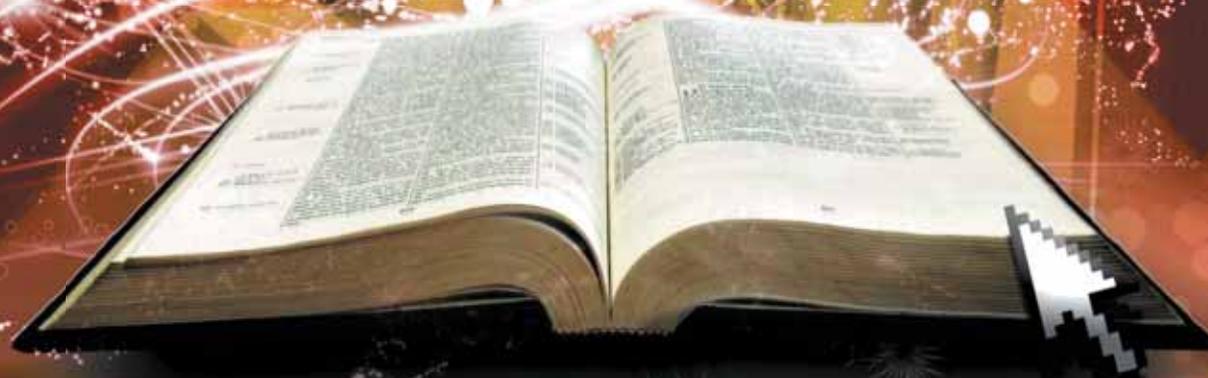


CONNECTING WITH CHRIST AND HIS WORD
Christian Education Lessons for Youth and Young Adults

BOOK 5

click



INCLUDES

52 lessons for the whole year and resources for teaching each lesson for adolescents from 12 - 17 years and youth from 18 - 23 years.

click

"Click here" is the invitation to enter a new world of information and is widely used while browsing internet pages.

In the same way with this CLICK book, we want to help you connect teenagers and young people with Christ and His Word.

This book was prepared by brothers and sisters who have experience in biblical teaching with adolescents and youth. All lessons are based on the Bible, and grouped into six different units that include teachings about Trends, the Fruit of the Spirit, the Messages to the Churches of the book of Revelation, among others.

We want this material to be helpful so that you can successfully guide teenagers and young people in their Christian growth.

Click and start!

ISBN 978-1-63580-170-5



CONNECTING WITH CHRIST AND HIS WORD
Christian Education Lessons for Youth and Young Adults

BOOK 5

Chick



INCLUDES

52 lessons for the whole year and resources for teaching each lesson for adolescents from 12 - 17 years and youth from 18 - 23 years.

Click - Connecting With Christ and His Word, #5

Published by: Mesoamerica Region Discipleship Ministries

www.discipleship.MesoamericaRegion.org

www.SdmiResources.MesoamericaRegion.org

Copyright © 2019 - All rights reserved

ISBN: 978-1-63580-170-5

Reproduction of this material is permitted only for local church use.

All of the scripture verses quoted are from the NIV Bible unless otherwise stated.

Translated into English from Spanish by: Monte and Bethany Cyr

Printed in the United States



Table of Contents

T

Presentation	5
Help for the Teacher	6
Unit One • The Sermon on the Mount	
Lesson 1: Children of God	8
Lesson 2: Jesus and the Law	10
Lesson 3: Jesus and Anger	12
Lesson 4: Jesus and Adultery	14
Lesson 5: Jesus and Divorce	16
Lesson 6: Danger	18
Lesson 7: Love My Enemy?	20
Lesson 8: What can I do?	22
Lesson 9: God Takes Care of Me	24
Lesson 10: Don't Judge	26
Lesson 11: The Golden Rule	28
Lesson 12: A Good Fruit	30
Lesson 13: Decisions	32
Unit Two • Fruit of the Spirit	
Lesson 14: Poles Apart	34
Lesson 15: Love, Love...	36
Lesson 16: What is Joy?	38
Lesson 17: Does Peace Exist?	40
Lesson 18: Holy Patience!	42
Lesson 19: Are You Kind?	44
Lesson 20: A Different Fruit	46
Lesson 21: Be Found Faithful	48
Lesson 22: Let's Be Gentle	50
Lesson 23: Regaining Control!	52
Unit Three • The Messages to the Churches of Revelation	
Lesson 24: First Love	54
Lesson 25: Firm Convictions	56
Lesson 26: The Church in Pergamum	58
Lesson 27: A Good Church	60
Lesson 28: Living Dead?	62
Lesson 29: Take Care of Your Crown!	64
Lesson 30: Useless Church	66

Unit Four • Trends

Lesson 31:	Signs on the Body	68
Lesson 32:	Social Media	70
Lesson 33:	Homosexuality?	72
Lesson 34:	Smart Entertainment	74
Lesson 35:	Exercise!	76

Unit Five • What Do We Believe In?

Lesson 36:	One or Three?	78
Lesson 37:	The Son of God	80
Lesson 38:	The Third Person	82
Lesson 39:	Free From the Power of Sin	84
Lesson 40:	I Believe Your Word!	86
Lesson 41:	We Have a Father	88
Lesson 42:	End to Pure Suspense	90
Lesson 43:	What is the Church?	92
Lesson 44:	What are the Sacraments?	94
Lesson 45:	God Heals	96
Lesson 46:	Will He Come Again?	98
Lesson 47:	Can We Be Saints?	100

Unit Six • Special Dates

Lesson 48:	Accepted or Rejected	102
Lesson 49:	Promise Fulfilled (Easter)	104
Lesson 50:	Where Can I Serve?	106
Lesson 51:	What Will You Give? (Christmas)	108
Lesson 52:	A New Start (New Year's)	110

Presentation

P

We are glad that you have received this Christian education material for teenagers and young people. The lessons developed here are based entirely on the Holy Scriptures and prepared thinking about teenagers and young people. These lessons have been developed by an international team of people who have experience in ministry with teenagers and youth. We want you as a teacher to feel safe using these lessons and may God work in your heart as well as in the hearts of your students.

This book has six units covering a total of 52 lessons to be used for a whole year. The units don't have the same number of lessons, as the units vary according to the objective and theme being covered.

Knowing that teens and young adults are at different life stages, this book is designed to effectively minister to both groups; teenagers from 12 to 17 years old and young adults from 18 to 23 years old. The Bible lesson and activities are the same for both, but the introductory dynamic is different for each age group. You can adapt them according to the needs and facilities of your local church or the place where they meet.

In each lesson, you will find the following sections:

- The objective of the lesson. What is expected to be achieved in the lesson.
- The Connect section, which is the introduction to the topic. Here is the Introductory Activity for each age group.
- The Navigate section is the development of the lesson.
- The Review/Apply section is where the practical activity is located. You will find the answers to each activity within the activity, usually the answers are underlined. Be aware that through this activity, you will be able to provide feedback and fix the lesson objective in the minds and hearts of your students.
- The Challenge at the end of each lesson is a personal challenge to the students for them to work on during the week. The idea is to motivate the student to live what they learned.
- Finally, you will find Attention! boxes at the beginning of each lesson and at the end of some lessons. The Attention! boxes are reminders to review the previous lesson's challenge and they help remind you to reinforce the challenges at the end of the lessons.

We want this material to be taken full advantage of by you, as a teacher. We hope that through these lessons, you can lead your students to continued growth in their Christian lives.

Patricia Picavea

Editor in Chief, Ministry Publications



Help

for the teacher



H

Teaching the Word of God is a great privilege, and at the same time a great responsibility. We must be very careful in scrutinizing the Scriptures and also in presenting them.

When you prepare the lesson you will have the opportunity to learn and apply biblical truth to your life. If you prepare the lesson with this learning attitude, your teaching will be more effective. God himself will teach you to teach others.

Here are some suggestions that can help you prepare and present the lesson.

Lesson Preparation

1. Before preparing the lesson, seek God in prayer. Ask for wisdom and insight to understand the biblical passages and apply them to your own life. Also ask God to help you be sensitive to the real needs of your students.
2. Pray for your students in a specific way. Pray that they may be receptive to God's message and that they will grow in their faith and walk with him daily.
3. Prepare the lesson in a place free from distractions. Keep close the things you will need such as paper, pens, cards, etc.
4. In addition to this book and your Bible, you can consult other versions of the Bible, Bible Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries and a good English dictionary.
5. Read the lesson objective several times until you understand where to go with the lesson.
6. Memorize the Bible verse.
7. Read the lesson development, "CONNECT", several times and, if you wish, draw up your own outline. You can write down the main points on some note cards, that way you won't need to have the book in your hands during the class.
8. Review each Bible quotation presented in the lesson. You can indicate in your Bible each verse with a book mark or piece of paper, that way you will be able to easily locate the verses during the presentation of the lesson. Also read a loud the Bible verses that are quoted in the lesson to practice the words that might have difficult pronunciations.
9. Look up the meaning of the unknown words in the dictionary, that way you will understand the meaning and can share it with your class.
10. Review the "Introductory Activity" according to the age group you will be teaching. Be sure to have the required materials and practice the activity beforehand.
11. Review the "Review/Apply" section. This way you will know what the activity is about and can better guide your students.
12. Review the challenge for the week! Think of creative ways to present it to motivate your students to complete it.



Presentation of the lesson

1. Arrive to your class early, preferably, be the first one there. Take time to arrange the room to in the best way possible. For each unit, you can rearrange the chairs, the board, etc. You can also put up posters that refer to the unit to motivate the interest of your students.
2. Start class ON TIME. If you wait until a good group arrives, it won't motivate your students to arrive on time to the following classes and you may not have time to complete the lesson.
3. Take a few minutes to greet your students personally, ask them about their week and some specific situation in their life that you are aware of (i.e. athletic competition, school activity, etc.) It will help them to know that you have an interest in their lives outside of class.
4. Always start the class with prayer. Ask the Lord to give you all wisdom to understand the message of the Bible and that you will all have a willingness to obey it.
5. Encourage your class to actively participate in the "Introductory Activity". If you have any visitors or new students include them as well.
6. Develop the lesson in an organized way. If you have a whiteboard or flipchart, use them to make notes. Write the first point and the highlights of it. You may also want to write down new or difficult word to pronounce and their meaning. Do this with all the points in the development of the lesson.
7. To encourage the participation of all the students in the class, form groups for the students to work in, prepare questions beforehand, ask students to read the Bible verses, listen to your students comments, encourage those who don't participate to participate. Don't criticize, don't interrupt, avoid difficult or personal discussions, guide the conversation to the Word of God.
8. Always take time between each point to the apply biblical truths to daily life. Use examples appropriate to the age of your group. For example, school situations, family relationships, programs of television, etc.
9. Present the "Challenge" for the week. Encourage your students to participate and follow up with them in the next class. If it's a project for the whole class take extra time for planning.
10. Present a brief preview of the next lesson to create anticipation in your students.
11. End the class with prayer.

Other suggestions

1. Prepare contests for each unit, for example, memorizing verses, attending class on time, bringing guests, etc.
2. Prepare service projects at least twice a year. These type of activities helps students to meet outside of class and to learn to serve their community and church.
3. Memorization is important in the learning process. Encourage your students to memorize the Bible verses, but make sure they understand the meaning of them. Here are some ideas to help with memorization.
 - Write the verse, divided into sentences, on different pieces of colored papers. Give one set to each group and ask them to put the pieces in order. This will help them with memorization.
 - Have them write the verse on paper and then decorate it as they wish.
 - Present the verse as a mime or with hand gestures. Present this to the whole group.
 - Divide the class into groups and challenge them to memorize the verse. The group that memorizes it first wins.
 - Write the verse, divided into sentences or phrases, onto card stock/heavy paper. Hide the pieces in the classroom and ask your students to look for them and organize the verse correctly.



Children of God

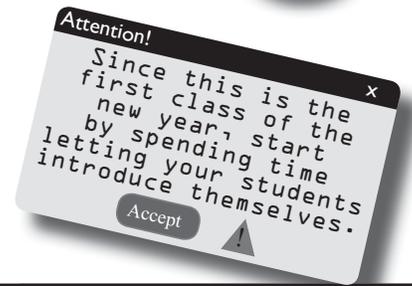
Lesson

Jessica Castro • Spain

1

Objective: That the students accept the commitment to be a good influence on those around them.

Memory Verse: *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16*



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: A mirror and a flashlight for each group.
- Instructions: Let each group turn on the flashlight in the direction of the mirror trying to get the reflected light to reach specific places in the room. You can designate the places with tape.

Explain to your students that the flashlight represents to Jesus, and that the mirror represents each one of his children. Like the mirror reflects the light from the flashlight, we must reflect the light of Christ in our lives.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Ask each student to write on the sheet of paper something or the name of someone who has influenced their life forever. And how they were influenced. Give a few minutes and allow volunteers to share with the rest of the class.

Just as a person has the power to influence others for better or worse, we as children of God can and should influence others so that they can know Christ.

Connect

Navigate

1. God knows you and is with you

In the John 8:12, he says that Jesus is the light of the world, and that everyone who follows him will also walk in the light. Influence means producing certain effects either on an object or person. We are only a mirror that reflects the light of the Lord, therefore, if we turn away from Him, his light will no longer be reflected in us and the world won't be able to see it. A good example of this kind of influence in the Bible is found in the life of Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul declares with great certainty that Timothy had a sincere faith, which was obtained thanks to the influence of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. We don't know much about them, but what we know about Timothy is enough to recognize that they were true daughters of God. Timothy's father was Greek (Acts 16:1) and he may have tried to influence his son's beliefs and customs, but the teachings of his mother and grandmother were stronger. Growing up, Timothy followed what he had learned in his childhood, to the point of becoming a faithful servant of the Lord.

It's evident that Timothy's mother and grandmother reflected the light of Jesus Christ and Timothy could see it.

We must realize everything that can be achieved by being a good influence on others. We, as children of God, must be that kind of influencers that change the lives of others; that leave traces on those we encounter, that produces the fruit of salvation and that, with the passage of time, produces fruit that lasts. But we can only achieve this if we follow Jesus closely and not at a distance.

2. A true child of God embraces the commitment

There's a village located in the upper part of the Himalayan mountains in Nepal. Suraj was a man dedicated to taking the gospel of Christ to this village. When he arrived at the village, Suraj thought he had reached the end of the world; he wasn't accustomed to the weather, nor to the type of life they lived there, it was very difficult for him. The village was very idolatrous and people drank a lot of rice alcohol that they prepared themselves. Suraj endured the rejection of the people, they even wanted to throw him out. Although at first he thought it would be impossible to deliver the gospel of Christ, he was never discouraged. On the contrary, he took refuge in God and entrusted him with all his concerns. As time passed, the people began to accept Christ into their lives. The gospel grew and the leaders of the village decided to throw Suraj and



all who followed Jesus out of the village. This was very difficult for these new Christians in the village. They could no longer spend any time with their relatives, but they accepted it because of their love for God. But the story doesn't end here, the people of the village realized that the Christians had something that made them special and that they were good people; so, they let them return to their homes. (<http://www.taringa.net/posts/info/15443770/El-Amor-de-Cristollega-a-una-aldea-del-HIMALAYA.html?dr>)

This man, Suraj, took on the challenge of taking the gospel to people who lived in a very remote place. These people had never heard of Christ, but despite the difficulties that this entailed, Suraj didn't stop doing what the Lord Jesus commanded him. He and the people who accepted Christ had a commitment to God and that commitment helped them to be faithful to their God despite all the bad things they had to face. Finally God gave them the victory.

Commitment means giving your word, it's a responsibility to fulfill what was promised despite any obstacle along the way. We as children of God have made a great commitment to Him. By giving Him our lives, we promised to be faithful and obedient in everything. Does the commitment require effort? Yes, but the Word of God encourages us to endure (Joshua 1:9). There's a saying that says: "There's no success without sacrifice." Commitment belongs to the brave because they take on the challenge they face and overcome it, but a coward surrenders to the obstacle and flees. The Word of God condemns those who are like that (Revelation 21:8). We must embrace our commitment no matter how difficult it is, always remembering that "*I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*" (Philippians 4:13).

3. A true child of God guides others and honors God

Paul is an example of a faithful person who led others to God and honored him with his life. This man was a great servant of God who took the call of God very seriously. He traveled many places taking the gospel of salvation to non-Jews (Acts 13-14, 15:35-21:1-16), teaching and guiding those who were added to God's family so that no one would deceive them with false doctrines (Galatians 3:1-5, 4:8-31).

In Acts 20:24 Paul clearly expressed his greatest desire: to honor God with his life; to do God's will. There's no better way to give glory to God than through our obedience, and Paul was obedient to the point of dying for Him. Paul's glory was the glory of Christ (Galatians 6:14).

Like Paul, we must also seek to glorify God with our lives. Singing beautiful songs is not the only way to honor God, our deeds must also honor Him. Everything we do, anywhere, should exalt the name of God. This is not an obligation, rather it's an gift to God, born from the heart as an act of gratitude for all that Christ has done for us.

If we think about this constantly and do it, it will be easier to lead others into the presence of God. When others observe our deeds, they will see something special and give glory to God (1 Peter 2:11-12). As he says in Matthew 5:13-16, we are salt of the earth and the light of the world. We must give the flavor of Christ to this earth and share His light so that others know that there's someone who loves them. Mankind, lost in sin, needs this message of hope. Only with our obedience can we be Christ's salt and light to the world.

Review/Apply: Allow time to complete the following questions.

1. What was the result of the influence of Lois and Eunice on Timothy's life? (He became a faithful servant of the Lord.)
2. What does the word "commitment" mean? (It means to give your word, to be responsible to fulfill what we've promised.)
3. The passage Matthew 5:3-18, what does it tell us we are? (The salt of the earth and the light of the world.)
4. According to John 8:12, what should we do to reflect the light of Christ? (Follow Him.)
5. How can we lead others to the feet of Christ? (By glorifying God through our obedience.)

Challenge: Say to your students: How have you been an influence in the lives of those around you? Are others seeing Christ through your life? We must be the salt and the light for this world, even if in our attempt others want to destroy us. The path of a Christian is not a path of roses, but if you trust God, you can overcome anything. Write your commitment to be an influence of God to others, date it and sign it.



Jesus and the Law

Lesson

2

Natalia Pesado • USA

Objective: That the students understand how Jesus came to fulfill the law.

Memory Verse: *For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew 5:20



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Drawings of traffic signs (for example “stop”, “no parking”, “yield”). You can search for them in a driving manual, on the Internet, or draw them by hand.
- Instructions: Ask your students to describe the consequences faced by a driver who doesn’t respect the traffic signs of the road. Then help them consider how God’s laws can prevent negative consequences in their lives.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard and chalk, or large paper and markers.
- Instructions: Write the ten commandments (Exodus 20) on the board. Divide your students into groups. Then ask them to think of possible reasons why God gave each of the commandments. Facilitate exploration about God’s motivation (for example, the welfare of his people).

Connect

Navigate

1. The clarification of Jesus

In Matthew 5:17, we see Jesus’ first perspective of the law: *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I haven’t come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”* “To fulfill” is “to complete, to bring to realization”. “... Jesus fulfilled the meaning of the Old Testament to the fullest.” (Beacon Bible Commentary. Volume 6. CNP, USA, p.75).

In the Old Testament we can read about the laws that God gave his people to help him differentiate between good and evil. In the Pentateuch, God gave the people the ten commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), instructions about the feasts to celebrate and laws of a social nature (Exodus 21-23) and also the guides about the sacrifices and how these were to be offered (Leviticus 1-7).

We must recognize that the law was given to guide the people and to give them a way to reconcile with God if they had sinned. But in comparison to the Old Testament sacrificial system, when Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He became the perfect sacrifice that paid our debt for sin and reconciles us with God in a miraculous way to make us children of God. In Hebrews we read how the sacrifice of Jesus fulfilled the law of God completely: *“Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”* (Hebrews 9:26).

Some followers of Jesus thought that Jesus was coming to reject God’s law, but in reality Jesus came to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-18). And he did it in a perfect way, as nobody had done before. Jesus, in his desire to bring all his followers to the truth, clarified that his mission wasn’t to abolish the law of God, but to fulfill.

2. Jesus’ guarantee

Jesus went on to say: *“For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”* (Matthew 5:18) It’s also interesting to see another version of the same passage that clarifies the meaning of what Jesus wanted to communicate to his disciples: *“... not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished”* (ESV).

Here we can see yet another perspective that Jesus had towards the law of his Father. We see that in his explanation Jesus used a hyperbole or exaggeration to communicate the holiness and majesty of the law given by God. Jesus explained that every part of the law must be taken very seriously, however insignificant it may seem, because what is demanded won’t change until everything has been satisfied. Here we understand that the law of



God implies the commandment "... *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind*"; and, *'Love your neighbor as yourself'*." (Luke 10:27). It's very interesting to consider how Jesus asks us so clearly not to ignore what the law of God asks of us, because God won't ignore even the smallest part. Following Jesus' example, we can understand that although a writer could forget to put the dot on the letter "i", God won't ignore any of his commands.

In conclusion, we can see that the law of God is of such importance and relevance that absolutely nothing of what God said will be forgotten. Jesus explained that just as heaven and earth are so immense and enduring, so to in our human experience, we must understand that the stability and truthfulness of God's law exceeds that of heaven and earth. This comparison can help us counteract any feeling of doubt or contempt for God's law. It's possible that initially the law of God causes us discomfort in pointing out our faults and sins (Romans 3:20b), but we must also recognize that this situation may result in a desire to change towards goodness and holiness (1 Timothy 1:8).

Jesus taught to be careful to study and remember the law of God in all its breadth just as He set the example for us in his earthly life and that we resist the attitude of taking God's law lightly or irreverently knowing that the whole law of God will remain forever. Ask: "How can we practice these teaching in our lives?"

