdom of God encompasses "*all nations.*" The gospel of Christ is not exclusive, it is truly universal. It knows no distinctions of race, color, sex, or class. Only those are excluded who exclude themselves by unbelief and rejection of Christ. Not all men become the children of God, but all men must hear the message of hope. To this day there remain many who are unevangelized; we still cannot look at a map of the world without thinking soberly of Christ's words, "*Go ye into all the world and preach . . .*"

EVANGELISM

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: If you are studying alone, answer the following questions. You may detach this page and submit it for grading.

GROUP STUDY: It is permissible to remove this page and photo sufficient copies for classroom use, if desired.

1. Paraphrase Ezekiel 3:17-21. _____

2. What is "evangelism"? _____

3. What are four hindrances of evangelism? Give examples. _____

4. In how many gospels is the great commission mentioned? What is each version? _____

5. Explain the content of the great commission. _____

6. To whom are we to witness for Christ? What power is needed in order to be an effective witness? _____