3. Sorrow due to Compassion

Jesus concludes his teaching in this passage with a word of warning: (Matthew 5:20). A biblical commentator explains: "Jesus emphatically stated that He requires a higher justice than that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law... It fundamentally means an attitude of inner justice rather than mere exterior performance... But here is the requirement: one must not only be careful of his actions but also of the motives that inspire him; not only of his words, but of his thoughts. Keeping the law of Christ is a requirement greater than the observance of the law of Moses." (Beacon Bible Commentary. Volume 6. CNP, USA:1992, p. 76 {translated from Spanish to English}).

Jesus' conclusion about this passage leaves the reader with a feeling of challenge much greater than he could have imagined. Jesus once again shares an added aspect about his perspective of the law, we see that Jesus declared that He came to fulfill God's law not only in its entirety, but he came to fulfill it with the pure desire to please his Father. Jesus compared the fulfillment of the law with two types of attitudes; He first speaks of the example of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, who were part of the group of religious leaders of his time. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were known for their arduous dedication to fulfilling each of the commandments of the Mosaic law plus a considerable number of commandments added to prevent any unconscious error or failure. This group was also known for its critical attitude and contempt for those who didn't share their lifestyle. At the same time they were criticized for their exclusively and external compliance with the law and their insensitive hearts towards the needs of others. The tendency to act this way is exemplified in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) in which religious leaders were carried away from helping someone by the letter of the law (Numbers 19:16) instead of following the spirit of the law (Luke 10:27b).

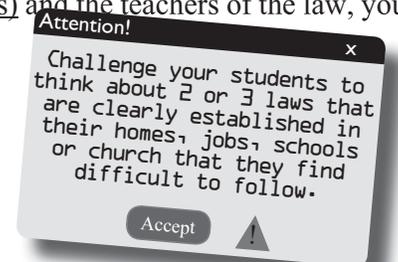
But Jesus compared this cold and insensitive attitude with the attitude of true children of God. We have the best example in Jesus who came to fulfill God's law with the motivation of love. It's very interesting to read in the gospels how Jesus felt so much love for those around him, and that love moved him to act in ways that naturally fulfilled God's law. Jesus challenged us to follow his example: the only way that "*our righteousness*" will "*surpass that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law*" (Matthew 5:20) would be by doing what is right through compassion and mercy, that is, by keeping the law of God because we love Him and others.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to complete the following Bible verses by filling in the blanks with the correct words. This will help them memorize their memory verses.

1. "Do not think that I have come to (abolish) the Law or the (Prophets); I haven't come to abolish them but to (fulfill) them." Matthew 5:17
2. "For truly I tell you, until (heaven) and (earth) disappear, not the smallest (letter), not the least stroke of a (pen), will by any means disappear from the Law until (everything) is accomplished." Matthew 5:18
3. "For I tell you that (unless) your righteousness (surpasses) that of the (Pharisees) and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not (enter) the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20

Challenge: Say to the class: What is your perspective about the law? This week think about 2 or 3 laws/rules that are clearly established in your home, at work or school or church and what it costs you to follow those laws/rules.

Ask God to help you always have a healthy perspective about laws in general and the laws that affect you in particular. Also ask that He strengthen your will to fulfill them.



Jesus and Anger

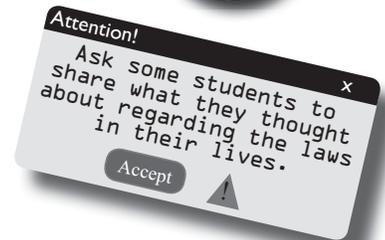
Lesson

3

Leticia Cano • Guatemala

Objective: That the students recognize that anger results in the lack of forgiveness towards others and affects their relationship with God.

Memory Verse: “*In your anger don’t sin*”: *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.*” Ephesians 4:26



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Adhesive tape
- Instructions: Ask for two volunteers. Have them sit in the chairs at the front of the classroom. When they are seated, ask another volunteer to put a strip of masking tape on an arm or leg of each volunteer. Then they will pull it off. The volunteer who can control their emotions the most will win a prize. It can be a candy or a chocolate. People aren't always able to control their emotional reactions amid difficult circumstances.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Pencils and paper
- Instructions: Ask your students to write on a piece of paper "What do I do when I get very angry". Have your students write down their own reactions (i.e. shout, cry, stop eating, hit the wall, etc.) When they finish have them put the unnamed paper in a container. The teacher will take the papers one by one and read them aloud in the form of a riddle, ending with the phrase "Who am I?" Let the other students guess who the person is who wrote the phrase. You can give points to those who guess correctly. Then spend time reflecting on why we react like we do.

Connect

Navigate

Sometimes things happen that make us greatly enraged and we do or say things we don't mean to. How do we feel when that happens? Our hearts beat rapidly, we may feel our face burning as if it had an inner fire, or get a knot in our stomach. Sometimes we want to hit the person who aggravated us or break what is in front of us? Well, we've all gone through a similar situation. We call this kind of physical and emotional reaction - anger.

1. What is Anger?

We were created with diverse emotions to express our feelings in a negative or positive way. Anger is an emotion that expresses the extreme dislike of circumstances or events that seem offensive or harmful to us (Matthew 5:21-22).

We can't help feeling offended or upset, but how do we react in such a situation? The Bible says "*don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.*" (Ephesians 4:26-27 NLT). Letting anger control our reactions is sin, especially when reactions affect others. It also tells us that staying angry gives rise to temptation. If we let anger control us, the consequences will be dangerous for our Christian life.

2. Anger and its consequences

Being angry is generally characterized by physical, verbal or emotional aggression. Some things people do when they are angry are: kicking the door, breaking glasses, screaming, hitting, insulting, or similar things. In addition, an angry person experiences physical reactions as well, such as heart rate acceleration, stomach ache, headache, etc.

Anger is more common than we imagine, we see it when a vehicle tries to pass another vehicle and the driver is enraged and accelerates to out run it, motorists who shout when they get cut off, husbands who beat their wives or their children . It's natural that we experience anger when we feel offended, but it's necessary to think about the consequences that we will have to face, sooner or later, if we don't control our reactions.

People who let anger dominate them will always reap a negative result. We can offend our neighbors, destroy valuable objects, ruin relationships, have legal problems, and even cause irreparable damage. Due to uncontrolled anger there are many people who are sick, in hospitals, in prisons and even in the cemetery. The terrible thing is that anger is progressive, it builds up and causes both physical and emotional damage; the worst thing is that it multiplies, because the people who suffer from anger often reproduce it.

The reactions that seek to satisfy our outrage are caused because we don't forgive the offense. To harbor resentment in our hearts and not give forgiveness constitutes a barrier in our relationship with God (Matthew 5:23). However, it's not God's desire that we live under the domain of anger and its terrible effects on the soul and that's why he designed a different model.



3. A new paradigm

God knows human nature. He knows that we can easily be overwhelmed. That is why he established principles that should govern our daily behavior and our interpersonal relationships.

The Lord Jesus Christ referred to the law, which established punishment against negative actions (Matthew 5:21-22), but sin originates from intention and then is consummated in action. The Lord taught that anger and insults are reproached by God.

When we are offended, we can't always express anger, but we can feel it. We may not express the insults but we do think them or we may not physically act out, but we are insulted. An offense can lead to anger, anger to insult, insult can cause a negative reaction from the offended towards the offender and once again they aggravate each other. Anger increases in intensity until it reaches physical aggression that can end in terrible tragedy.

There are positive ways to handle anger, talking with the other person to clarify things is always good. Because anger can lead us to take actions or have attitudes that aren't pleasing to God, the Lord Jesus Christ warns of the problems we might face: ". . . anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." (Matthew 5:22).

At this point you may want to take time to give your students the opportunity to voice their opinions about meaning of the previous statements. Current laws have penalties for verbal or physical aggression, if the matter is taken to the court of justice. In each community there are different terms used for verbally assaulting another person. Perhaps in our context the words "Raca" (an Aramaic term of contempt) and "you fool" don't make sense or aren't offensive, but whatever words we use to attack, we are undermining human integrity made in the image and likeness of God. (At this point of the lesson, you can take time to brainstorm with the class popular terms that their friends use as synonyms for "dumb").

The way we treat others affects the way we relate to God, because the Lord takes, not only actions but also intentions into account. God established rules of coexistence that go beyond the standards of society.

Anger leads to unforgiveness and this prevents us from offering our worship to the Lord. In order to not have an obstacle when we seek the face of the Lord, Jesus shows us the model we should follow.

- Seek reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24).
- Settle matters quickly with your adversary (Matthew 5:25).
- Forgive the offense (Matthew 6:14).

We need to submit our lives to the lordship of God, so as not to be controlled by anger. Not being willing to forgive damages our relationship with God. We must recognize that Christ in us is the one who can help us control anger and prevent us from sinning against God. We need to seek his direction to make sound decisions in times of crisis.

Review/Apply: Before a critical moment in which we must make a decision, Charles Sheldon, in his book "In His Steps" proposes that we ask ourselves "What Would Jesus Do in my place?" Discuss with your students the following situations and answer the question "What Would Jesus Do" in each situation. Then have your students answer the last 4 questions.

Situation 1. You have the phone you've always wanted and your sister accidentally breaks it.

Situation 2. A classmate cheats on an exam and claims it was you, so you fail the exam.

Situation 3. Because of someone else's mistake you lose your job.

1. Is it a sin to get angry? (No)
2. If getting angry is not a sin, at what point can it become a sin? (When we don't forgive and physically, verbally or psychologically assault the other person.)
3. How can a positive transformation be made in our personality to overcome the reactions of anger? (By giving our weaknesses to the Lord.)
4. What things should change in your life in light of this biblical passage? (Vengeful and aggressive reactions, etc.)

Challenge: Say to the class: Think of a person with whom you have differences. Pray to the Lord to help you forgive them and look for the opportunity to make peace with them. Find ways to control your anger, for example, count to 10, breathe deeply, repeat a Bible verse or a song that helps you. Put it into practice during the week.



Jesus and Adultery

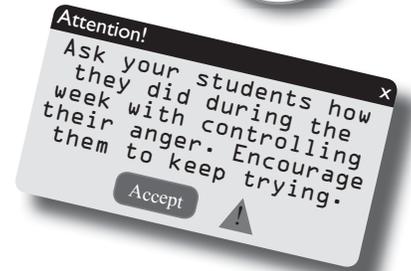
Lesson

4

Macario Balcázar • Peru

Objective: That the student understands that with the help of Christ, he can discipline his own life to avoid falling into temptation of sexual immorality.

Memory Verse: *But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* Matthew 5:28



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Three posters with one of the following descriptions written on each: Christian Teen, Excited Teen, Teen Girl/Not A Christian.
- Instructions: Ask three volunteers (two boys and one girl) to dramatize the following situation. The two boys will be talking, the girl will pass near them with suggestive movements. The “Christian Teen” will react by controlling his impulses, being calm and the “Excited Teen” will act appropriate for his role. Then have a brief dialogue about the dramatization and ask what they think about it.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Three pieces of colored paper - white, light blue and pink. Three pens or markers of different colors.
- Instructions: Divide the class into three groups, assign each group a different color of paper. On the white paper have them write what today’s men think about marital infidelity. On the blue one have them write what today’s women think about marital infidelity. The third group will write what they think makes a happy home. Then, in the order indicated, each group will read to everyone else what they wrote, leading to dialogue.

Connect

Navigate

God created human beings with good, different, characteristics. The Bible says that he made a man and a woman (in Hebrew: Ish “man, male”, Isháh “woman, female”). He did so because he wanted them to complement each other and be united in him throughout their earthly lives.

1. Adultery according to the Bible

The Bible mentions adultery a lot. In the Bible we find advice, restrictions and also some cases where adultery was lived out by biblical characters. In the Old Testament there are restrictions in the form of a commandment as in Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18. In both cases the words are the same: “*You shall not commit adultery*”.

Cases lived out by biblical characters

The best known cases of adultery are of King David (2 Samuel 11:1-27) and that of the adulteress (John 8:1-11). Have your class read the above passages and then, based on what they’ve read, reflect on the following questions. You can divide you class into groups to answer the following questions:

- What did David do while Joab and all Israel fought the Ammonites? (v. 1). (He stayed in Jerusalem and he didn’t go to war.)
- Under what circumstances did David notice Bathsheba? (v. 2) (While he was walking on the roof of his house, he saw Bathsheba who was bathing.)
- Who was Bathsheba? (v. 3). (She was the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah Hittite (Hittites were not Israelites.))
- Summarize what David tried to do to hide his sin with Bathsheba (vs. 6-13). (David invited Uriah to dinner, got him drunk and ordered him to go home, hoping he would sleep with his wife and thus cover up Bathsheba’s pregnancy.)
- How did David end the problem with Uriah? (vs. 14-26). (Since David didn’t get Uriah to sleep with his wife, he changed tactics, and since Uriah was a soldier under Joab, general of David’s army, David ordered Joab in a letter that Uriah himself carried, to put Uriah on the front lines of battle, which meant certain death, which is what happened.)
- What statement does the biblical writer make regarding David’s adultery with Bathsheba? (v. 27). (*But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.*)
- Who did the Pharisees and the teachers of the law bring to Jesus? (John 8:1-4). (A woman caught in adultery.)
- What did the Pharisees and the teachers of the law demand from Jesus regarding the woman? (v. 5). (They wanted Jesus to condone stoning her according to the Law given to Moses.)
- How did Jesus resolve this situation? (vs. 6-11). (Jesus didn’t answer them, but bending down he began to write with his finger on the ground, and as they kept questioning him, he said to them “*Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her*”. Since they all knew they were sinners, one by one they left and in the end only Jesus



and the woman remained. Jesus asked her if any had condemned her, she replied that none had; Then Jesus said to her, *“Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.”*)

After answering the above questions, enter into a time to discuss and draw conclusions regarding to the cases you’ve examined. The following ideas can serve as guidelines:

- Adultery is a denial of the value of marriage.
- Adultery corrupts society.
- Adultery devalues the other spouse (Malachi 2:13-16).
- Adultery brings destructive consequences to the family.
- There’s forgiveness for the adulterer who repents, but sometimes the consequences are devastating.

2. How do I Avoid Adultery?

A. Teaching of Jesus

Read Matthew 5:27-30. When reading the passage we find the following ideas:

- In Jesus’ time, the command not to commit adultery was well known (v. 27).
- Jesus established a new dimension of adultery: The act itself is not necessary, the person’s intention is enough to be an adulterer (v. 28).
- Jesus taught that if the eye or the hand cause you to sin, then you must cut them off and throw them away, for it’s better to lose one part of the body than for your whole body to go to hell (v. 30).

Ask: Which is more drastic, what Jesus taught or the law? Is adultery an act or an intention?

B. Disciplines that help us not to commit adultery

We have seen the value of making good decisions. Let’s now look at some Christian disciplines that will help us avoid adultery:

1. Put our bodies under the control of the Holy Spirit.
2. Keep our minds and hearts clean. Let’s avoid watching erotic movies, porn, going on the Internet to watch videos or search for information that’s not healthy or holy.
3. Let’s read the Bible every day and meditate on its teachings. Spend at least 30 minutes a day reading the Bible, meditating and praying.
4. Attend church services and actively participate.
5. Don’t have friends who aren’t Christians, but especially don’t learn their ways and practices.
6. Keep a diary, in which you write down your experiences and through it, tell God your experiences, which include temptations, struggles, problems, tests, conversations, etc.

If Jesus, our Savior told us not to commit adultery, we must obey him. If He commanded it, it’s possible! By avoiding adultery, we will avoid many sorrows and misfortunes; we will contribute to making the world a better and more beautiful place to live it.

3. Decision not to practice sexual immorality

Adultery is a sexual immorality and it offends God, family and society. We must avoid adultery, because as Christians we don’t want to do evil but good. Not committing adultery is a decision we make, just as practicing adultery is also a decision. The people who practice adultery do so because they have decided to follow that path. Point out that to avoid adultery we need to:

1. Decide to honor God in our thoughts, words and actions.
2. Decide to fill our minds and hearts with the Word of God, the Bible.
3. Depend on God for everything we want to do. This is done through prayer, and even better, if we do it on our knees, with great reverence and love for God.
4. Decide to be a good testimony of Christ our Redeemer, of ourselves, our family and the church.

Review/Apply: Divide the class into groups of three and have them write down the answers to the following questions:

1. What clear teachings has this lesson made about adultery? _____
2. If a person commits adultery, is it possible to restore them spiritually and save their marriage? (Jesus’ encounter with the adulteress tell us yes. And David himself found peace and forgiveness.)
3. What spiritual disciplines can help us to avoid committing adultery? (Read the Bible, pray, search for God, etc.)

Challenge: Say to your class: Analyze your life and see if there’s anything that’s leading you into the temptation of sexual immorality. Ask God to help you leave them behind and begin to get involved in activities that will help you grow in your Christian life. If you know people who are in trouble because of this issue, pray for them for five minutes each day.



Jesus and Divorce

Lesson

5

Viviana Perez • Argentina

Objective: That the students know the biblical point of view regarding divorce.

Memory Verse: *I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.* Matthew 19:9

Attention!

Start the class by asking for testimonies of how they did with last week's challenge. They may not want to share, so start with prayer, asking for God to help them in the face of immorality.

Accept

Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Instructions: Ask your class to form two circles, one of boys and one of girls. The circle of girls will be within the circle of boys. Each boy will have to stay behind a girl with his eyes down and his hands behind taking care of his partner so that she doesn't escape. In the center will be the leader who will start the game, by winking at one of the girls. The girl that's winked at will try to run away. When the boy feels that his partner is leaving, he must touch her so that she doesn't leave, but he can only touch her shoulders. If the boy lets his partner be get away, he goes into the center and continues the game by winking at another girl. The game can continue as long as you feel there's time.

Many marriages end because they don't know how to take care of the person with whom they have decided to share the rest of their life. What do you think are other reasons that cause so many divorces to exist today?

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Open room, a tray or platter.
- Instructions: Divide your students into pairs, a boy with a girl and have the boy carefully observe their partner. The boys will then leave the room while their partners deposit a visible personal object, such as earrings, necklace, bracelet, etc. onto a tray in the room. Have the boys return and instruct them to choose the object they believe their partner was wearing.

The smallest details make people feel valuable. Many marriages end because there's a lack of attention to details. What do you think are the biggest causes of divorce today?

Connect

Navigate

Recently we've all heard the phrase "we fell out of love" and days later we see couples divorcing because "they no longer love each other".

One can get on the Internet and search for divorce and marriage statistics and easily notice that today there are more divorces than marriages. For example, in Colombia 3 couples divorce every 2 hours. In Argentina, according to the newspaper "La Nación" published on the Internet on March 4, 2012, it states that there were more than half a million divorces in the last decade. In Mexico, out of every 30 couples 10 divorce in less than 5 years, and so headlines continue. Without going to far, most of us can find divorced relatives. Divorce leaves wounded hearts and broken families, but what is the biblical view of divorce? Ask: Do you think divorce is good or bad? What problems does divorce cause in a family? After reading Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:1-12 ask, do you believe that God agrees with divorce?

1. The origin of marriage

From the time of creation God leaves a clear mandate about the institution of marriage (Genesis 2:24). This indissoluble unity was God's original purpose for humans. God didn't have in mind that couples would separate, He wanted them to persevere together. The sexual union made this couple have such a significant link that they were no longer two, but one flesh. This was reason enough to start a life together, to the point of leaving father and mother behind. Marriage, in the time of Jesus and even before, was more than a sentimental matter, it was a covenant of honor. Men generally married women from familiar families or relatives. The father, who considered himself responsible, had the duty to find his daughter a suitable husband. Marriage wasn't a public celebration like today, there were no signatures on paper, only the word of honor. It was understood that this union would be respected for life.



2. The origin of divorce

At the time of Moses the people of Israel lived in sin and there was a moral crisis in marriages. Because of the hardness of their hearts, a special law on divorce was issued. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, God established through the Mosaic law, the right to divorce. It wasn't a permit for debauchery. At the time men separated from their women for insignificant reasons, then women were dishonored and unable to rebuild their lives. The woman was considered as inferior as a slave, so the law of God limited the right to divorce to a single question: "something indecent" (probably an impurity or physical or moral problems), not adultery, because those caught in adultery were punished by stoning until they died (Leviticus 20:10). In addition, he imposed the obligation to give a divorce letter, explaining the reasons for the divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1). This protected the woman, if she wanted to remarry (Deuteronomy 24:2). This law was, in some way, a stop to the mistreatment and abuse towards married women. He also emphasized that the man couldn't remarry the same woman, if she had married another and divorced the latter or widowed (Deuteronomy 24:4). In Jesus' day this law, given by God, had undergone some modifications, that's why people asked Jesus about the subject.

In Matthew 19:3-12, Jesus' teaching emphasized that God's desire from the time of creation was that marriage should not be dissolve. Jesus stated that the only valid reason for divorce is "sexual immorality" (v. 9). However, Jesus stated that the reason Moses permitted divorce was because "your hearts were hard." It wasn't part of God's original plan for humanity. In The Passion Translation version of the Bible, it says "... because your hearts are so hard and stubborn." There are many couples who have faced very difficult situations in their marriages, but when both have sincerely sought God's help, their homes have been restored. Jesus says that the reason for the divorce itself is the lack of seeking Him. After Adam and Eve sinned, their hearts were inclined towards evil, especially selfishness. Sadly all of us inherit that root of sin. But when Christ died, He did it to save us and cleanse us from all evil. Jesus can help us, mold us, guide us in every aspect of our life including our marriage relationships.

3. Consequences of divorce

The world we live in today imposes anti-values, the thought that everything is disposable, even marriage, "if you don't like it you can get a divorce." The world seeks the least effort required, and marriage is justly built and affirmed day by day. It requires effort to be maintained. For a marriage to be strong, it must begin well, that is, for the right reasons, with a healthy and holy courtship and with the values of the Kingdom of God in the heart.

In Genesis 2:23-24 Adam, in reference to Eve, said that she would be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. And verse 24 indicates that both would be one flesh. The union that occurs in marriage is very strong. Both people share their life with the other. When there's separation between them, both are strongly affected. Another consequence is reflected in the lives of their children. The home, which should be the safest place for them, is broken. In many cases, judges determine how much time children should spend with each parent. This causes children to live in two different places, bringing much instability, fear, separation, and anguish into their lives. They lose the basic experience of home.

Finally, the consequence of divorce is reflected in society. More and more divorces are taking place which leads to the formation of an unstable and sickly society.

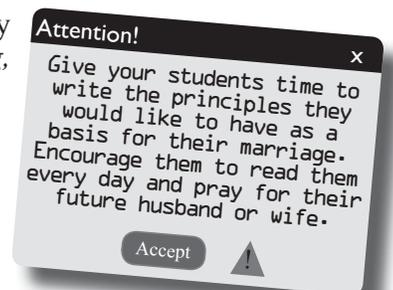
It's vitally important for a couple to decide before they get married that, in the face of difficulties, divorce won't be an option. Today's lesson makes it clear that marriage is, above all, a covenant of honor and that God desires and designed marriage to be until death.

There are only two institutions set by God that represent Him here on earth, one is the church and the other is marriage. How good it would be for us to challenge our marriage (when it comes) to be a reflection of God, that the people around us will look at us and see that God is working in our home, because respect, courtesy, love and consideration, are evident.

God can restore love and destroyed marriages, he can resurrect the dead, he can also renovate a home, we must turn to his grace and mercy because nothing is impossible for God.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to write down five things that they can do when they get married to maintain a stable marriage. *Love, understanding, tolerance, forgiveness, patience, etc.*

Challenge: Say to your students: Start praying for your future husband or wife. Not for a particular person, but for the person that God will put in your life at the right time. Write in a notebook some principles that you would like to base your marriage on and ask God to begin preparing you for marriage.



Danger

Lesson

6

Helen Andújar • Puerto Rico

Objective: That the students recognize the importance of being responsible to the commitments they make without the need to make oaths and promises.

Memory Verse: "... don't plot evil against each other, and don't love to swear falsely. I hate all this," declares the Lord." Zechariah 8:17



Connect

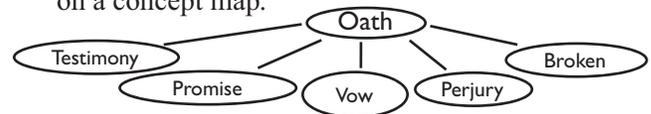
Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Instructions - Form two groups. Ask your students to write and dramatize a situation in which it's difficult to believe something that one of them says they have seen and how that person would convince the others that what they say is true. After a few minutes of preparation, have them present their scenario before the class. Allow time after each group presents to think about and discuss each scenario and why we struggle to believe the unbelievable.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard or large paper, paper, pencils.
- Instructions: Ask your students what they think when they hear the word "oath". Record the answers on a concept map.



Ask your students to answer the following questions:

- Are you careful when you speak?
- What do people think of you?
- Do they distrust what you say?

Without writing their names, allow them to write the answers on their paper. Share the answers that are different. Allow them to discuss and review the responses in the form of constructive and non-offensive criticism.

Connect

Navigate

The third commandment given to Moses on Mount Sinai says, "*You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord won't hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*" Exodus 20:7. However, the twenty-first century generation seems to ignore this commandment. Too often we hear, "I swear to God", "As God is my witness", "for the love of God", etc. Is it right for a believer to use these expressions?

Oaths or promises are agreements between two or more people. When God is placed in the middle, it can be said that God is being called as a witness of the truthfulness of the promise being declared.

1. Jesus and oaths

Jesus always took the time to teach things of the utmost importance for the spiritual growth of his listeners. The theme of the oath follows other important topics in the Sermon on the Mount, so this topic is of vital importance to all believers (Matthew 5:33-37). Jesus emphasizes to his disciples in Matthew 5:33, "*Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.'*" An oath is a promise or commitment where someone is asked to be a witness. In Jesus' time, oaths were very commonly made and commonly were not fulfilled. Jesus told them that although it was done by their ancestors, they should not swear by anything. The believer is expected to be complete in all areas of life. He has no need to swear an oath, since those who know him know that he is honest and unable to deceive another.

Jesus knows that by nature the human being is a liar and deceiver. For this reason Jesus told them: "... *don't swear an oath at all...*" (Matthew 5:34-36). Jesus knew the heart of the Pharisees and knew that they were not interested in pleasing God. They just wanted to meet a set of rules to gain a good reputation and



spiritual title. They didn't swear by God, but by other things and if they didn't comply they didn't sin according to the law. However, everything belongs to God who is the creator and owner of the universe. If you swear by heaven, earth, or other things with deceptive purposes then in the same way you are being deceived. It's trying to give the impression that what is said is true, when it's not. By using a person as a "witness," they appear truthful, when there was only falsehood in their hearts.

2. Oaths in the Old Testament

It should not be said that swearing is a sin, however we should not swear by anything because it's a mandate received by Christ Jesus in the New Testament. This thought is contradictory because if Jesus forbids it then it's a sin.

Before entering the promised land, Moses repeated the law to the people of Israel. Remember, the first generation of Israelites who left Egypt died in the desert. God warned them to live in obedience and faithfulness to Him. In Deuteronomy 6:13 it says "*Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.*" But, the warning of Leviticus 19:12 says "*Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.*" making it clear that God doesn't tolerate a false oath.

God hoped that by swearing in his name, the people would do it with respect, care and truthfulness. God wanted them to enjoy the promised land and be careful not to become contaminated with the customs of neighboring towns. Even so, perjury wasn't rare, the people of Israel promised and didn't comply.

Many years later, the Pharisees, who in Jesus' time were the "religious leaders" of the people and who were responsible for interpreting the law and enforcing it, managed to maintain the validity of the oath. But Jesus knew there was much abuse even from them. To reaffirm that swearing in vain is not pleasing in the eyes of God, Jesus flatly said: "*All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No' . . .*" (Matthew 5:37).

3. Oaths in the Twenty-first Century

There are circumstances in which human law requires an oath. Jesus himself implied this in his response to accept the oath before the Sanhedrin. "*The high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.' 'You have said so,' Jesus replied.*" Matthew 26:63-64a.

When testifying in a court of law, it's required to swear that the truth will be told and only the truth. The Christian can say that he will speak the truth without taking the oath.

Upon marriage, a couple promises each other, before God, that they will be faithful and that they will live together until death do they part. This is an oath between the couple and between the couple and God. Today this oath is breached when adultery is committed or the couple divorces. The promise made before God and the witnesses who were present are broken.

There are many professional careers that require oaths, for example doctors. They have the Hippocratic oath and are ethically responsible for human life. But many break their oath when they forget that they swore to help the sick and seek only their own economic benefit or when they perform abortions, killing the life of an unborn child.

Review/Apply: Divide the class into groups. Ask each group to write an acrostic with the Words: "Jesus" and "oath". Allow them to use their creativity. They can use a word or a phrase. After you have given them adequate time, have them share their acrostics with the class. Then stick them on one of the walls of the room.

Possible response:

J-ust don't swear	O-bey His Commandments
E-asy it may be	A-void sin
S-weet is His name	T-rustworthy be
U-se His name carefully	H-onesty
S-wearing is wrong	

Challenge: Say to your class: During the week, do a survey using the following questions. Interview at least ten Christian people and ten non-believers.

Questions: What is your opinion about oaths? Would you be willing to swear by an oath if you were asked to? Who or what would you swear by? Share the answers you received during our next meeting.



Love My Enemy?

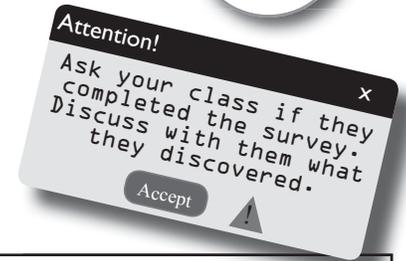
Lesson

7

Aldo Genes • Paraguay

Objective: That the students understand that to love your enemies is not an option but an imperative.

Memory Verse: *“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?”* Matthew 5:46



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Instructions: Form groups of 2 or 3 people and ask them to prepare an acrostic using the word “ENEMY”. You can use a word or a short phrase for each letter.

E-xasperating

N-asty

E-xplosive

M-ean

Y-ucky

Then share with them with the class.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Prepare 2 or 3 different colored sheets of paper with the following questions:
 1. Define who an enemy is? (Clarify that in this context we aren't referring to Satan.)
 2. What has someone done to you to become your enemy?
- Instructions: Ask each student to randomly choose a color. This will determine the group that they will be part of. Then have the groups answer the questions and share their answers with the class.

Connect

Navigate

How do you talk about such a deep topic without making it sound spiritualized, unattainable or simplistic? It really isn't easy to answer this question. We definitely believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who guides us to all truth in his Word (John 16:13) and that He'll also guide all truth to those who seek him with a sincere heart regarding this delicate issue.

The predominant theme of the Sermon on the Mount is discipleship. Jesus discussed the new values that would govern the Kingdom and pointed out the privileges and responsibilities that citizens would have.

Specifically, Jesus laid his position on the law of the Old Testament and made the necessary corrections. The Lord contrasted his teaching with six aspects of the law given to Moses (Matthew 5:17-48).

1. To love your enemy is necessary, it's not an option

Dictionary.com defines “enemy” as: “a person who feels hatred for, fosters harmful designs against, or engages in antagonistic activities against another; an adversary or opponent.” We aren't referring to Satan or the devil here.

The famous quote “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” from Matthew 5:38 is known as the “law of retaliation” (Exodus 21:24).

This Old Testament regulation didn't encourage revenge, but took care of excessive compensation to someone who had hurt someone else. For example: If I kicked someone's donkey and killed him, the owner took revenge by killing my donkey with a kick. The law of the retaliation approved “revenge” for a wrong you received. On the other hand, “you will hate your enemy” (Matthew 5:43), wasn't an order given by law in the Old Testament. Ask: What is an imperative? An imperative is an order, a mandate. Jesus uses his authority in these verses by saying “but I tell you” (Matthew 5:39, 44), and introduces a new radical value, to love your enemy.

Ask: Did Jesus ask for something impossible? We answer by saying yes and no. Yes, it's impossible if we try to do it within our natural human power, since, this request goes against the natural desire for revenge that human beings have. But, we answer no, because Jesus was addressing his disciples. Therefore, people willing to do his will and people who have the training of the Holy Spirit to perform his will in the power of the Spirit and not in their own natural power can love their enemies. Therefore, loving your enemies is a value that we can only incorporate if we are disciples of Jesus Christ and if we are trained by the Holy Spirit of God. In the Spirit, it can be done!

2. Love your enemies and don't retaliate

Jesus asks us not only to love, but also not to resist our enemy. In this section you will use several cultural expressions of the first century and mandates of the Old Testament law that are worth explaining.

A “slap to the right cheek” (Matthew 5:39), was considered a serious insult (Lamentations 3:30), which was punishable by a heavy fine. On the other hand, Exodus 22:25-27, forbade the confiscation of a cloak (Matthew 5:40). Also, it must

be remembered that at the time when Jesus walked the earth, Judea was ruled by the Romans and the Jews considered the Romans their enemies. This reference, allows us to understand a legal provision of the first century, in which a Roman soldier could require any passerby to carry his load for a mile or 1.5 km (Matthew 5:41). Jesus was basically teaching that we should have a generous attitude towards our adversaries, to refuse to retaliate, to give up personal rights for the benefit of the other person. That way the cycle of violence is broken. If someone mistreats you, don't react with the same intensity. Even though the principle of physics says: "Every action has an equal or greater reaction." Don't do it! Breaking the cycle of violence is the principle behind: "*If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also*" (Matthew 5:39b).

We must resist temptation, and not avenge ourselves because we serve a righteous God who promised to avenge the wrongs that have been done to us and the ill-treatment we've suffered (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; 1 Peter 3:9). We must obey the mandate that says: "*Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*" (Matthew 5:42).

3. Loving your enemies happens when the process of forgiveness begins

Why do we, so many times, resist forgiving an enemy? Many times it's related to the concept of forgiveness that we have. There's an expression that says: "To forgive is to forget." And, that's precisely what it costs. Because we assume that, if I say today to an adversary: "I forgive you for the wrong you did to me," the negative feeling that we harbored must automatically disappear.

If today I make the decision to forgive my adversary from there I start growing in accepting and understanding the decision I made so that I can walk towards forgetting. I may never totally forget it because I recognize that what happened is part of my life story, of my personal background; but, from the moment I forgave, that negative feeling won't paralyze me anymore. I decide to free my heart from allowing "a bitter root" to grow in me (Hebrews 12:15).

The only way to "*not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Romans 12:21), is to begin the process of forgiveness for those hurts, mistreatments and offenses that we or our loved ones have suffered. Another useful recommendation would be to start with small things like controlling our minds and hearts to change our perception of what the idea of "enemy" means in those situations. Settling on the idea that we can have an "enemy" steals our peace and brings us unrest (James 3:16). In addition, we have to keep in mind that forgiveness is a hallmark of Christianity (Matthew 6:16; 18:21-22).

4. Love your enemies and their limits

Paul, develops this theme in Romans 12:17-21, telling us "*... as far as it depends on you...*". In other words, I may have the best attitude, the greatest disposition, but I cannot force the other person to forgive me or want to stop seeing me as an enemy. On the other hand, I cannot "*live at peace with everyone*" at the price of compromising my convictions or my Christian testimony. Above my desire to befriend my adversary, is my loyalty to God.

In addition, loving enemies and trying to lead harmonious lives cannot be sustained in the midst of injustices. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of justice (Matthew 6:33); Therefore, we can hardly keep the peace if we are systematically violated and abused. Therefore, the love of enemies is not a lack of interest in justice, they must go hand in hand.

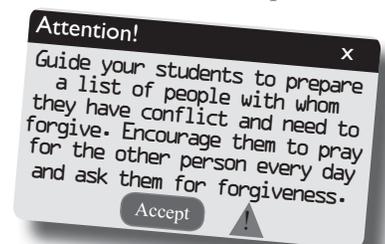
To love our enemies is to show that we have the nature of the one we call Father. In addition, it's to show that there's a willingness in us for good to prevail over evil as our Father wants and that we seek good because we are good and kind as He is.

Remember that, loving ones enemies is a counterculture action for those belonging to the kingdom of heaven and that in our human power alone, such action is impossible. The training of the Holy Spirit is required. Once we have Christ in our hearts and with the help of his Holy Spirit, we can begin the process of forgiveness to get closer to those who have hurt us. The Lord promised that he would be with us until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20), and that includes being with us in the process of learning to love and forgive our enemies.

Review/Apply: Allow time for your students to reflect on the following questions and share the answers in class.

1. What three actions or attitudes do you find are very offensive and painful and can lead you to see a person as "your enemy"? Share with the group.
2. Do you think that forgiveness can be a process to learn how to love an enemy again? Share.
3. Do you think that to stop wishing evil towards your "enemy" and to greet them with a smile can be ways to bring peace between you and your enemy and show them love? Do you think such steps are too little to ask? Is this impractical? Does it demonstrate love?

Challenge: Say to your class: First: Try to pray for one week for someone who you think hurt you and today can be considered "your enemy." Second: Spend time alone with God, praying for that person until you feel forgiveness towards them. If the Lord urges you to approach the person to ask for forgiveness, don't hesitate to do so and then share your testimony about what happened. This testimony can be very helpful to others.



What can I do?

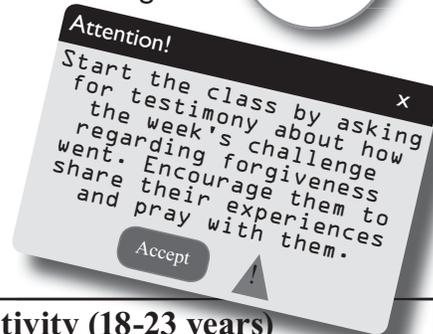
Lesson

Marco Rocha • Argentina



Objective: That the students understand the true meaning of giving an offering or helping someone in need.

Memory Verse: *But when you give to the needy, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.* Matthew 6:3-4



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Newspaper and magazine clippings that reflect different needs suffered by people such as: Poverty, social exclusion, marginalization, victims of gender or racial violence, unemployment, etc.
- Instructions: Paste the clippings on poster board and place in a visible place in the classroom. Ask: What is your first impression when you see these clippings.

Form groups of two or three, and allow them to think about the people around them who may have some need (people inside or outside the church) and ask them to develop a plan of action to work together to help some of these people. The plan should include a calendar of events. Encourage them to implement their plan and follow up so that the project(s) are completed.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard and chalk or poster board and marker.
- Instructions: Divide the blackboard or poster board into two columns. In the first column, ask your students to make a list of everyday situations in which they observe people in need, for example when they travel to their jobs or to their place of study. Then divide the class into groups of two or three students and ask them to develop proposals for a plan to help these people in need. Write these proposals in the second column. Emphasize the importance of implementing these proposals to be consistent with the Christian virtue of loving others by offering time, effort and money.

Connect

Navigate

It's not very difficult to discover that around your students it's possible to find people with multiple needs and in need of help. Many of them lack the basic economic means to survive with dignity, but others also suffer from the lack of affection and opportunities to be included as citizens in society or in a group.

Although most prefer to ignore these people, God is especially interested in them. And he gave us the power, as his children, to always be ready to help with a kind heart.

Since the beginning of time there have been, in every society, groups of people who suffer from some type of need and need help from others to face the situation in which they find themselves.

Some of the problems that affect these people are poverty, social exclusion, marginalization, gender or racial violence, and unemployment, among others. Throughout human history, people have dealt with these scourges in different ways, often ignoring the one who suffers, sometimes identifying them as evil or as their plight being destiny or a divine punishment and therefore preferring not to intervene and others proclaiming them to be an evil that needs to be eradicated through government or civil programs of social action.

However, God in the Bible teaches us that He wants his children to love these people who are in need with the same love with which he loves, seeing in every need an opportunity to love and give, without expecting something in return! He gives us the power to do it!

1. We must love as God loves

In Matthew 22:37-39 we find that love for God and love for our neighbor are inseparable. Even 1 John 4:8 states that *"Whoever doesn't love doesn't know God, because God is love."*

God is love, therefore, all of us who have Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior, receive that love as a stamp in our lives. This love is not a virtue that can be saved and hidden as a treasure, but it's a practical love that always seeks to show love to our neighbor, and much more to the one who has a need or is going through a difficult situation in his life.

As we read the previous passages we ask ourselves: Who is my neighbor, who should I love? What would Jesus ask us to do with these people? What can we do if we don't feel love for the one who suffers?

The Lord gave us the power to love, if someone has not yet experienced that power, take some time to seek God and ask his Holy Spirit to fill them with his love. Remember that Galatians 5:22 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit in our lives is primarily love.

2. We must give as God gives

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that when a person suffers or faces some kind of need, there are different reactions from human beings and God wants us to see the opportunity we are given to meet that persons need. We find this in the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37. Divide the class into two or more groups and ask them to analyze the story taking into account the following:

- The state the man was in after being stripped and beaten. (The Bible says that the man was “half dead”, he was in a state of great need and needed help in order to survive. He had been beaten and was badly wounded).
- The characteristics of a priest of the time, the importance of his social function, his economic well-being, and perhaps the reason he was in such a rush. (Leviticus 16 tells us that his garment was a linen robe, he had a belt and a linen turban. His task was to make the sacrifices and he was in a hurry to carry out his religious tasks.)
- The characteristics of the Levite and his ministerial task in the temple. (He was a person between 30 and 50 years old. He was in charge of keeping the temple in order {Numbers 4}).
- The characteristics of a Samaritan of the time and the conflictive relationship between Jews and Samaritans. (Among them there were apparently irreconcilable differences, both civil and religious. Those differences were very old, beginning when the kingdom of Israel was divided. Samaria became the capital of Northern Israel, while Jerusalem was the capital of Southern Israel or Judah. Those from the north worshiped in Samaria and those from the south in Jerusalem. The their prayers, the Jews thanked God they were not Samaritans.)

To complete the activity, ask the students to draw up a list of things that the Samaritan arranged in his heart to give in favor of the needy man (for example: Time, money, effort, etc.). That is why Jesus’ example was very relevant. The injured person wasn’t treated by someone from their own culture, or religion, but by someone whom he considered inferior. Emphasize the words of Jesus at the end of verse 37, as a call to ourselves: *“Go and do likewise.”*

Challenge your students to imagine what would have happened if the Samaritan had calculated everything he was going to lose by helping that needy man, if so he would surely have taken the same position as his predecessors. However, he could act the way he did because he had no interest in what it cost him. Probably the rescued man never had the opportunity to thank him for his merciful action.

It’s important to know that God likes it when we give with a selfless heart not with the intent to obtain some benefit in return (Matthew 6:3-4). The children of God already have a reward from our Lord. When we give an offering of money, time or special dedication to a needy person, we must do so with genuine love, kindness and mercy and not to be flattered for the good we’ve done and not even for personal satisfaction.

In Matthew 25:35-40 we find a series of actions towards the needy. Jesus asks us to act with compassion and mercy in the face of the needs of others. It’s not enough to just have a feeling of sadness but we must do something practical that covers their basic needs.

Talk with your students about the needs they discussed during the “Introductory Activity” and encourage them to move the projects forward. But also encourage them to think of this attitude not as an occasional activity but as a way of life, something they practice daily when they see needs around them.

Those of us who have recognized Jesus as our Savior have many reasons to celebrate. We have been forgiven, freed from eternal punishment and can enjoy eternal communion with God. In the event that someone has not made the decision to recognize Jesus as their Savior, give them the opportunity today to accept this gift that God offers them that they may enjoy eternal life with Him. The Bible reminds us that he whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life, that’s the deepest desire of the heart of God (John 3:16-18).

Review/Apply: Guide your students to read the actions of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:33-35. Then list them on a blackboard or poster board in the order they occurred, letting your students tell you the order. Then, to the right of each phrase, write actions that would be appropriate today in the face of a similar situation.

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. The Samaritan came where the man was. | D. The Samaritan took the injured man to an inn. |
| B. The Samaritan bandaged the mans’ wounds. | E. The Samaritan took care of the man. |
| C. The Samaritan poured oil and wine on the wounds. | F. The Samaritan gave two denarii to the innkeeper. |

Challenge: Say to your students: This week, look around your neighborhood and think about how you can personally do something to help a neighbor. If you need to prepare something, make a plan and then do it. If you do this every week, doing something for your neighbor will become part of your life and it will give you the opportunity to talk about Christ to others and show His love to others through your actions.



God Takes Care of Me

Lesson

9

Sharon Viquez • Costa Rica

Objective: That the students understand that seeking God is the best thing we can do in life and that He provides lovingly for his children.

Memory Verse: “For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” Matthew 6:32



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Magazines, newspapers, cardboard or large paper to make a mural, glue, scissors, colored markers.
- Instructions: Divide your students into groups and have them cut out pictures that portray particular needs (i.e., clothing, food, fun, etc.). Then have them paste the pictures on cardboard or a large piece of paper in the specific groupings. Conclude the activity by enforcing the fact that God provides for our needs.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Signs or advertisements for houses for sale, clothing sales, university offers, car sales, restaurant ads, etc... Bank notes and coins. Picture of birds in the trees, different types of flowers, and of Jesus with his arms extended. Plain paper and pens for your students.
- Instructions: Create a collage with the advertisements on a large sheet of paper, subtly place the flowers and birds in the center of the collage and place the picture of Jesus at the top. Ask your students to write on a piece of paper what this collage teaches them and then talk about their answers.

Connect

Navigate

What is the meaning of life? Some people think they live to work, because they must work to earn money and be able to eat and they must eat to live and so that's it. So “the ultimate end of life” seems to be reduced to what can be obtained through the money that's earned. Therefore, “the things that can be acquired” become the measure of how a person lives. Ask: What do you think of this philosophy of life?

Are “things” all there's to life? Is acquiring or accumulating “things” all that the human being must want in life? And is acquiring money to get things what must occupy all his attention to the point of anxiety and concern?

The passage we're studying, Matthew 6:25-33, begins with the statement “Therefore I tell you.” According to Dictionary.com, “Therefore” means “in consequence of that; as a result; consequently” and expresses a reason for what will be said next. Jesus was coming to the end of a speech about material goods that he began in Matthew 6:19-24, where he was strongly confronting the listeners by asking them: Where is your heart? How is your vision? Who is your lord?

It seems that if we have clear answers to the previous three questions, we will understand what produces anxiety, what the ultimate goal of human life is and what the supreme goal for which we should strive is. And what is anxiety? Dictionary.com defines anxiety as: “distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune.” Jesus tells us that there are things for which we should not strive, that is, we should not worry excessively about these things: Food, drink and clothing and in the same verse, it tells us why: “*Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?*”(Matthew 6:25b).

1. The confrontation

There's a dilemma observed in verse 19 of this chapter, in which the Lord confronts his people Israel and which we, his church, must also consider: Where is your heart? Matthew 6:19-21. The first thing that must be clearly defined in our lives is that our treasures transcend the material goods that we can accumulate on this earth. Are material goods bad? No. But, the “distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune” (anxiety) and living to acquire more goods every day, dilutes our purpose in life and hinders us. This is Jesus' warning. “*Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?*”

The first question in the previous section of the passage we are studying, is about vision, (Matthew 6:22-23). What is your vision focused on? The world seeks success. Ask: How does the world measure if you are a successful person? (Allow students to comment). Unfortunately, the world measures success by what a person has, “the things” or objects. Again, having material assets, wanting to have a decent house, an academic background, etc., is not the problem. The problem is to believe that these things are the ultimate goal of human existence, thus distorting God's plan for us.

The last statement in that section is vital. It implies that we must make a choice. Who will you serve? Jesus makes a radical point here, no one can serve two masters. This is a confrontation of our will. Sooner or later one of the two will occupy most of our time, who are you a servant to? God or the success that wealth in this world can bring you?

2. The Warning

The warning that Matthew 6:19-24 gives us is about things and the anxiety that human beings develop in trying to accumulate them. Ask: Why do we do it? Ask your students to approach the board and write on it possible answers. They will possibly say things like: They are necessary, we need the money to live, etc.

A large number of people live under societies idea success and not under the Biblical concept of success. The success of society says: "You must depend on yourself to get everything you want"; Biblical success says: "Trust in God" and concentrate "your greatest effort to please him."

Trusting God doesn't mean that we should have a passive attitude toward life and "do nothing", claiming that God will provide everything. The issue in this lesson is the anxiety we develop and how it leads us to lose the perception of divine providence, diverts our hearts from God, clouds our vision and takes us away from the center of true worship, putting us at the crossroads of God or riches.

God, throughout Scripture praises man for his work. In Genesis 1:28, he gave a job to Adam and Eve to be stewards of creation. In Proverbs 6:6-11, the Scriptures praise the laborious work of the ant and rebukes the lazy. In 1 Timothy 5:8 Paul confronts believers for not providing the necessary resources for their family.

Jesus didn't condemn possessions, nor seek after them, on the contrary, He has given everything to us for our enjoyment (1 Timothy 4:4). The warning is that our confidence, our value, is not found in things, but in God (1 Timothy 6:17). If we find our security, trust and courage in God, then we can understand the Biblical principle of Matthew 6:33.

3. The comparison

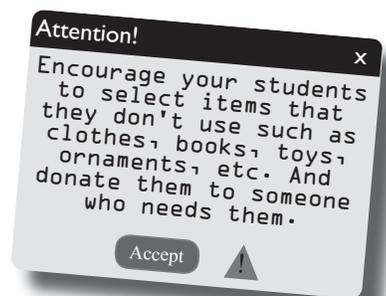
God provides for the birds and clothes the flowers, aren't you worth much more than they are? (Matthew 6:26-29) We must not strive for those things that God has promised to provide. The desire to have things can bring harm to our physical and mental health, it can affect the way we interact with others and decrease our ability to trust God.

Planning and anxiety aren't the same. We must do our part by preparing for our future, but we must be completely grounded in the truth that God takes care of us. He must occupy our hearts and must be the one in whom we set are vision. He is the Lord who has promised to take care of us. Anxiety is an expression of disbelief in the promise that God will provide everything that He knows we need.

Review/Apply: Answer the following questions.

1. What is the anxiety? (Distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune.)
2. According to Matthew 6:25, why should we not strive for food, drink and clothing? (Because life is more than food and the body more than clothing.)
3. Are material goods bad? (No. Unless they become your focus, then they are bad because you are putting them before God.)
4. What is the difference between the definition of "success" from a social point of view and a biblical view? (The success in society says, "I must depend on myself to get everything I want"; Biblical success says "Trust in God" and concentrate "your greatest effort to please him.")
5. Name four harmful aspects of the desire. (It damages our physical and mental health, affects the way we interact with others and diminishes our ability to trust in God.)
6. God assigned a task to man and woman in Genesis 1:28, what was it? ("*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*")
7. We must follow the example of the ant that according to Proverbs 6:6-11 does what: ("*Stores its provisions in the summer, and gathers its food at harvest.*")
8. In 1 Timothy 5:8 What do the Scriptures teach us about those who don't provide for their families? (They are worse than an unbeliever.)
9. What is the conclusion about anxiety? (It's an expression of disbelief in the promise that God will provide for our needs.)

Challenge: Say to your class: One of the best ways to learn not to hold on to material goods is to let go of them. Look through your belongings this week, select some and donate them to people who need them. It's better to give than to receive.



Don't Judge

Lesson

10

Jessica Castro • Spain

Objective: That the students understand that judging others is harmful to them and doesn't please God.

Memory Verse: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Matthew 7:1-2



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Two large handkerchiefs to use as blindfolds, two volunteers willing to allow others to do their makeup, makeup (i.e., eyeliner, lipstick and anything else you want to add.). If you don't have volunteers, print two pictures of a young woman's face in black and white, and have markers or crayons in the colors you want them to use to draw makeup and color the hair.
- Instructions: Ask the girls who volunteered to come to the front of the class or paste the drawings on a wall or blackboard. Ask for two additional volunteers, male or female, who are willing to do the girls' makeup or draw the faces on the pictures. The additional volunteers should be blindfolded.

When they are done, ask the participants if they think they did well and if they think they would have done better without blindfolds. Then tell your class that the same thing happens in real life. Many people aren't able to see their own mistakes, but they are eager to correct others and usually, they only make things worse.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Dark glasses, a piece of red cellophane paper.
- Instructions: A week ahead of time, ask everyone to bring very dark glasses to class. As you begin the activity, have them put on the dark glasses. Then, without allowing them to see it beforehand, show them the red cellophane paper and ask them what color it is. Don't let them get by with simply saying "I don't know" for an answer. More often than not, they will say the wrong of color.

Use this activity to help them understand how a person can believe that he is correct, when in reality he is not.

Connect

Navigate

How awkward it is to have something in your eye! True? We can't be calm, our eye starts to tear and it hurts. Probably more than once we've had to stop what we were doing because of the discomfort we feel and because whatever is in our eye prevents us from seeing what is being done. Ask: What would we think if the dentist who is going to remove a tooth has this problem? Could they do a good job? No one would let themselves be treated by that dentist, at least not until whatever is causing the eye discomfort has been removed and the dentist can see better. The passages of Matthew 7:1-6 and James 4:11-12 give us the reasons why we must remove whatever prevents us from seeing correctly before we judge others.

1. What God doesn't like

When Jesus was among us he shared with us the will of the Father. The Sermon on the Mount covered many topics and one of them wasn't judging others. This was a mandate or rule that He left us. However, it wasn't the first time this was discussed in scripture. In the Old Testament God made known to his people his will regarding our relationship with Him and with others.

In Exodus 20:16, the ninth commandment says: "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." False testimony is an indirect way of judging someone. It's bad for another person to be misjudged. For example, if I say false things about someone to others, those who listened to me will create in their minds a prejudice against the person of whom I spoke and will no longer see them as before.

If we look for the meaning of the word "judge", according to Dictionary.com it is: "to form a judgement or opinion of; decide upon critically".

When you give your opinion about someone you must be very careful, because you can easily be talking badly about that person; and therefore, go against the commandment of our Lord.

We must avoid judging others because it's a command from God, but in addition, doing so will help us to have healthier and stronger personal relationships. God gave us this commandment because he wants to see his love reflected in us and through us.

2. With the same measure

If you try to put on a piece of clothing that's not your size, there will be problems. Either it will be too big or it will be too small.

Using this example, we can make a comparison with reality. Nowadays people try to work wonders to fit the parameters that exist in our world, for example clothing fashion. We judge people according to the fashion of the moment and if someone wears something different, they are considered "out of fashion". But this not only occurs in the secular sphere but, unfortunately, also within the church. The following illustration talks about this:

"We will call him John. John is disheveled, barefoot, with a plain shirt and pants. This is how he dressed during his four years of university studies. He is brilliant but somewhat quiet. He became a Christian while studying at the university.

In front of the university there's a conservative church of refined people. They want to minister to young students, but they don't know how. One day, John decided to visit that church. He entered in his usual attire (the service had already begun), walked down the aisle in search of a place to sit, but didn't find one. People looked somewhat uncomfortable, nobody dared to speak. John approached the pulpit, but finding no place, sat down on the carpeted floor. There was tension in the air. The minister watched as a well-dressed, gray-haired old deacon slowly headed towards John. He was a pious, cultured and refined man. As he walked, people thought to themselves: "We cannot blame him for what he is going to do. After all, it's not expected that an old man understands a young man, much less, one who sits like that on the floor." It took awhile for him to get to the front, his cane tapping the floor as he walked. The silence was absolute, you couldn't even hear the breath of those present. The minister couldn't preach as he waited in expectation to see what the old man would do. Then, they watched as the old man released his cane and with great difficulty sat on the floor next to John in order to worship God with him. (Adapted from the website of Christian resources. <http://www.webselah.com/el-anciano-diacono> [Consultation: September 11, 2012].)

In this illustration, everyone judged the young man by his clothes and for sitting on the floor of the church. The young man didn't fit into the expectations of their closed minds.

We cannot expect everyone to "measure up" to our same standards. We tend to see others in relation to what we think is right or wrong, without thinking about their situation, or their point of view. We must remember the words of Christ in verse 2b "...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." In the same way we treat others, we will be treated.

This makes us see that we need to know each other a little better, to make an analysis of our own character. People, many times, project their own defects or failures onto others (Romans 2:1). In Matthew 22:39, Jesus gives us the second great commandment: "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" It's important that we love ourselves in order to love others as they are and this can be achieved only with the help of God..

3. Only God judges

Moving a little further in the passage in Matthew 7:1-6, specifically in verses 3 and 4, Jesus asked two questions that clarified the teaching he was giving. And later, in verse 5 Jesus admonished listeners to take care of themselves before trying to help a brother.

James 4:11-12 reprimands us for speaking badly about anyone or judging others, because we aren't only judging people but also God's law. Being more specific, if I judge someone, I am judging the Law because with that attitude I am saying that my opinion is better than the law of God, but who are we to judge?

Therefore, only the one who made the Law has the power to judge, since our judgment is according to the flesh (John 8:15-16), but His is perfect and holy, because He is holy (Leviticus 11:44).

Jesus ends by saying: "*Do not give dogs what is sacred; don't throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*" (v. 6) This verse tells us that we should not waste our time with foolish and rebellious people who don't want to listen to advice, let alone be like them. God wants to work in our lives in an extraordinary way, but if we don't give him a place in our lives, He'll never force us and he'll just let us wallow in our filth like pigs.

Review/Apply: Have your students unscramble the letters and find the words that complete the Bible verse. "*Do not vige dsgo what is sacred; don't wrtroh your lsaper to sgpi. If you do, they may pemaltr them under their efte, and turn and erta you to ecipes."* Matthew 7:6

Challenge: Say to your class: Today the Lord is challenging us to level up. He wants us to mature spiritually. Make the decision to change; and every time you see someone with the intention of judging them, stop, close your eyes and say to God: "Lord, help me to see this person with your eyes." You will soon see how your vision of things will change. Practice this during the week and keep track of how many times you were able to avoid judging someone.

The Golden Rule

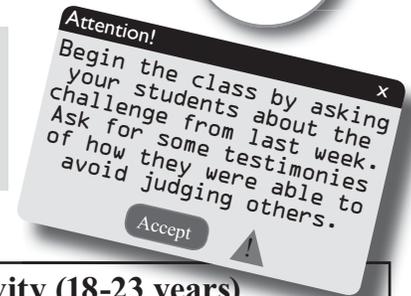
Lesson

11

Natalia Pesado • USA

Objective: That the students understand that their actions towards their neighbor will always have consequences.

Memory Verse: *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.* Matthew 7:12



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Blackboard and chalk, or poster board and markers.
- Instructions: Ask your students to make a list of how they would like other people to treat them (i.e., that my mom wouldn't yell at me when I don't take out the trash quickly, that my supervisor at work/teacher at school will appreciate it when I try hard, etc). At the end of the list and after everyone who wishes has shared, ask them to reflect on how they can begin to do each of the things on the list to other people. Ask them: What the results might be?

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard and chalk, or poster board and markers.
- Instructions: Ask your students to make a list of five complicated situations between people that they know of (i.e., a divorce, a conflict between parents and children, a conflict between co-workers or school friends). After completing the list, think about how the "golden rule" could be applied to each situation. If they are unsure, let them know that these topics will be studied in the lesson.

Connect

Navigate

Have you ever heard the phrase "the golden rule"? What do you think it means? Perhaps, it's an instrument to measure inches on something made of gold? In today's lesson we will study more closely this famous phrase that so many people know but rarely apply.

In the history of mankind, there have been certain phrases that have been repeated through the years from generation to generation, and these phrases are sometimes related to important truths in life that have never ceased to apply to the human experience. It's not surprising that one of these phrases was spoken by Jesus, since all his words were truths of great importance to human beings. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught a reality that resonated in the ears of the listeners: "*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.*" In today's lesson we will study what this teaching means for our lives today.

1. Why did Jesus teach the Golden Rule?

Humans have the unique ability to relate to other humans and this differentiates humans from any other living creature. God gave them the ability to feel agape love, the ability to think from another person's perspective, and even the ability of language to communicate thoughts and ideas. God also gave them the inner need to feel loved, accepted and valued. It's undeniable that humans need each other for a full and satisfying life. That was God's design! However, it's interesting to note that one of the situations that causes the greatest stress in life is conflict in interpersonal relationships. That is, those same relationships that a human needs to feel good about their life, can at the same time be the cause of great affliction and bitterness and in some cases even produce thoughts of wanting to take their own life.

Simultaneously, God's main commandment for the life of the Christian includes a requirement for social life (Matthew 22:37-39).

It's for this reason that Jesus took time to teach spiritual truths that can help us to have harmony in our interpersonal relationships. One of these truths is a teaching of Christ's that has become known as "the golden rule", because it's a moral law of high value. Jesus declared in Matthew 7:12, "*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*"

We see that Jesus taught the golden rule with the purpose of helping his followers to be able to fulfill the most important commandment of God's law and at the same time to enjoy one of the most beautiful blessings that God wishes to give us: That of having healthy and satisfying interpersonal relationships.

2. How should we apply the Golden Rule?

The golden rule is a phrase that's understood clearly, logically and simply. Jesus explained that the best way to know how to treat others is to think about how we would like others to treat us and put that into practice towards others. At first glance, the goal seems easy to achieve; However, a second look results in the realization that following the golden rule will take a lot of effort and will be a lifelong project.

“Christianity ... is ... something else. The golden rule had been established but in a negative way before Christ appeared. Confucius said: “Do not do to others what you don't want them to do to you.” The Jewish rabbis had a similar saying. But it's generally recognized that it was Jesus who presented his positive aspect, which is something very different. Refusing to steal is one thing; but lending a helping hand is another.” (Beacon Bible Commentary. Volume 6. CNP, Missouri, p.90).

The teaching of the golden rule asks the followers of Jesus to always seek to make others feel good about themselves like we desire to have others make us feel about ourselves. It's important to note that it would not be according to Jesus' desire to demand that others apply it to us in an obligatory manner or in inappropriate ways. What Jesus wanted to communicate to his followers was that they were the source of good actions towards others in an intentional, motivated and constant manner.

The opportunities to apply the golden rule will be presented in the Christian's life over and over again and we must be ready at all times to respond with love. There will be circumstances in which applying the golden rule will be very expensive, either economically, emotionally or by giving our time. The follower of Jesus is called to demonstrate the golden rule towards others even at times when it's not convenient to their personal agenda or when it requires a special sacrifice of possessions. The key to the golden rule is to be intentional in its application and remember that the results will be a great blessing in the life of the Christian and also for the glory of God.

3. How can we apply the Golden Rule?

As we read the words of Jesus, we realize that although the phrase is easy to understand, it won't necessarily be easy to apply in daily life. Our pride, selfishness and greed are the great barriers to applying the teaching of Jesus. When we remember or another person reminds us of Jesus' golden rule to encourage us to apply it in a given situation, our pride may also say: “But why am I going to apologize if it was the other person who started all this!” Or “I don't want to help with that, besides, the other person is in this difficult situation because of their own decisions!” However, the golden rule always applies for the followers of Jesus.

Although it would be easy for us to make a wish list of how we would like others to treat us (that my brothers would not use my things, that my parents would understand what I am going through, that my classmates would not make fun of me), we know that, in our daily lives, we sometimes don't apply those same things to others when it costs us effort. Moreover, perhaps our loved ones would say that we do the opposite sometimes: that we don't forgive, that we don't help, that we don't control our anger. The time will come when we realize that although our intentions to comply with the golden rule are noble and honest, we cannot, in our own strength, do it. It's impossible.

God made provision to help us fulfill his commands, and Jesus promised that when He was no longer here on earth, the Father would send the Holy Spirit to empower us (Acts 1:8).

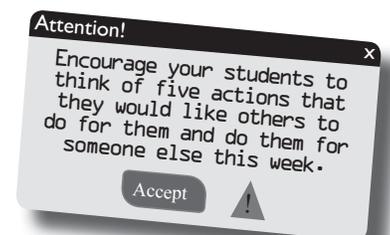
The Holy Spirit was sent by the Father so that we can live a life of victory in doing the will of God. God has not left us alone in this situation, but quite the opposite, He is with us always.

Review/Apply: Have your students fill in the missing words without looking in the Bible. Then ask them to write the verses in their own words.

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We don't know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.” (Romans 8:26).

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26).

Challenge: Say to your class: What is your perspective of the golden rule? In today's lesson, you have learned what Jesus taught and all that this short phrase encompasses. The most important thing is to remember that the Holy Spirit is available to help you apply it in your daily life. Think of five actions that you would like others to do to you and do them for other people.



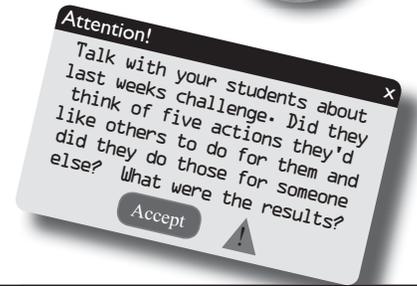
A Good Fruit

Lesson 12

Annabella de San José • Canada

Objective: That the students understand that the Christian life must be shown in actions and that we will be judged by them.

Memory Verse: *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.* Matthew 7:18



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: A good quantity of seeds from different kinds of fruit, divided into small bags for each group, paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Form groups according to the number of students you have in class. Give each group a bag of seeds (try to keep the contents in the bags), paper and pencils. Each group is to guess what fruit each seed belongs to, writing down the names of the fruit on the paper. The group that guesses the most in the shortest time wins.

It's easy to identify the seeds because we generally know or have previously tasted the fruit to which they belong. We know that an apple seed will produce apples. Every person, especially Christians, will be known by the fruit they produce, no matter whether they are a pastor, a leader or a layman.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Sheets of paper and pencils for each student.
- Instructions: Ask each student to write down five things about themselves, three that are true and two that are false. When everyone finishes, have each person read their list aloud in the order they deem necessary to confuse the group. The group must guess what things aren't true on the list.

We can all try to deceive others about who we are but sooner or later the deception will come to light.

Connect

Navigate

A Christian from Korea visited one of the missionaries there and told him that he had learned the Sermon on the Mount and wanted to quote it for him. He immediately repeated word for word all three chapters that make up the Sermon on the Mount. When he finished, the missionary told him that now it was necessary to put these teachings into practice; to which the believer replied: "This is how I learned it: First I tried to memorize it all at once but the words went away. Then I memorized a verse by heart, went out in search of one of my neighbors and I practiced the teachings of that verse and the words suited me well. So I learn the whole sermon that way." (500 illustrations. Alfredo Lerin. Mundo Hispano, 2003).

1. The modern world, the narrow or wide door?

Our modern society is a society of mass communication. Twitter, Facebook, smartphones, etc. they allow a message to reach thousands of people in seconds and our enemy the devil, who prowls like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, finds ways to use mass media as a means to try to destroy the values and principles established by God little by little. Many messages sent daily are far from fulfilling the expectations God has for his children. Every day we can see thousands of messages, some inconsequential and others very controversial, which, without thinking and analyzing, many of us respond with a simple "like" or "thumbs up" because it has "gone viral". Could this be an example what of Jesus referred to when he talked about not entering through the wide door that leads to destruction? Jesus knew that crowds can influence the lives of individuals. Groups of demonstrators or protestors try to sway us to their ideas and "bullies" influence us as well.

How do we go against the flow? Today the crowds are more dangerous than ever, the crowds tell us that sexual freedom, homosexuality, drugs and everything that makes us feel good and gives us free rein to "natural" desires are fine. To really fight against the masses today is difficult because we can expose ourselves to humiliation that can be seen throughout the world in only a minute, because of technology. But going against the flow is God's call for his children.

When Jesus said to enter through the narrow door, he was probably trying to think of a clear example of how to teach us that we are individually responsible for our decisions in life. The example of the narrow door used by Jesus makes us think that when we enter through a door, we usually do it one by one. That is why He calls each one of us personally to Holiness. If we study his Word, in it we will find a way to face the daily challenges of our lives with the help of the Holy Spirit.

2. Wolves in sheep's clothing

We have talked about mass media and this is precisely what the false prophets of our time are using to make us fall into their traps. Generally, when people read this passage, they immediately think of famous preachers, but even around us, there are false teachers to whom we must be aware, because they come with novel ideas that conveniently adapt to the desires of our youth. Jesus Christ said that there were going to be times when men would call good evil and evil good. Ask: Can you think of examples of this? Topics such as virginity, fidelity or modesty, nowadays become myths and mockery through videos, blogs or advertisements on the Internet. The masses are pushing us through the wide door. They are the ferocious wolves that Jesus was talking about.

3. The good tree bears good fruit

If you have the opportunity to live in an area that grows fruit trees, you know that fruit trees in different regions of the world produce fruit differently. For example, fruit trees grown in Latin America tend to produce fruit that's generally sweeter, more colorful and tasty than in other areas of the world. But no matter how good the weather is in any region, if the trees have any disease or sickness, their fruit won't be good. Christians are called to bear good fruit (Matthew 7:16-23).

When we talk about entering through the narrow door we must understand that God is going to ask for individual accounts of our performance in this world. Ask: How do we react individually to the pressure of the crowds? How do we act individually before the declaration of false doctrines disseminated by the mass media? The answer we give to these questions is important to determine what kind of fruit we are bearing.

Jesus Christ said that *"Every tree that doesn't bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."* (Matthew 7:19) This is a serious warning to us as Christians, especially because He adds that *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 7:20) We can try to deceive people with false appearances, but God knows how we act, what we say, what we write, what we read or see. Sooner or later the fruit of who we truly are will come to light. Young people should be aware that even when mom or dad, or the elders of the church don't look at their text messages, their Facebook page or their Twitter account, God sees it and knows what kind of fruit is there. God sees what we like. His wish is that we be careful, that we don't enter through the wide door through which thousands and thousands enter each day, most without knowing what they are doing.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever and his desire for this changing world that we are living is that we remain steadfast in Him. Instead of hiding from the advances of science and technology, we can use those advances to proclaim his teachings. His desire is that we be light, but when we search the internet, we will find photos that make us doubt a young person's claim to follow Christ. We must be careful of what we post and make sure that's a good representation of who we are in Christ.

Review/Apply: Have your students read Matthew 7:13-23 and answer the following questions.

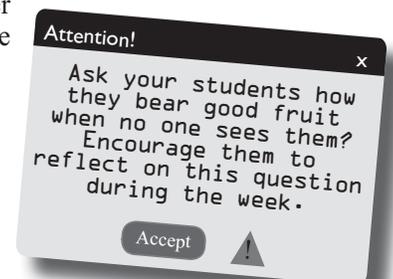
1. What does it mean for you to enter through the narrow door?
2. Who could be the so-called false teachers of our time?
3. What are the risks of getting carried away by the crowds?
4. How should we act when we are faced with something everyone says is good, but according to biblical teachings is something that's wrong?
5. What should we do with current technology and science?

Guide your students to use their technological skills to present the message of Christ. For example:

- Prepare a list of Internet sites where you find Christian devotions. The idea is to find alternatives to use technology and mass communication to learn more about God.
- Creatively, in your own words, re-write the Bible verses from this lesson.
- Create a network of contacts in your Sunday school class and during the week send text messages to encourage your classmates to bear good fruit, pray for each other, etc.
- Encourage your students to create a mural to help the youth of your church remember that they must stand firm in the teachings of Jesus. (Use technology if you have the opportunity.)

Challenge: Say to your class: Analyze a normal day in your life. Could you say that your behavior at home, school, work or when you are alone is abundant in fruit worthy of a consecrated Christian?

God sees your text messages and the things you like on the Internet, do you think He considers you a tree that's bearing good fruit?



Decisions

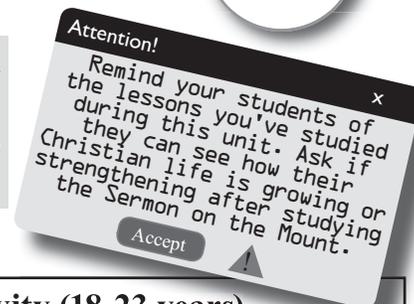
Lesson

13

Natalia Pesado • USA

Objective: That the students recognize the importance of building their own lives on the foundation that's Christ.

Memory Verse: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Matthew 7:24



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Ask your students to draw a map describing the path they would take to get from the church to their homes. If they can, they should use the exact name of the streets they would take and how far they would travel on each street. At the end, reflect on what would happen if someone doesn't know the path well and makes a wrong turn. This could lead to taking longer to arrive or getting lost. Compare this to the situations that a young person may experience if they make bad decisions and end up living in a difficult situation.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Divide the class into small groups and have each group design a "dream house". After a few minutes, discuss together what would happen if the base of the house wasn't built well and the floor began to crack and then the cracks began to climb up the walls. Compare it to the "cracks" that can harm a young person's life (having premarital sex and getting pregnant at a young age, getting involved with drugs or alcohol, etc.).

Connect

Navigate

1. Why do I have to decide?

In Matthew 7:24-29, Jesus describes two types of people, a person who "hears these words of mine and puts them into practice" (Matthew 7:24) and the person who "hears these words of mine and doesn't put them into practice" (Matthew 7:26). This comparison helps us understand that each person has the ability and responsibility to make a decision about their actions. Ask: What things do we decide on a daily basis?

God allows us to enjoy communion with Him, to enjoy the nature that he created in our world, to enjoy the warmth of being with other people, family, friends, brothers and sisters, our church family, and many other things.

Along with all these privileges, come great responsibilities. One of the most important responsibilities that every person has is to decide how they will live their life here on earth. The decision of how we will live life begins at some point in our childhood, when we begin to reason and understand that we did something wrong that we could have done differently and from that moment on, every day we will make countless decisions that will determine the trajectory that will lead our life. Decisions that are unavoidable include: falling asleep, sooner or later, doing or not doing homework, going to Sunday school or not, among many others. Certainly there are people who may have the idea that they don't need to decide whether or not to follow God's ways, and they may think they can take a "neutral position", but that's not true; the truth is that if a person is not intentional and doesn't take charge of his decisions, he will soon realize that something or someone else will take control of his life (for example, laziness, other people, drugs or alcohol). We can conclude then, that we must make a decision because it's part of our human existence, just as is breathing, eating or sleeping.

2. What do I have to decide?

In today's passage of study, Jesus is very clear about the two options between which we must decide. In all of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, listeners have a basic decision to make about each situation they face; we could say that each person, when faced with a situation, must choose whether they will act as Jesus teaches or will they do the opposite. What friendships will I have? How responsible will I be? Will I serve God with my gifts? Who will I marry? Will I continue studying? What will I study? What kind of person will I be? Ask: Think for a moment about the past week or the coming week, what decisions have you made or will you make? They don't have to be complicated decisions, they can be one as simple as, "I studied for the exam I had".

In conclusion, we see that there are many decisions that we must make throughout life, but the most influential decision will be: “Will I always do what pleases God?”.

3. When do I have to decide?

People reach a time in their development in which they gain the ability to reason about their actions and make decisions about those actions. Decisions will vary by age; a four-year-old child (lying to mom about whether she ate the cookies or about hitting her little sister) or an eighteen-year-old person (respecting her friends with her words and actions, or taking drugs or alcohol). The reasoning capacity is perfected with the maturity acquired over time. With secular study and the study of God’s word we will have more ability and responsibility to make the best decision.

We must bear in mind that there are people with developmental problems (for example, a person with Downs Syndrome) who may not be able to reason in the same way as a person without such disability, God knows the level of responsibility of each person. We must recognize that it’s vitally important to make the fundamental decisions correctly as soon as possible in our lives. We must strive to acquire more wisdom and not become lazy or foolish in order to have less responsibility. In knowing how to make decisions that are pleasing to God and striving to build our life on a strong foundation, we will enjoy great rewards and blessings. One of those blessings will be avoiding painful and harmful situations.

4. How should I decide?

Deciding how to build your life on the rock may seem like a difficult task to put into practice in your daily life, but that’s not necessarily the case. Choosing a strong foundation is similar to what happens in school: to get the best grade in a math course a student must do several things like attending class, paying attention to the teacher’s explanations, doing homework and studying, if they do all those things, the natural result will be a good grade. Similarly, in our lives we make many decisions such as what style of clothing is modest and acceptable to wear, how should I interact with my friends or my boy/girlfriend, how should I interact with my parents and siblings, how should I do my best at school/work, what should I do with the money I have, what should I do to take care of my physical, mental and spiritual health? The results of these decisions will be evident in the foundation that our life will have. The most practical way to build our lives on the strong foundation so that it’s not destroyed, is to seek to know more of God’s will for us every day (that is, read the Bible and/or a devotional book, pray, talk to our parents or a trustworthy person and receive their advice, attend church and Sunday school, be part of the church’s youth group, read Christian books that address issues of teenagers and youth, etc.); The more we know what God wants for our lives and the more we strive to do His will, the more our lives will be more protected. God’s will is always the best and being at the center of His will is the safest.

In Jesus’ time, in Palestine, the houses were built with stones and bricks made of mud dried in the sun and when the rainy season came, the water loosened the mixture and weakened the walls, which made them more likely to collapse. When storm water fell on all the houses in the region, those who had built their houses on the stones didn’t have the concern that people who had built their house on the sand had. Because the sand moved with the water and dragged the loose walls until the house fell. Today, the most important structure is our life; if a person doesn’t make life decisions according to Jesus’ teachings, their life is in danger of being destroyed (for example: a serious illness caused by drugs or alcohol, a suicide because of a serious family problem, etc.). But the person who decides to make decisions according to the teachings of Jesus, builds his life confidently, knowing that difficult times will come, but life will go on. The decision is ours. Let’s build wisely!

Review/Apply: Allow time to answer the following questions:

1. What decisions have I made recently? (Include all kinds of decisions from very simple to more complicated)
2. What decisions should I make in the next few days? (Include all kinds of decisions from very simple to more complicated)

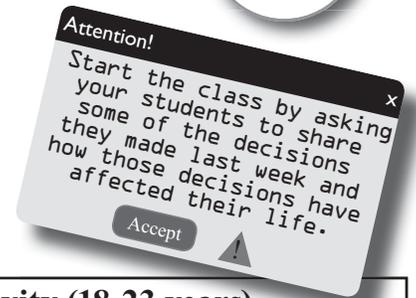
Then have your students divide into small groups and write a parable like that of the wise and foolish builders but using a current theme and include an example that applies to a student of their same age. (For example: A young man decided not to study and deceived his teachers by implying that he spent all his time of studying (sand) and another student who decided to take advantage of his study time to actually study (rock). Upon finishing studying both had the possibility of a scholarship to go to a good university with all expenses paid. When they were presented with the final exam, the one that didn’t study failed the exam and didn’t get into the university while the other student passed and was accepted.)

Challenge: Encourage your students to ask God to help them make decisions that will help them strengthen their lives and help them continue to build lives based on the rock that’s Jesus. During this next week, ask your students to write down every decision they make. This will help them analyze what type of construction they are doing in their lives.



Objective: That the student recognizes the difference between the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit.

Memory Verse: *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you won't gratify the desires of the flesh.* Galatians 5:16



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Four baskets you can put fruit in. Fill two baskets with good fruit mixed with rotten fruit and the other two baskets should be empty.
- Instructions: Divide the class into two groups. Give each group a basket of fruit (good and rotten) and an empty basket. Then have your students transfer the fruit from one basket to another using only their mouth. The group that does it first wins. Give some time and see how they react. If neither of the groups move the rotten fruit, finish the game in a draw. Then reflect with them about what happened, you can ask them how they felt? Was all the fruit the same? Why didn't they move all the fruit? What feelings did they have about the rotten fruit?

The works of the flesh are comparable to rotten fruit, which only brings disgust to those who taste them. The fruit of the Spirit is comparable to the good fruit, which is pleasing to everyone who tastes them.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Sharp objects, if possible with rust on them and soft, delicate objects that smell good.
- Instructions: Cover the eyes of two students with a bandana and have them smell and touch the objects. Ask them which object would they like to keep if they could?

Explain that the fruit of the Spirit is comparable to good objects that attract others and make others feel good and that the works of the flesh are similar to sharp objects that only cause hurt and that can even lead to death.

Connect

Navigate

The contemporary or post-modern current says that everyone should live as they see fit, doing what they want and following the desires of their mind and body, for this reason there's much immoral self-indulgence. People don't know how to set limits on their own impulses and the farther they are from God the harder it is for them set limits. Since man turned away from God he has become more and more corrupt. Proverbs 3:5-7 says *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil."* But man is doing the opposite, that's why the Bible declares in Galatians 5:17 that the desires of the flesh are contrary to the desires of the Spirit and vice versa. But we, the children of God, who already know the truth, must do what His word says; but are we doing it? The passage in Galatians 5:16-24 wasn't addressed to unbelievers but to Christians. So, is it possible that a child of God is living carnally instead of being led by the Spirit of God?

1. The Works of the Flesh

"Work" means: "exertion or effort directed to produce or accomplish something; labor; toil." (Dictionary.com) When talking about the works of the flesh we refer to the facts or acts produced by a person who follows his own wishes. According to the apostle Paul, the body has the desire to do things that displease God. As we see in Romans 7:14,16-23 and Psalm 51:5, the sin that dwells in us makes us prone to do evil, even if we know in advance that we should not do it.

A. And what are the works of the flesh?

In Galatians 5:19-21 he mentions one by one the works of the flesh, which are: *"...sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like..."* (At this point of the lesson, divide your class into several groups. Prepare in advance pieces of paper with the syllables of the words of the works of the flesh on them. Distribute to each group two to four of the words {depending on how many groups you have} and have them form the correct words with the syllables. The group that finishes first will be the winner).

Obviously, these aren't the only works of the flesh, there are many more that aren't specifically mentioned such as getting high or lying, but all this is included in the phrase that says: *"... and the like"* (Galatians 5:21). According to the passage in Galatians 5:17, all these practices are contrary to the Spirit; that is, they don't please God.

B. What are the characteristics of the one who practices the works of the flesh?

1. They don't follow the Spirit of God. This means that a person has not been filled with the Holy Spirit. By not having the Spirit of God in your life you cannot be guided by Him. The Word of God demands us to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). Only then can we overcome all sinful desire. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says: *"It's God's will that you should be sanctified:"* so, if a believer doesn't consider the importance of being filled by the Holy Spirit and doesn't seek to be sanctified, unfortunately he won't inherit the Kingdom of God .
2. He has neglected his relationship with God, his Creator. If we neglect our communication with God through prayer and reading his Word we will be more likely to fall into the temptations of the devil. When a Christian stops looking for God he begins to worry more about the things of the flesh, than about the things of the Spirit, as it says in Romans 8:5.

C. The works of the flesh can result in horrible consequences

We can first analyze the human sphere. For example, adultery and fornication can spread venereal diseases such as Gonorrhea, Syphilis and even AIDS. Another example is anger, it can lead the person to harm others and even kill. Alcohol consumption is also harmful to your health because it can cause cirrhosis in the liver and also causes social damage (damage to the family, accidents, etc.).

The works of the flesh bring many physical and social complications. Dissension, which means "strong disagreement" along with other works of the flesh can lead to lawsuits. If we look at how the works of the flesh affect us spiritually, they can lead us to eternal death (Romans 6:23a; 8:6a). According to Galatians 5:21b, *"I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this won't inherit the kingdom of God."* This verse is easy to understand, we will simply not be in God's presence.

2. The Fruit of the Spirit

The word "fruit" means, among other things, "anything produced or accruing; product, result, or effect; return or profit" (Dictionary.com). Let's apply this concept to the Holy Scriptures. When a believer is led by God the result will be the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in the believers life. This is something that occurs naturally and is received through faith in Jesus Christ. When a believer is sanctified they no longer have the inclination to do evil (Romans 8:5). The Fruit of the Spirit is something that should characterize a Christian, and others will recognize them because they will resemble Jesus Christ.

A. What is the Fruit of the Spirit?

Ask students to help you define each word by writing them on the board or on a large piece of paper. You can ask what is ...? Love (a feeling, decision, surrender, sacrifice); joy (happiness, delight, satisfaction); peace (harmony, tranquility); patience (tolerance, understanding); kindness (generosity, compassion, mercy); goodness (kindness, mercy); faith (confidence, hope, truth); gentleness (humility, obedience.); self-control (willpower, self-discipline).

Unlike the list of the works of the flesh, there are only nine characteristics, but they are essential for the victorious Christian life.

B. What are the benefits?

By practicing all these things we will gain life (Romans 8:6), we will be recognized as children of God (Romans 8:14), we will be free from all condemnation (Romans 8:1) and we will enjoy fullness of life on this earth, as long as we do what pleases God.

Ask: Have you ever noticed how magnets behave when someone tries to join them at the same pole? They repel against each other? (If possible, take two magnets to demonstrate.) The same thing happens in our spiritual lives, we cannot pretend to be children of God if we live according to the habits and ways of unbelievers. We must seek God and live according to his Spirit, seek holiness, because *"without holiness no one will see the Lord"*. (Hebrews 12:14). Only by seeking after God can we receive and develop the wonderfully attractive characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:24), and finally, be able to do the will of God.

Review/Apply: Allow time (alone or in pairs) for students to write practical examples of characteristic they have observed in a person who has the Fruit of the Spirit in their life. Then answer the questions.

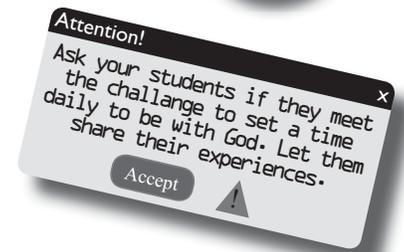
Love (Ex: A person who treats others well.) Joy; Peace; Patience; Kindness; Goodness; Faithfulness; Gentleness; Self-Control

1. What is the Fruit of the Spirit? (Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.)
2. What benefits are there for those who live according to the Spirit of God? (They will receive life, will be recognized as children of God and will be free from all condemnation.)
3. What are the works of the flesh? (sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like)
4. What characterizes the one who practices the works of the flesh? (He has not been sanctified and has neglected his relationship with God.)
5. What are the consequences of living according to the works of the flesh? (It causes physical and social problems; Moreover, it prevents inheriting the Kingdom of God and leads to eternal death.)

Challenge: Say to your class: Romans 13:14 says: *"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh."* God is commanding you to review his presence in you life. How? Look for Him daily. Accept the challenge of establishing a special time to communicate with God.

Objective: That the students understand that love is a Fruit of the Spirit that must be cultivated daily.

Memory Verse: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there's no law.* Galatians 5:22-23



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: A blackboard or poster-board and chalk or a marker.
- Instructions: Divide students into groups. Ask each group to think of five love songs that are popular on the radio. Then, ask them to choose a song and write out a stanza that they remember. Have the groups analyze the lyrics and discuss why they think these songs speak of love. Then have each group share their song with the rest of the class. Have them discuss why they think that these songs speak of true love.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: A blackboard or poster-board and chalk or a marker.
- Instructions: Divide your students into groups and ask them to choose three important characteristics that they would like to find in their ideal partner. Then ask them to act out those characteristics so that the other groups can guess what they are. Finally, ask them why they chose these characteristics and if they think that these characteristics will guarantee them true love.

Connect

Navigate

Love, love, love. Many of us have had or still have a misconception of what love is; possibly due to the influence of mass media. There are as many songs as there are artists that tell us about love. Books have been written about love and it's one of the most searched words on the Internet. The Bible, which is the basis of our beliefs, tells us what the true meaning of love is, what it produces in our lives and how we can cultivate it.

1. The true meaning of Love

What the Bible tells us is that "...*God is love.*" (1 John 4:8). The love of God doesn't need a subject to exist, because God's very essence is love. God's love for man is found in every book of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Therefore, we could consider the Bible to be the greatest love story ever written.

In the Old Testament we see God's love reflected in choosing Israel to be his nation and in the powerful deeds God did in favor of his nation.

But his ultimate expression of love is reflected in the life and death of Jesus Christ. "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" John 3:16.

Ask: "Is it the same to love your mother as to love your friends?" "Is it the same to love your pet as to love your boyfriend or girlfriend?" They'll say no, it's not the same feeling. Ask: "How would you describe the difference?" The Greeks didn't have a single word to refer to love. Usually they used four different words for different kinds of love. The love a young man has for a young lady is the word *Erós*, a passionate love. The love for friends is the word *Phileō*; it speaks of affection, fondness or liking. The kind of love between parents and children is *Storgē*, natural affection. And finally they had the word *Agapē* that means love without limits, loving someone unconditionally. It means that no matter what a person does to us either through insults, offenses or humiliations, we'll still love that person. Therefore it's a feeling that involves both the mind and the heart. It implies the involvement of both the will and emotions. It describes a deliberate effort (which can only be made with God's help) to seek the best for others, including those who seek to harm us.

Christ wants us to have this kind of love, to be like Him. *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”* John 15:12. And that’s precisely what the apostle Paul speaks about in his letter to the Galatians. But how can we have that kind of love? Love is the fruit of the Spirit. That is, in order to have the kind of love that God desires us to have, we must have the Holy Spirit living in us. Only then can we love as God loves.

2. What love produces in our lives

The passage of 1 Corinthians 13, known as “The Love Chapter” is possibly the best description of a Christian full of love God. When we have the love of God in our lives, it’s reflected in love to our neighbor, in love to those around us, but not only a sentimental love but a love that seeks the welfare of others. The love of God in our lives will lead us to be better children, better students, better study partners, better citizens. The love of God in our lives will make us desire to please Him and serve our neighbor. In addition, the love of God in our lives will cause us to forgive offenses in such a way that we don’t hold grudges in our hearts, it will allow us to obey our parents and respect them. The love of God in our life will make us more and more like Jesus. Ask: “How can we reflect God’s love?” Ask for practical examples.

3. Cultivating God's Love

Cultivate, is “to devote oneself to; to seek to promote or foster.” (Dictionary.com) Cultivating love means that we must do everything possible so that the love that’s in us, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, grows and develops more every day. Ask: “What would happen if we stopped watering a plant?” It would possibly dry out, not bear fruit and eventually die. Tell them that the same thing happens with love, if we don’t put all our effort into making it grow, it will be lost, we will no longer have that love in our life. In our world we have many opportunities to show and cultivate the love of God that dwells in our lives. The love of God will always be translated as the love of our neighbor because it’s intimately related. *“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever doesn’t love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they haven’t seen.”* (1 John 4:20)

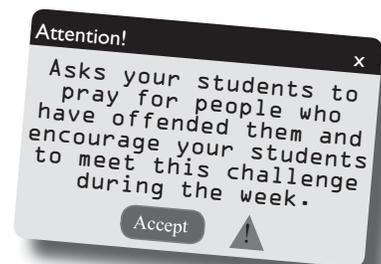
There are many ways to show love to our neighbor. Our neighbors are first of all those who live with us, then those who live near us and finally those with whom we interact daily but who live far from us. In the first group are our parents and siblings and the way to love them is to show them obedience, respect, treatment the well and help them when they ask. In the second group we find our neighbors and neighborhood friends. How do we show them love? By being polite, helping them when we see them in need, for example with grocery bags. There may be elderly people who would be happy with a short visit or a young couple who may sometimes need someone to take care of their young children. Finally, the largest group involves the people at school or in the workplace or just anyone our city. It’s possible to show them love by visiting nursing homes, youth hostels, hospitals and that will bring joy and hope the those you visit. That is cultivating love.

But, the most important and necessary thing is that every day your relationship with the Lord grows deeper and more real, only then can love be received and then you can continue loving others.

Review/Apply: Guide your students to underline the correct answers.

- The different types of love that the Greeks described were:
a. romantic **b.** eros **c.** platonic **d.** phileō **e.** storgē **f.** ideal **g.** agapē
- The passage known as the “Love Chapter” is:
a. John 15 **b.** 1 Corinthians 13 **c.** Matthew 17 **d.** Ephesians 4
- According to 1 John 4:20 a liar is:
a. someone who tells a lie **b.** someone who doesn’t love God
c. someone who doesn’t love his brother or sister **d.** someone who doesn’t tithe
- Answer these questions: What happens if you don’t cultivate love in your life?
What will you do to start cultivating love in your life?

Challenge: Say to your class: Take a few moments and think of someone who recently made you feel bad. It could be a friend who betrayed your trust or maybe your dad or mom embarrassed you in front of your friends. One of the characteristics of love is forgiveness. This week take time to pray for the person who hurt you, asking God to help you forgive them.



What is Joy?

Lesson

16

Yeri Nieto • Mexico

Objective: That the students recognize that joy in the Christian life is based on a personal relationship with Christ and not on circumstances.

Memory Verse: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*
Philippians 4:4



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Pencils, sheets of paper and blackboard.
- Instructions: Ask teenagers to draw two figures on the paper, the first of a joyful person and the second of a sad person. Then ask them to show the drawings to their classmates and describe what they see in the happy person and what they see in the sad person.
Discuss this question: "What characterizes a joyful person?" Write the answers, in the form of concepts, on the board.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Pencils and sheets of paper.
- Instructions: Ask the young people to write on a sheet of paper an extreme circumstance that would cause them sadness. They can use an experience they have been through.
After they've had time to think about it, share an example of your own and talk about it. "Is it possible that in these circumstances a person can show joy?" Allow all answers.

Connect

Navigate

All people go through countless experiences in our lives, some good and some bad; some cause us pain, others bring us satisfaction; Some are tests we didn't expect, others are consequences of our own actions. All people, live in different circumstances and go through different experiences that help us affirm our humanity. However, although we all share many of the same experiences, we don't all share the same response to those circumstances.

Have you noticed that the same experience at home produces different reactions in family members? Two brothers who have spent their entire lives together react differently to the same situation. The same takes place in a married couple, even if they have been married for fifty years.

But in today's lesson we ask ourselves the question: "Is there a characteristic that defines Christian people in all circumstances?"

1. The place of circumstances

The first thing that Christian people need to take into account is that, circumstances affect life but don't determine it.

Consider, as an example, the apostle Paul. We know that during the time he wrote his letter to the Philippians, he was imprisoned (Philippians 1:13-14). And if we read that brief letter carefully, we will realize that he was a little sore because some churches had stopped sending missionary aid; however, in chapter four, he urged the members of the Philippian church to always rejoice. The reason? He was joyful in the midst of tribulations.

This is not strange for Paul. In Acts 16:11-40, he and Silas went to Philippi to preach the gospel, but they ended up in the inner most cell in prison (v. 24); but at midnight these two men prayed and sang hymns to God! (Acts 16:25) and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Circumstances only affect us (positively or negatively), but they will never determine our life.

Let's enjoy! What determines our life is the presence of God; and when God dwells in our being, it brings us joy. A joy that makes us sing inside the darkest dungeon. Joy as a fruit of the Spirit is cultivated and strengthened amid difficult circumstances. This joy goes beyond an emotion or simple joy. It comes from an intimate relationship with God.

2. Thank God for everything

Apostle Paul, at the end of the first epistle to the Thessalonians, wrote several words of council; one of them says: "...give thanks in all circumstances;..." (1 Thessalonians 5:18a).



The second thing we need to remember is that we should thank God in all circumstances.

We may not thank God for diseases, but we thank Him in the midst of them because He can give us strength to get through the illness and He can bring total healing if it's His will. We don't thank God for crisis, but in the midst of the crisis, He'll bring His perfect response to our cry. We don't thank God for the death of a loved one, but He can bring us comfort in the midst of our grief and we believe there's life beyond death. And we thank Him because we know who He is and that He is with us through all circumstances we face.

The Word declares that God has transformed "... *my wailing into dancing...*" (Psalm 30:11). We know Him! We know that He can change all negative circumstances into a blessing. He is a God of love and He works for our good.

When we learn to thank God in all circumstances, then we can smile. Because we know that all the circumstances we go through are temporary ...

Let's be glad! The power of God will bring redemption and restoration, as it always has. If we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it will help us to give thanks and have joy in the midst of any circumstance.

3. A Joy to share

We aren't encouraging you to deny reality. When there's a crisis or illness we don't say "Let us declare that there's no disease" as many preach. Of course there's a crisis! We will encounter awkward circumstances that make us wobble, but faith in Jesus Christ is a perspective that's always looking towards the future.

It is, therefore, Christianity that fosters a life of resurrection and not death. John wrote that "*He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain...*" (Revelation 21:4).

Let's accept reality: If there's a crisis, or illness, or pain, or death, let's accept that circumstance. But we never have to accept defeated from our circumstances! Because God will make his power and glory known in our lives.

He has always done so. We read it in Bible stories. We can corroborate it in the history of Christianity. We have seen it in our local congregation. We have observed it in our lives. The nearer the dawn, the darker the night ... or as Proverbs 4:18 says, "*The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.*"

Paul wrote: "*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*" (2 Corinthians 4:8-10). When our faith is tested and strengthened, people around us will see our joy in God.

The joy of the Lord that inhabits the hearts of all Christian people should not be saved. That joy needs to be shared. According to the Word of God, joy is a characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23); that is, it's undeniable evidence that we enjoy a different life. Thus, when we declare that God changes all things, that includes everything! Even our character: The bad mood, the irritation, the frown, the violent reactions ... If the Lord is with us, if his Holy Spirit inhabits our being, let us live joyfully!

Have you given someone a smile today? Have you taken time today to share the good news? Have you shared something valuable with another person, something that would make them happy? Have you done your best to make people around you feel good? Do people want to stay with you? That would be a good way to test if the Spirit of God is bearing fruit in our lives.

Let's show people the joy of living in Christ! Share the light of Jesus Christ today with a sincere smile and a joyful heart.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to answer the following questions and then have them write a prayer asking for joy as a fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

1. How does our Christian perspective change by knowing that the apostle Paul, when he was in prison, taught that we should always rejoice in the Lord?
2. What are the differences between "thanking God FOR everything" and "thanking God IN everything"? What is the Biblical meaning?
3. If joy is a characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit (like patience, love or goodness), what should I do differently in my daily life to be someone worthy of Christ?

Challenge: Say to your class: This week, try to share the gospel of Jesus Christ differently: Illuminate the lives of those around you with a smile. Prepare a drawing that represents the joy of God in your life and share it with your friends through Facebook or other means of communication.



Does Peace Exist?

Lesson 17

Leticia Cano • Guatemala

Objective: That the students understand that peace is the result of being filled with the Spirit of God.

Memory Verse: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I don't give to you as the world gives.* John 14:27a



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- **Materials:** Rope and an area that has two sides between which the rope can be tied to build a cobweb, about two meters wide. It should be done leaving spaces of various sizes within the cobweb, the largest should be over a meter.
- **Instructions:** Divide the class into two groups. Ask each group to go through the cobweb without touching the ropes. You can tell the group that they are trapped and that the only way out is through this electrified cobweb and they should look for a way to pass through with the help of others. Everyone must go through it. During the exercise, observe the behavior of the participants (if they get angry, fight, help each other). At the end of the exercise, ask each group: "How were the decisions made within you group?" "Were there disagreements?" "How did you solve them?" As you conclude, mention some of the disagreements you observed and make some recommendations.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- **Materials:** Before the students arrive, stick the following questions on the back of the chairs (one question per chair):

What would you do if...

- you were told that your best friend was in an accident and is seriously injured in the hospital?
- you got fired from work?
- your parents told you they are going to get a divorce?
- on your wedding day, your fiancé left you at the altar?

Tell your students that they have a question on their chair and they should find the questions. Instruct them to answer the questions individually. Give them adequate time to reflect on each option. As a class, allow them to share their responses.

Connect

Navigate

Nancy, a teenage daughter of a pastor, had a malignant tumor. After an expensive and fruitless treatment she passed away. In the twilight of her short life, she used to sing: "Peace, peace, wonderful peace; Coming down from the Father above; Sweep over my spirit forever, I pray; In fathomless billows of love!"

In Hebrew SHALOM "is taken from the root word shalom, which means, 'to be safe in mind, body, or estate.' It speaks of completeness, fullness, or a type of wholeness that encourages you to give back." (<https://firm.org.il/learn/the-meaning-of-shalom>) In Greek, EIRENE is defined as "a state of national tranquillity (exemption from the rage and havoc of war); peace between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord; security, safety, prosperity, felicity, (because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous)." (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/eirene.html#>). In Latin peace was used to define a pact, the pacts that the Roman armies established with the conquered territories, was called the Roman PAX. These are words referring to peace in three of the oldest languages.

Some of the definitions of peace are: "a state of tranquillity or serenity; a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, especially in personal relations." (Dictionary.com) Peace can refer to relationships between people (Matthew 10:34), between nations (Luke 14:32), or between God and man (Romans 5:1) (Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible. Nelson, Wilton M. Caribe, Miami:1977, p. 491).

1. The origin of peace

Many peoples, nations, groups and individuals strive to create a society of peace, but their efforts often fail to achieve permanent results. In Guatemala, the firm and lasting "Peace Agreement" between the government and the guerrillas was signed in 1996, but the country continues to suffer many social problems because real peace comes from within the individual, not from the environment. Every day we hear news of violence in different parts of the world. The Bible teaches that by living in sin we are enemies of God and therefore of our neighbor, but by receiving Christ as Lord and Savior, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1) and our relationships with our neighbors can be healed.

Experiencing peace doesn't depend on circumstances but on living within the will of God. That is why human efforts, although admirable, are insufficient. Humanity cannot have peace with each other, as long as it has no peace with God

because no one can give what it doesn't have. God can give us peace because He is the God of peace and willing to share it with his children (John 14:27; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). Prior to his death on the cross, Christ assured his disciples that in Him they would have peace (John 16:33). The effects of the world are many and in spite of them, we can feel the peace of God within us.

2. Peace, a fruit of the Spirit

Reconciliation with God doesn't happen without a trace. It's impossible to be filled with the holy presence of God and live in lawsuits and disagreements. The fullness of the Spirit generates clear evidence that shows that we are people transformed by their power. People commonly fight for meaningless things. Ask: "What are the most common fights you have?" The Bible teaches us that being filled with the Spirit produces changes in our lives such as the ability to live peacefully with those around us, family, fellow students or work (Galatians 5:22). Ask: "Do you feel that your life has changed in some specific aspect?"

It's sad when someone is known for causing problems wherever they go. The struggle doesn't come from God (James 3:14). Someone who causes damage, doesn't edify, doesn't build others up and doesn't demonstrate the presence of the Lord in their life to those who provoke them. Just as it's natural for the apple tree to give apples, it's natural for the Christian to live in peace with those they have a relationship with because the presence of God in their life produces inner peace. James 3:18 states "*Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*" It's necessary, after experiencing the peace that comes from God, that we also are promoters of peace, encouraging those around us, including those with whom we have differences, to seek reconciliation with God.

Christians must be peacemakers, we must not be quarrelsome. Scripture says that "*...as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*" (Romans 12:18). But this is only possible if the presence of the Spirit is real in our lives. The peaceful climate is not always up to us, but whenever it's in our reach, we have a responsibility to be peaceful rather than being the promoters of conflict. We should avoid being a stumbling block, a cause of division in the family or in the church and a hindrance for others to approach Christ. Sometimes when we are hurt by other people we feel the legitimate right to return the offense, but that's not what pleases God (Romans 12:19).

3. Peace, evidence of communion with God

When Moses returned from the mountain, after receiving the Law of the Lord, the people could see that he had been in the presence of God. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not a temporary emotion, it's the intervention of God in our being to transform us into his image and likeness and that's something that becomes evident. The ability to interact in peace makes it clear that we've been in communion with God. Garden care produces beautiful flowers and communion with God produces lives that reflect his presence.

Living in peace is a demand of the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). By being in communion with God, the Spirit guides us and enables us to live in peace.

Peace is not synonymous with passivity, many times peace is shown not only as a virtue of not causing conflict but it's the ability to promote a climate of peace. Our society suffers from violence in all areas. In homes there are arguments, in school people are envious and they fight, at work there's discontent, in the church there are disagreements. The majority of the time, no one intervenes to bring peace to the situation, on the contrary, most of the time people take sides in favor of one person or the other. However, after a Christian experiences being filled with the Spirit, they cannot stand still in the face of conflict without doing something to resolve it (Matthew 5:9). Promoting peace distinguishes us as children of God.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to answer the following questions.

1. What are the most common problems within the family that threaten to steal our peace? (Children rebelling, fights between parents or siblings, economic problems, etc.)
2. What are some social problems that have stolen the peace of our community? Why? (Crime, lack of work, breakdown of families, etc.)
3. What are some solutions to the problems that threaten to steal our peace. (When it's up to us, be at peace with everyone. And trust in the promises of God.)
4. Make a list of the passages in the Bible that instruct us to practice peace in our daily relationships. (Galatians 5:22, Romans 5:1; Matthew 5:9; Hebrews 12:14 and others.)
5. If a friend of yours has been fired from work and is desperate, what would you advise them to do based on today's lesson?
6. If two of your friends are angry with each other, how can you apply today's lesson to help them?
7. Think about the problems in your family and how you can intervene so that there's peace within your home.

Challenge: Say to your class: These days, many people speak about peace, but they don't take into account that peace is the result of a personal relationship with Christ. This week prepare a poem that talks about the peace that comes from Christ and bring it the next time we meet. If you want, share it with your friends. If you aren't very good with poetry, maybe you can draw a picture.



Holy Patience!

Lesson

18

Carlos Saavedra • Peru

Objective: That the students understand that patience as a fruit of the Spirit is a virtue that the Christian must show in the midst of his daily walk.

Memory Verse: *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* Ephesians 4:2



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Instructions: Form two groups and ask each group to think about an everyday situation. Have them act out the situation in 2 ways - one which shows using patience and one which doesn't show patience. Then allow some time to discuss the dramas and the different ways Patience was demonstrated.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Ask your students to work in teams of 2 or 3. Have them think of two situations where a lot of patience is required. Then ask them to think about what a person guided by the Holy Spirit would do in that situation and how a person who is not guided by the Holy would do. Allow time to share your ideas with the other teams. We need to know what we should do when we are in different situations in which our patience will be tested so that the name of God is glorified.

Connect

Navigate

Patience is considered to be the work of the Spirit in the believer when it's demonstrated in our relationships. What a privilege God has given us! To be open letters so that others know the Lord. Patience reveals our faith in the plans, omnipotence, and the love of God.

We live in a world where things are getting faster, people are moving faster, there's almost no time for many of the things we want to do and therefore we are constantly in a state of irritation. In such a world, the lack of patience becomes evident and as much as people self-educate they must remember that the source of patience is the Holy Spirit, as a product of intimate communion with God. Patience is a feature of the Christian character that allows us to go through chaotic situations without collapsing, allows us to accept each other and reflects God's love to others.

The authors who write about patience describe it in two ways: passive and active patience.

1. Passive Patience

In 2 Timothy 2:10 Paul referred to enduring everything "*for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that's in Christ Jesus...*" Only if we persevere under trial, are patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, stand firm, will we win life (Luke 21:19; Romans 12:12). Then "*that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him*" (James 1:12). Ask your students for some examples of tests that God's children pass. Also examples of the tests suffered because of the gospel. The Bible shows us in several passages this type of inner patience. In 2 Corinthians 6:4, Paul recommends that God's servants be patient in affliction, in needs and in anxieties of Christian service. In 2 Timothy 3:10 Paul encourages Timothy to be patience in the development of his ministry. Hebrews 12:7 tells us about patience under the discipline of God. In 1 Peter 2:20 he tells us about patience when punished for undeserved reasons. James 5:7-11 urges patience by standing firm and waiting for the coming of the Lord just as the farmer waits for the land to yield its crop.



In these situations, patience is shown in our internal attitude towards circumstances that we cannot control and that demand faith.

2. Active Patience

Ask your students to read the following verses: Romans 2:7, Luke 8:15, Hebrews 12:1, James 1:4. Perseverance is patience in motion. It characterizes those who actively pursue a goal to which they are convinced that God has called them to. It's to continue with life faithfully, trusting that if one does their work honestly and well, with a good attitude and a kind spirit, they are actually serving God. An excellent biblical example of a person who showed this kind of patience was Joseph (Genesis 39-50). Joseph's story is one of the longest and most dramatic narratives in the Bible. After being sold as a slave by his cruel and conspiratorial brothers, he was transported to Egypt, where he suffered and endured many sorrows. If someone was right in staying bitter, harboring hatred and losing faith in God, it was Joseph. But, Joseph's faith and hope in God were firmer than ever. He decided not to take revenge. He didn't deny his faith in Jehovah nor resign himself to a miserable destiny and a bitter end. Although he must have experienced deep and dark periods of time, he didn't end up desperate. Rather, again and again he offered his life to God.

This is a type of active patience. He stood firm in his trust in God. He had patience to wait to receive what God had prepared for him.

When we learn that patience is an aspect of love built on the pillars of resilience and perseverance we realize that it's an essential virtue we need to live in this world. Many Bible translators correctly chose the expression that literally means "long suffering" as the most precise term for patience. In a perfect world, like the one Adam and Eve experienced, patience would be meaningless. The need for patience came when sin entered the world. If sin had not appeared we would be living in a state of perpetual satisfaction without struggles or pain. One doesn't "endure" a joyful and enjoyable experience. Nor do we "persevere" in a task that offers no challenges.

It's amazing that of the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews 11, some showed great patience while others showed impatience. Noah is a prime example of patience. His "homework" to spend 120 years building the ark has to be one of the most amazing examples of perseverance in history. Surrounded by an evil civilization that had become violent and was ungodly, Noah patiently built the ark.

Patience is a practical daily virtue; We must demonstrate patience in small and almost imperceptible ways. Unfortunately, the simple meaning of patience is often demonstrated dramatically through our acts of impatience. Almost all of us have acted out our impatience that have resulted in terrible consequences, some of which have negatively affected our relationships with others.

So how can we show patience with the people around us? Having seen in light of the Word of God that we must act patiently, we now return to the list of situations from the "Introductory Activity" and review our responses. How can we show patience in our daily walk.

Review/Apply: Have your students answer the following questions with the help of the Bible verses.

1. How should we respond when we are under persecution? (1 Corinthians 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:4). (We should endure persecution with patience.)
2. What does Paul say about supporting our brothers? (Colossians 3:13-14). (We must bear with each other and forgive others the way Christ forgave us.)
3. Why should the Lord's servant not be quarrelsome when they are treated badly? (2 Timothy 2:24-26). (By being kind we hope that they will see God's truth and be led to the Lord.)
4. Why should we not become lazy? (Hebrews 6:12) (Because through imitating those who have faith and patience we will inherit what has been promised.)
5. Who should we be patient with? (1 Thessalonians. 5:14). (The Bible teaches that we must be patient WITH EVERYONE.)

Challenge: Say to your class: This week make a list of the situations in which you needed patience. They can be situations at home, school, work or with friends. Mentally review the facts of each of them and ask God to help you show patience.



Objective: That the students understand that kindness is a component of the fruit of the Spirit, necessary in our relationships with others.

Memory Verse: *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* Colossians 3:12



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Nine 12 x 6 inch (30 x 15 cm.) pieces of card stock paper; Nine markers (crayons) of different colors; Nine pins to put the sign on the students' clothes; Nine volunteer students.
- Instructions: Ask the nine volunteers to write one of the nine fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22, on each of the cards. Then divide the nine volunteers into groups of three. There are three fruits of the Spirit that refer to the believer's relationship with the Holy Spirit, three refer to the believer's relationship with others, and three refer to their relationship with themselves. Students must propose which fruits go in each group and which are most important.

Students should organize the three groups as follows: Love, joy and peace (the believer's relationship with the Holy Spirit); patience, kindness, goodness (relationship of the believer with their neighbor); and faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (the believer's relationship with himself, especially with his character). This division will allow them to better understand the meaning and application of the spiritual fruit in their Christian life.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Nine signs of different colors (12 x 6 inches or 30 x 15 cm.). Write the name of one Fruit of the Spirit on each sign. Write the definition of one fruit of the Spirit on each of nine normal sized pieces of paper. Glue tape, scissors.
- Instructions: Place the signs with the nine names of the fruit of the Spirit on the wall or on the board. Then read the definitions (you can find them in each lesson) and ask your students to discover which fruit it refers to. The first one who raises his hand and names it correctly will stick the definition below the fruit. This exercise will help students to be more familiar with the definitions of each fruit and they will be more likely to remember what they've learned.

Connect

Navigate

The fruit of the Spirit, spoken about by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, is part of a paragraph that establishes the difference between living in the Spirit and living in the flesh. The aforementioned negative actions or attitudes are related to the works of the flesh, which, due to their sinful nature, must cease to exist in the life of the Christian, be it child, adolescent, young adult or older. It's the duty of the Christian to live in the Spirit and bear fruit of the Spirit. Only in that way will we be doing the will of God. We will be living congruently with what we believe and bearing witness as Christians.

Kindness, as a fruit of the Spirit, will help us improve friendly relationships with those around us. This includes our family, friends, neighbors, and everyone who somehow relates to us. Of course, we will treat those we don't know, with kindness as well, which is God's desire.

Let us see, then, the meaning and application of kindness as a fruit of the Spirit.

1. Meaning of Kindness

The word kind is defined as "of a good or benevolent nature or disposition, as a person; having showing or proceeding from benevolence". The word benevolence is defined as "a desire to do good to others; goodwill; charitableness". The word kindness is found eleven times in the New Testament. We will try to explain seven of those verses to help you understand its meaning:

1. Romans 2:4. Paul, referring to God's true judgment towards sinners, lets us know that it's because of his (God's) "kindness", that he leads us to repentance. The term kindness is associated with patience and forbearance, attributes of God that attract us to Him. God's kindness is intended to lead the sinner to repentance.



2. Romans 11:22. Paul, trying to explain God’s saving grace to the Gentiles, states that it’s because of God’s “kindness” that we are all beneficiaries of His divine redeeming love. His kindness is shown in contrast to his sternness, which is being applied to those who fell, while his kindness is for those who continue in his kindness.
3. 2 Corinthians 6:6. Paul defends his ministry to the Corinthians. He tells them that his ministry is credited with purity, understanding, patience, love, and among these virtues, “kindness”. Although he had to be strong in correcting a serious problem, we noticed a high degree of goodness, friendliness, and kindness toward the Corinthians.
4. Galatians 5:22. The term “kindness” here appears as a fruit of the Spirit; that is, what the Spirit does in the life of every genuine believer. In contrast to the works of the flesh, the fruit distinguishes the spirituality of the faithful believer. As Christians we are called to live by the Spirit and our lives should produce the fruit of the Spirit.
5. Ephesians 2:7. “Kindness” is closely related to the enjoyment of heavenly blessings in Christ after having obtained salvation by divine grace.
6. Colossians 3:12. Paul illustrates in this text that “kindness” is part of the Christian’s clothing. Since we are God’s chosen people, dearly loved, the characteristics listed here are what others should see in us and kindness is one of those characteristics.
7. Titus 3:4-5. The salvation of the human being is possible because of the “kindness and love of God” not because of what we’ve done but because of his mercy.

An accurate and concise definition of kindness is difficult to build. But we can understand its meaning, in understanding that because of God’s kindness towards us, sinners, we can be saved. And when he saves us, our lives should then show that same kindness to others.

2. Applications of Kindness

God’s kindness towards the human being inspires us towards a redemptive passion for our neighbor. Communicating the truths of salvation requires expressing oneself in gentle, kind, compassionate, merciful ways, yearning for the understanding of the message by those we engage in conversation, so that they can enjoy God’s invitation to live under his will and grace. If possible, we should avoid condemning or being relentless critics to others. The kindness of God teaches us a redemptive longing in favor of the victim of evil. Let’s be kind to others.

Kindness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit enables us to grow in life and is a practical expression of holiness. To portray this fruit in our lives is to imitate the lifestyle of Jesus Christ, and to be approved by God.

In our friendly relationships with others, it helps us to be gentle with everyone. Paul urged the Philippians: *“Let your gentleness be evident to all.”* (Philippians 4:5a). The term gentleness is a translation of a Greek word that’s not the same word that’s used for kindness, but they do have similar meanings and even more, are similar in their practical expression in friendly relationships. Being kind in our relationships with others will result in the love that characterizes every relationship we have and which binds us in perfect unity (Colossians 3:14).

3. The Source of Kindness

The Christian cannot experience or show kindness if he doesn’t live in the Spirit. *“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you won’t gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you aren’t to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you aren’t under the law. . . Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”* (Galatians 5:16-18,25).

Walking in the Spirit is a permanent action, it doesn’t refer to a sporadic connection. The only way not to be dominated by the desires of the flesh is to daily remain faithful to God. Being led by the Holy Spirit should not be specific to a particular situation, it should be the lifestyle of a Christian.

In the same way, Colossians 3:12 tells us what we should “wear” the characteristics that we want to present to others: *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”* Let us live as followers of Christ who show his kindness to those we encounter, no matter the circumstances.

Review/Apply: Have your students to create an acrostic in the form of poetry with the letters of the word “kindness”. Here’s an example.

Kindness of God
Indicates the way to Salvation.
Nothing can man do.
Demonstrated through His mercy,
Never can it be repaid,
Enter through the narrow gate,
Salvation is from God,
Salvation can be yours.

Challenge: Say to your class: This week think about how you judge people who live in sin. While it’s true God hates sin, He loves the sinner. Write at least three ideas of how a group of people marginalized by society could be reached with the gospel and show them God’s love.



A Different Fruit

Lesson

Francisco Borrallés • Mexico

20

Objective: That the students understand that goodness, as a fruit of the Spirit, is shown through good behavior and by doing good deeds for their neighbor.

Memory Verse: *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16*



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper, pencils and Bibles.
- Instructions: Ask students to form groups of four or five members. Have each group answer the following three questions and do the activity that follows.
 1. How do you feel when someone close to you receives something better than what you receive?
 2. How do you react when you see someone go through a painful or unpleasant situation?
 3. What is your physical or verbal response when someone does better than you in a sport or public event?
- Match the previous answers with a song you know.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Ask your students to form groups of four or five members. Have each group answer the following three questions and do the activity that follows.
 1. What is experienced when two or more people compete for a job?
 2. What is the attitude of people when they are competing for a job promotion?
 3. What is the reaction of a candidate when they aren't elected to the position they were running for?
- Elaborate on or give explanations for why you answered the previous questions the way you did.

Connect

Navigate

Fresh water springs are the best quality natural water source on the planet, because the water, before traveling to the earth's surface, has traveled through kilometers of sediment rocks and soil that serve as natural filters to remove all types of pollutants and, in many cases, have enriched it with precious minerals and substances that humans need (<http://www.imta.gob.mx>) [Accessed: February 13, 2013]. When the water in a spring flows into other streams of water becoming part of a stream or river, the spring sometimes becomes contaminated, making it useless for many uses, including human consumption.

Just as with water, the human soul has become contaminated, due to the disobedience of our first parents (original sin) and our own sins. Therefore, like every human being, we are separated from God and his original design for humanity, we are separated from the purity that Adam and Eve, at the time of their creation, enjoyed and we are continually inclined to sin.

1. A way to show that Christ lives in me

Before water can be consumed by us, it needs to go through a purification process. So also our lives, in order to be a blessing to others, need to be purified. This work in our lives will show that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and we can reflect God's love to other people. After having experienced this process, we can begin to act according to the fruit of the Spirit as the Spirit works in our lives.

The apostle Paul explains in his Epistle to the Galatians the theme of Christian freedom and the nature of this new life using the expression "fruit of the Spirit" as opposed to "the works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16-25). For the apostle "the fruit of the Spirit" is the application of the principle that a good tree produces good fruit.

Similar to the fruit of a tree, the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian's life will be a very noticeable (obvious, clear) sign that the person has been washed with the blood of Christ. When a person lives a new life in Christ, their own life will be a blessing to others as they will have something special to share, providing comfort and encouragement to those in need.



2. It's better to rejoice and do good

We have been created in the image and likeness of God with a specific purpose (Ecclesiastes 3:12). Our life must be aimed at fulfilling God's plan and that implies fulfilling the words of Jesus Christ our Lord which are recorded in Matthew 5:16 *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

It follows to say that, from the previous quotation, the fruit of the Spirit in our Christian life must produce goodness, which can be defined as: "a state or quality of being good; moral excellence, virtue; kindness, generosity."(dictionary.com.) [Query: December 11, 2019].

Remember that the "quality of goodness" is not naturally in us because *"No one is good—except God alone."* (Mark 10:18). No one is intrinsically good, that is, no one is good at birth nor can they be good by themselves. And regarding the "natural inclination towards good", I don't think it's necessary to comment, quite the contrary, the human being, by its' nature, is continually inclined towards evil, towards sinning.

The Bible teaches us that we should rejoice in doing good because it's the will of God. Also because his plan for us is that we live by reflecting and sharing with those around us the goodness He has given us through his Holy Spirit. This will be a great blessing to others and it will fill us with peace and joy.

In order to manifest goodness towards others, it's necessary that this be a fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Scripture says: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there's no law."* (Galatians 5:22-23). Similarly, as water when it has been contaminated cannot purify itself, the human being cannot produce good fruit by himself, he has to be cleansed and purified by the precious blood of Christ in order to produce in his life the fruit of the Spirit, in this case goodness.

3. A fruit to be shared

If we recognize goodness as a quality that someone possesses, that quality will have to be evaluated or determined by other people, not by ourselves. I cannot say "I am good" or "I have good feelings", only because some event moved me with compassion and I did a "good deed". Do a "good deed" only reflects that we have the capacity to be kind, but not that we are good. If there's goodness in us, we must bear fruit of goodness, that is, our fruit must be abundant and permanent (not scarce and momentary) and must be shown every day of our life and be the basic intent of our actions.

Therefore, it will be easy to see that in my being there's "goodness" like that described as a of the fruit of the Spirit, if I have a continuous disposition towards good, if I manifest in my heart good wishes towards others, if my thoughts are of peace and blessing, if I am willing to support others in their need and if I am willing to listen to them. In this way it will be a blessing for me to be able to help them carry their burdens.

Also, Kindness will be manifested in our daily lives and in our dealings with other people, our characteristic in dealing with others will come to be kindness and softness of character and we will address our neighbors with courtesy and dignity.

Goodness will be present and continuous in our being, only as a fruit of the Spirit. We will never be good people through our own efforts, with the purity of purpose that God wants. Only the regenerative work of God can make it grow in our lives. The presence of goodness in each one's heart will be evident in the conduct and treatment of others.

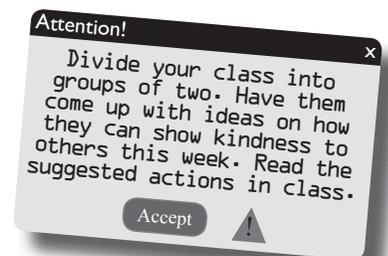
Let us ask God to help us to live the next verse *"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."* (1 John 3:18)

Review/Apply: Ask your students to think about and write down some daily situations that motivate them to be or not to be kind.

- Those situations in daily life that motivate us to be kind. (Possible answers: Poverty, disease, defenselessness, marginalized, indifference, etc.)
- Those situations of daily life that motivate us not to be kind. (Possible answers: mistreatment, dishonesty, ungrateful, lack of resources, physical limitations, etc.)

What do the following passages teach us about being kind? Romans 12:17; Galatians 6:10; Luke 6:30-34?

Challenge: Say to your class: God wants us to show kindness to our neighbor. This week, perform at least two acts of kindness with a good attitude from those mentioned during class. Share next week what you did and how you felt.



Be Found Faithful

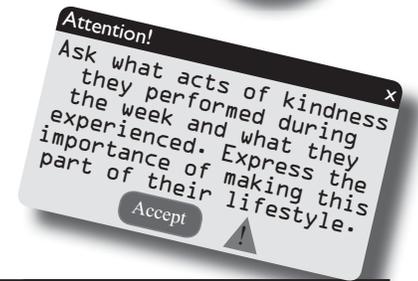
Lesson

21

Loysbel Pérez • Cuba

Objective: That the students understand that faith as a fruit of the Spirit is an ethical virtue that distinguishes the Christian in his relationships and experiences.

Memory Verse: *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.* 1 Corinthians 4:2



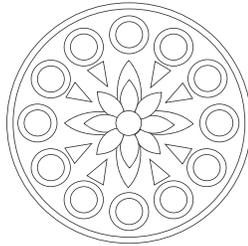
Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Sheets of paper with the image below reproduced on them and colored pencils.
- Instructions: Display the image that you've colored ahead of time systematically. Color all the circles one color, all the triangles another color, and so on.

Give each student an uncolored image and ask them to color the image in one minute. Then ask them to color the image a second time, but this time it must be exactly the same as your sample. After five minutes ask for the colored images and compare them to the original to see who copied it the most accurately. It's necessary to observe, study and be consistent in our work in order to be exact.



Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Bandanas to use as blindfolds.
- Instructions: Divide the class into pairs and ask them to decide who will be blindfolded and who will be the guide. Have those who are going to be blindfolded leave the classroom. Create an obstacle course with the guides. Instruct half of the guides to misdirect their partners through the course and instruct the others to give their partners clear directions through the course.

Talk about how those who were misguided and those who were well guided felt. If we trust someone we will respond reliably or faithfully.

Connect

Navigate

Galatians 5:22 tells us that a part of the fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. Paul wrote to the Galatians of good relationships between neighbors, so he wasn't referring only to the faithfulness of God, but the result of that faithfulness: Loyalty.

1. Be faithful as God is faithful

When looking for the meaning of "faithful" in the dictionary we find: true to ones word, promises, vows, etc.; steady in allegiance or affection; loyal; constant; reliable; trusted; believed. (Dictionary.com) [Accessed: December 11, 2019]. Nowadays we find various loyalties and they are more and more volatile, for example, you can be faithful to a philosophy, a music group, or a fashion which changes according to the season.

As Christians we must have a continuous loyalty to God and, if something must be fulfilled exactly, it's the Word of God. In this way faithfulness should affect our daily lives, if not, it becomes a dogma and empty words. We can apply this idea in two ways: First, we can live by faith trusting in the authority of the word of the Lord. This work of the Holy Spirit creates in us that conviction, as long as we submit to Him.

Second, we can be faithful to each other, as much as God is faithful to us. The Holy Spirit produces in us faithfulness. Because of the fact, that He is trustworthy, so we too can be trustworthy.

Since the very nature of God is faithfulness, the Son of God was faithful until death. Faith or confidence in God and his promises should lead us to stand firm and should generate faithfulness in every aspect of our lives.

It's important to recognize that it's God who produces the will to act (Philippians 2:13) and our faithfulness to God won't depend our strength alone, but on the testimony that each Christian has that the Spirit works in their life. The Scriptures constantly describe to us that love, faithfulness and obedience to God will result in concrete actions towards others.

In the Bible we find several examples of men, who because of their faith, were faithful to God; Abel, who delivered a pleasing offering to God, Noah who through his obedience built the ark to save his family, Abraham who left his home and

his family to obey God, Moses who was able to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt (Hebrews 11). It's because of their trust in God that men and women gave up everything they had and put their lives at risk, because they chose to remain faithful to God.

2. Be faithful to whom?

The life of the Christian is always moving vertically and horizontally: towards God and towards others. For that reason faithfulness must be shown in both of these areas, in our relationship with God and with others.

A. Faithfulness to God

Christians have received a measure of God's grace that they must administer and use for his glory (Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Peter 4:10). There will be accountability to God for what has been given to us, so it's necessary to constantly be reviewing what we have. In what way, as a Christian, do I exhibit the glory of God? To whom or to what am I faithful? Am I faithful to God or to my desires and my will? Sometimes, we are more faithful to studies, to friends, to a current philosophy, to the bride or groom, or to our goals than to God. In the midst of everything else God is displaced.

A Christian must be faithful in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), in the study of the Word (Acts 17:11), in communion with other believers, (Hebrews 10:25) and in evangelization (Matthew 28:19-20). Here we see that there are very concrete actions that demonstrate our faithfulness to God. Ask: How much time do you spend reading the Word, praying, in communion with other believers and sharing the message of salvation?

B. Loyalty to others

The world must see Christians as trustworthy people. Christians must be faithful employees, who obey with *"respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart"* (Ephesians 6:5). They must be faithful friends (Proverbs 18:24; John 15:13). And they must be faithful neighbors to the entire human race (Luke 10:30-37; Romans 12:14-21).

Obviously, faithfulness to God will result in appropriate behavior towards others. On many occasions believers give religious speeches, talk about God, use religious vocabulary, but don't want to get involved in service or ministry and when asked to help they never can.

Every Christian must assume the commitment to love, respect, be faithful, obey and honor others, just as God loves us and remains faithful to us.

3. Be faithful with clear evidence

A Christian who is faithful to the Word and the voice of God will be involved in works according to the flesh. Paul mentions at least seventeen works of the flesh such as adultery, jealousy, envy, idolatry, orgies, etc. (Galatians 5:19-21). A Christian will avoid all the works of the flesh, whether in thought or action. That is how they are faithful. The not only agree with an affirmation but they have a firm conviction that the affirmation is reality and they accept the consequences for themselves.

Faithfulness is an attitude of deep commitment that involves the entirety of our lives, not just parts of it. Faithfulness affects our inner life and our external behavior. Then, being completely committed to the Lord, actions and attitudes are a result of following his Word.

To sum up, faithfulness is the firm conviction that produces the total recognition of the word of the Lord as truth and the acceptance of practical consequences in daily life.

Although our modern society has decided to devalue faithfulness, without this persevering and constant virtue we won't be able to reach *"the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:14). The lament of our Lord still applies in the present tense: *"when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8).

Faithfulness is the primary quality of a follower of Christ. Paul mentions it in 1 Corinthians 4:2 *"Now it's required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."* The main requirement of a Christian is truth and faithfulness to God. What is required is not word eloquence, or great skills, but faithfulness to God in our daily life.

In a post-modern world where everything is changing, we must remain loyal to God, not as an obligation but as a benefit to our lives, since walking with God results in the well-being of the believer. If you think carefully, each believer can testify to how God has been faithful, but it's beneficial to also reflect on how we've been faithful to God.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to have a discussion panel using the following questions. Try to get everyone to participate and guide the answers.

1. As a Christian, what most helps you put your faith in God?
2. What makes you trust in God?
3. Share an experience in which you learned to trust in God.
4. Is it hard for you to trust God in any of your current experiences?

Challenge: Say to your class: It's important to reflect this week on how we've shown our faithfulness to God as young people. Think of an action towards someone else (family, neighbors, school or co-worker) where you can demonstrate faithfulness to God and do it this week. Share your experience in the next class.



Let's Be Gentle

Lesson

22

Helen Andújar • Puerto Rico

Objective: That the students understand that gentleness as a fruit of the Spirit is an inner virtue that manifests in wisdom to face conflictive situations.

Memory Verse: *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*
Galatians 5:25



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Ask you students to answer the following questions:
 1. How would you define “gentleness”?
 2. Name some examples of gentleness according to what you know.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Worksheet with the following questions.
- Instructions: Give a sheet to each student. Ask them to answer the following questions.
 1. Would you support your friends if they were arguing? a). Yes b). Maybe c). No
 2. Do you tolerate noisy children without protesting? a). Yes b). Maybe c). No
 3. When someone yells at you, do you answer by yelling back? a). Yes b). Maybe c). No
 4. If someone provokes you to fight, are you willing to fight? a). Yes b). Maybe c). No
 5. If someone offends you, do you plan revenge? a). Yes b). Maybe c). No

Points for the answers:

1. A) 4 pts. 2. A) 4 pts. 3. A) 2 pts. 4. A) 2 pts. 5. A) 2 pts.
B) 3 pts. B) 3 pts. B) 3 pts. B) 3 pts. B) 3 pts.
C) 2 pts. C) 2 pts. C) 4 pts. C) 4 pts. C) 4 pts.

Results: 20 to 18 pts. You reflect gentleness
17 to 15 pts. You can do better
14 to 0 pts. You must try to improve

Connect

Navigate

Gentleness is an attitude possessed by those who love God. Gentleness is “Sensitivity of disposition and kindness of behavior, founded on strength and prompted by love” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/gentleness>). It’s a quality that’s mentioned as a fruit of the Spirit. Everyone who has the Spirit can possess it. It’s an attitude of humility and kindness that makes the believer submit patiently to the offense received without yielding to the desire for revenge or retribution.

1. Conduct that pleases God

Submission to God’s will is behavior that pleases God (Colossians 3:12-14). Each believer must shed all sinful attitudes and be clothed in agreement to the likeness of Christ, being regenerated and driven by the Holy Spirit. The Christian must be full of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. This will testify to a behavior and attitude that reflects the character of Christ in their daily life.

We must reject injustice, envy, hate, jealousy or any other attitude that may affect our relationship with other people. Diligently practicing love, compassion, humility and gentleness will allow you to reflect Christ in your life. That is the will of God.

The reason that moves us to act gently with others is so we can enjoy the forgiveness of Christ. *“Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”* (Colossians 3:13b).

We cannot give what we haven’t received. God’s forgiveness brings to our lives love, which *“binds them all together in perfect unity”* and guides us to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit which includes gentleness.



2. Willing to learn

Something the Word of God is what helps us cultivate gentleness in our lives if we are believers. James emphasizes how important it is to get rid of all sin in order to receive the teaching of the Word of God (James 1:21-25). The primary reason he says this is that the Word can save the soul. It's worth following the advice of James, by letting the Word of God be what shapes our lives as Christians and not the actions of the world.

The knowledge of the Word helps the believer to persevere to receive the crown of life that has been promised to the meek and humble of heart. With a willingness to learn, our life will be more easily shaped by the Holy Spirit and will show the fruit of gentleness.

In James 1:13-16 it shows us the importance of reflecting the characteristics of Christ in daily life. Behavior that doesn't reflect the fruit of gentleness comes from envy, jealousy, bitterness, hatred, selfishness and the like. However, as the tree is known by its fruit, so the believer will be known by their fruit. Only the Word of God transforms and changes the life of the believer. The believer must follow it diligently and, above all, put it into practice constantly, not just being a listener. Listening to the Word and doing nothing is a sign of a deceived heart. James urges the believer to be a doer of the Word that has been implanted in their heart. Therefore you have to practice what you claim to believe.

The invitation to seek God daily will result in others seeing Christ in our lives. The call is clear, we must be holy in every aspect of life, because He is holy. Holiness is not something that can be imitated, copied or learned. It's the result of a total dependence on the grace of Christ. He gave his life on the cross of Calvary to forgive our sins and to give us a new life. A life filled with the Spirit.

3. Considering others

Human beings need each other, no one can live completely independent. Christians belong to the body of Christ and need each other to be able to fulfill the mission of the church.

The Apostle Paul asked the brothers and sisters in Christ to bear each other's burdens. He also encouraged them that if anyone was caught in sin, they should help restoration them and not judge them because they also could fall into the same temptation (Galatians 6:1-3). Paul indicated that we should do this gently. The brother should be helped kindly and without pride. The person who has gentleness can fulfill God's law much better than the one who only observes the rituals and lacks love in his heart.

Finally, we can say that a gentle person has a calm disposition. It's important that in day to day life we exhibit gentleness in the use of power and authority without abuse, and in the face of criticism and attacks, stay calm and don't leave our post (stand your ground). *"If a ruler's anger rises against you, don't leave your post; calmness can lay great offenses to rest."* (Ecclesiastes 10:4). A gentle answer calms great anger, Proverbs 15:1 states: *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."* A gentle behavior helps us accept things with joy, without arguing or questioning them. Christ was the greatest example of gentleness. Every believer who longs to live like Christ must imitate him, always practicing this beautiful virtue.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to write down the answers to the following questions.

1. According to Galatians 5:22, what is gentleness? (A fruit of the Spirit.)
2. How do you interpret Ecclesiastes 10:4 and Proverbs 15:1? (Do not leave your post and stay calm (Ecclesiastes 10:4). A gentle answer calms the greatest anger (Proverbs 15:1) A gentle behavior helps us accept things with joy, without arguing or questioning them.)
3. What does Galatians 6:1 teach about gentleness? (Paul encourages that if anyone is caught in sin, those who live by the Spirit should help restore them with gentleness.)
4. Why should we restore with gentleness those who have sinned? (Because we can also be tempted and fall into sin.)
5. Write some practical examples of how to act with gentleness.

On a piece of paper allow students to write practical examples of how to react gently in different situations. Then post the examples on a wall of the room so that you can see it every time you meet while you study the fruit of the Spirit.

Challenge: Say to your class: This week, test your behavior during unexpected events. Write down the unexpected events in a notebook and make two columns. Write one reaction that demonstrates gentleness and another reaction that doesn't show gentleness.

Regaining Control!

Lesson

23

Carlos Saavedra • Peru

Objective: That the students understand that self-control, as a fruit of the Spirit, manifests itself as willpower in every aspect of our life.

Memory Verse: *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, . . .* Ephesians 5:18



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Sheets of paper with the following verses listed.
- Instructions: Briefly define the term “self-control”. Ask students to read the Bible passages and list the things that show self-control or the lack of self-control.
 1. Genesis 39
 2. 1 Samuel 13:12
 3. Genesis 2-3
 4. Genesis 4

In the Bible we find many examples of people who had self-control and others who did not; the difference was the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We need to accept the grace that God offers us.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Sheets of paper with the following verses listed.
- Instructions: Ask students to read the Bible verses and write down the areas in which we need to exercise self-control:
 1. James 3:8
 2. Ephesians 4:26
 3. 1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Peter 2:11
 4. Colossians 6:12
 5. 1 Thessalonians 5:22

We need to have discipline in all areas of our lives. However, we cannot do it alone. We must seek God. Only with the help of the Holy Spirit can we have self-control in all areas of our lives.

Connect

Navigate

Self-control is one of the Christian graces (Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6). Much like in an athletic competition, it's essential to train in order to achieve victory in the Christian walk (1 Corinthians 9:25). It's being under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that we receive this training. Self-control or willpower is the inner force that controls our passions and desires.

1. We must walk in the Spirit

If we walk in “the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21), according to our desires or thoughts, what arises in the face of temptation, difficulty or aggression will be our fallen nature. If they insult us, we will respond with insults, if they hurt us, we will seek revenge, if we are tempted to do evil, we are very likely to do so. That is why we need the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, that is, self-control and all its other characteristics.

Self-control gives the Christian control over decisions. In Proverbs 16:23-24, the Bible gives us a clear example of self-control when referring to the use of our words. When a person has self-control, he will manifest in his speech. Not only will it show wisdom, but it will bless those who hear it.

James 3:5-6 of the Word of God says that the tongue is small but boasts of great things, and it corrupts the whole body. Verse 2 tells us that if we can restrain the tongue, we can restrain the entire body. This is a clear example of self-control. The term “restrain” is used in reference to horses when they are held with the bridle. When applied to people, it means to contain, to keep in check or under control. When a person is able to contain his words in the face of an unexpected situation in order to do his best, he is said to have self-control.

But self-control encompasses more just than our words. Doctors have proven that a person can influence their bodies according to what they say or think, because they are sending orders to their central nervous system. A person may say “I'm tired, I don't have the strength, I can't do anything” and the brain says, “Yes, that's true”.

Here is a list of actions that we need to have dominion over in our lives: The way we think, eat, talk, manage money, use time, our attitudes, getting up early to seek God, the attitude we have when we do things to serve God, our sexual desires, the way we dress, etc.

God chose us and has called us to bear fruit (John 15:16). He is the vine and we are the branches. We must remain in Him because apart, we can do nothing. The only way to live in the Spirit and bear fruit is when we are connected daily, permanently, constantly with Christ who is the source of life.

2. How do we walk in the Spirit?

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, . . .; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). We must allow God to speak through our mouth, listen through our ears, and work through our hands.

We must give our thoughts to God and be filled with His. Return good for evil (Proverbs 17:13). Love others, respecting them and accepting them as they are, without arguing with pride, without being wise in our own opinions. As Romans 12:21 says, *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

We must be willing to walk “the second mile.” In the face of an offense or provocation, we cannot become passive, we must channel our reaction: “instead of curses, blessings”.

We must also use the spiritual weapons that God has given us. The thoughts that tempt us are like darts burning in the mind. We must extinguish them with the shield of faith. It’s not sin if thoughts come; only when we act upon those thoughts and continue to think about them do we sin.

Joseph was able to overcome the temptation to sin with Potiphar’s wife because he had self-control. How do we do it:

- Confess our weaknesses to God.
- Consecrate our lives fully to God (Romans 12:1-2)
- Ask God to help us eliminate bad habits (1 John 5:14-15).
- Live a life of obedience (1 John 5:3).
- Remain in Christ (Philippians 2:13).
- Ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).
- Allow the Word to dwell in abundance in our hearts.
- Submit to and walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:24).
- Serve Christ (Romans 6:11-13).

God’s purpose for his children is that they walk in moral purity; that they beware of depravity, not as an option, but as a mandate for every believer (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Only when the Spirit takes control of our lives will it affect all areas of everyday life. And this is the only way that God’s will is fulfilled.

This doesn’t mean that we will no longer be tempted by sin, but that in a significant way we are free from the “dominion” of sin! (Romans 6:14) And we can say “no” to temptation.

Self-Control is a fruit that will help us face temptations. That is why it’s important to receive and cultivate it in our lives.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to analyze the following sentences and determine if they are correct or incorrect.

1. In Romans 7, Paul describes the natural man as unable to resist temptation. (Correct)
2. The secret of self-control, according to Paul, is to walk in the Spirit. (Correct)
3. Without holiness, self-control is impossible. (Correct)
4. According to the Bible, the only ones who need self-control are the leaders. (Incorrect)
5. With self-control in our life, there will be no more temptations. (Incorrect)

Challenge: Say to your class: This week, make a list of the situations in which you faced in which you needed self-control, and then write down the times your actions were guided by the Holy Spirit.



First Love

Lesson 24

Pedro Sensente • Guatemala

Objective: That the students will know the warning, the invitation, and the promise that God made to the Church of Ephesus, and apply it to their own lives.

Memory Verse: *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.* Revelation 2:4



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Sheets of paper and pens or pencils for writing.
- Instructions: Ask your students to write on the paper three ways in which they know that a person loves them. (For example, a hug, a gift, a letter, words of encouragement, etc.). Then stick the papers on the board or wall and talk with the class about the importance of demonstrating love through actions.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard or poster board and chalk or a marker.
- Instructions: Ask your students to talk about the ways that couples show love to each other (i.e. gifts, hugs, going out, or other things that occur to them). Write them on the board. Then talk about what would happen if from one moment to another, they stopped showing love to each other.

Connect

Navigate

Love is a truly beautiful and powerful feeling; beautiful because it enables us to experience sensations that we never imagined feeling and enjoying, and powerful because it transforms our way of seeing life, improving our actions and attitudes. Read Revelation 2:1-7.

1. A warning not to abandon your first love

A. The omniscience of God

It's extremely important to highlight the affirmation of the Lord. *"I know your deeds"* (Revelation 2:2). God doesn't need people to tell him about the actions of others, let alone our own actions. He knows everyone, he knows everything. No one but God knows us perfectly (John 2:24-25). The effects of God's omniscience on the man and woman of faith encouraged the Church of Ephesus to wait patiently for God's response to the diversity of problems they faced, for they trusted that God knew their situation. David in Psalm 40:1 said: *"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry."* It's important to use prayer as a means of direct communication with our Creator to express our fears, concerns and needs, and He'll strengthen our faith and hope.

B. The works of the church of Ephesus

Although we don't see written who exactly did the good deeds, we assume it was the Ephesian church since the letter was written to them and their virtues were highlighted in the following verses. First, the Lord highlighted their hard work (v. 2a). There's no doubt that the church of Ephesus was an active church. Their work wasn't focused on the construction of buildings or on the acquisition of goods or properties, but rather on the preaching of the Gospel, on the follow-up or growth of new converts, and on the sanctification of believers. Second, the Lord highlighted patience twice (vs. 2b, 3). This virtue gave the church strength in the face of threats, persecutions, injustices, sufferings and the diversity of difficulties they faced. Third, the church didn't allow evil within the parishioners. When the church discovered people who had cleverly mixed with each other and whose purposes were alien to God's will, they expelled them (vs. 2b, 6) after having proven their false interests in the work of God (Psalm 97:10a). God knew even the smallest detail of the hard work done by the Church of Ephesus, and highlighted their virtues in this regard.

2. The invitation to repent and do the things you did at first

God treated in a very special and subtle way the situation that the Church of Ephesus experienced. He encouraged them by confirming that He knows everything. He highlighted and recognized their hard work and exalted each of their virtues. But their hard work, despite being good, wasn't pleasing to God because they had abandoned their first love (v. 4). With much love and determination, God expressed his discontent, his distaste for them because they left their first love. He invited them to repent heartily for their sin. Jesus affirmed that in order for our service to be pleasant in the eyes of God, it must be done in obedience to God's love (Matthew 7:21-23). God will recognize us only by the actions we do in his name (Psalm 127:1a). We can do or build many good things in the name of the Lord, but if we don't love him with all our heart, everything will be in vain. However, the love of God that surpasses all understanding provided a new opportunity for the Church of Ephesus to repent (v. 5a).

"Do the things you did at first" (v. 5b). True repentance implies a change of attitude, a change of direction (John 14:15). That is, the first and indispensable work was to return to Jesus, to their first love, so that their works were motivated by the love of Christ. The church had to start again by returning to their first love and working hard, this time, motivated by the love of Jesus. In this way their ministerial work would be to God's pleasure.

3. God's promise to the victors

God doesn't restrict opportunities from anyone. All the members of the Church of Ephesus had the opportunity to be victors. That's why he said *"To the one who is victorious ..."*. Everyone knew this divine requirement, everyone wanted to achieve it, but not everyone prepared spiritually to achieve it. It's not enough to want or want to get something, but one must prepare and take action to achieve the proposed objective.

The church of Ephesus lacked love. Love is voluntary; the Church of Ephesus was responsible for its decision in this regard.

Definitely the love of God is wonderful. In the Old and New Testaments, there's evidence of his love. To those who loved him, God promised his presence, support, and the guarantee that they would overcome any enemy or circumstance of life. Different quotes like Joshua 1:5,9; Romans 8:37; Philippians 4:13, etc. speak to us about the presence and care of God for us. God not only demanded that the church be holy, compassionate and victorious, but he also guaranteed the security of his presence and his power to achieve victory.

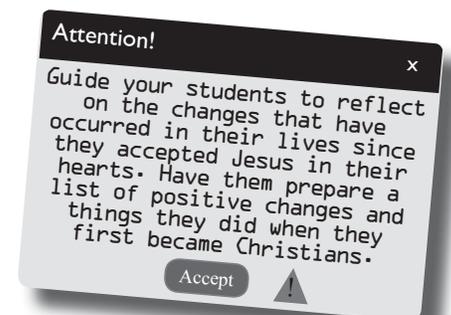
In Genesis 3:22-23, it's reported that our first parents, Adam and Eve, as a result of their sin, lost access to the tree of life and were expelled from the garden. Because of Adam and Eve, mankind was deprived of paradise and the privilege of tasting the fruit of the tree of life, but in Christ, the victors will be restored to their original condition and will again have the privilege of enjoying the paradise of God and eating the fruit of the tree of life (v. 7).

The church of Ephesus was enthusiastic, dynamic, hardworking, patient and jealous in the exercise of the ministry but in spite of his arduous ministerial work, God didn't like her because he forgot the best, the love of God and his fellow men. Activism or social action take little advantage if it's not motivated by God's love for our fellow man. The victory of the church always depended and will depend on your personal relationship with God. Let us always eat the bread of life, Christ, to strengthen our faith, achieve victory, and have access to the paradise of God and the tree of life.

Review/Apply: Ask your class to answer the following questions.

1. What first stood out to the Lord about the Church in Ephesus? (Their deeds and hard work.)
2. Which virtue gave the church strength in the face of threats and persecutions? (Perseverance.)
3. What does true repentance imply? (A change of attitude, a change of direction.)
4. For whom is the promise of eating from the tree of life? (For those who are victorious.)
5. What does the victory of the church depend upon? (It depends upon their love relationship with God.)

Challenge: Say to your class: Remember when you first gave your life to Jesus. What did you do right after that? Possibly you read the Bible a lot, you prayed regularly, you tried not to miss church services, etc. For a few moments, reflect on what you have stopped doing, and ask the Lord to help you have that warm communion you had with Him when you first became a Christian.



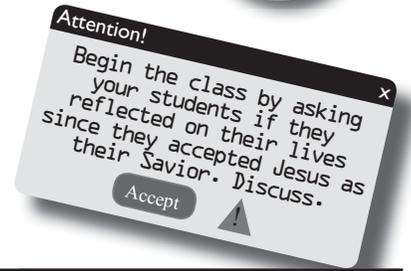
Firm Convictions

Lesson 25

Aldo Genes • Paraguay

Objective: That the students know about the relationship that God established with the Church of Smyrna and apply what they learn to their lives.

Memory Verse: *Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.* Revelation 2:10c



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper or card stock cut the size of an invitation card (12 x 8), pencils or pens.
- Instructions: Ask your students to create an invitation card for their birthday party. It must be a humorous card that should include: The date, place and time, but also, a warning that there's a poisonous snake along the way to the location of the party. The student, as organizer, promises to provide some way, a person or resource, to overcome this adversity. The card must not contain more than one hundred words. Then ask some of your students to share their cards. Then start the lesson by explaining that the Smyrna Christians, who were already being deprived of their liberty, were warned that difficult situations would come.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Form groups and have each group, through mime/charades, "tell" about an experience in which a person has been "locked-up". It may be that they were locked in their room for punishment at home; locked in an elevator or locked in a bathroom when the lock didn't work, etc.. Even if someone had the sad experience of being locked up in jail, they can share that. Then ask: "How did you feel during your confinement?" The idea of this activity is to better understand, develop empathy, and show solidarity with the Smyrna Christians who were being deprived of their freedom and were warned that they would suffer more confinement and persecution.

Connect

Navigate

“Faithfulness to God in the midst of poverty and adversity,” would be a magnificent title for the situation that the Smyrna Christians were experiencing. At a time when the Lord’s message to that church was recorded, Smyrna was a prosperous and beautiful city that rivaled Ephesus and Pergamum for the coveted title of: “Best City in Asia.” But, the Christian community of that city was poor and persecuted by the Jewish community, who denounced them and ordered that their belongings be seized and their property confiscated. Within that context, the Smyrna Christians were a community rich in convictions and faithfulness to the Lord.

1. Warning

A. They will be tested

Tests come from God and are intended to develop character, patience, dependence and greater longing to search for Him. As in the case of Job, Satan couldn’t act without God’s “authorization.” He cannot harm our lives (Job 1-2). The whole comment of the previous sentence is due to the fact that the text says: “. . . *the devil will put some of you in prison to test you.* . . .” Ask: Who would like to be deprived of their freedom? The believers in Smyrna were being warned that because of their faithfulness to God, they would continue to be tested in their fidelity and love of God, to the point of being locked in a cell.

B. They will have tribulation

The Lord, far from down playing the situation they were in, prepared them for worse scourges, but assured them that it would be brief (v. 10). The ten days could be a reference to the test of Daniel’s friends (Daniel 1:12-14). The era that we live in with postmodernism rejects everything that results in suffering and pain, and chooses instead that which produces pleasure and satisfaction. The pulpits and Christian preachers haven’t been exempt from this trend, and it’s easier to hear self-motivational preaching and promises of blessing and prosperity. The “preaching” that those of Smyrna were receiving was that the “payment” for their faithfulness would be greater tribulation (1 Peter 1:6-7).

2. Invitation

A. Do not fear what you have to suffer

Instead of being discouraged, the Smyrna Christians were to trust that the Lord Jesus Christ himself who, giving the warning, also gave them invitations and promises to overcome the difficulty they would go through (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In the expression “*Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer.*” (v. 10) we see almost a replica of what Jesus experienced a few hours before the cross. In the words of Jesus in Luke 22:42-43 “*yet not my will, but yours be done*”, we see that God doesn’t prevent him from going through the painful experience, but sends angels to strengthen him. In the same way, Jesus didn’t say to the Church of Smyrna: “due to the great test that’s coming for you, I will deliver you from such evil.” Instead, he told them: “*Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer.*” In other words, the Lord allowed the difficult situation, but invited them to not fear, for God knew the faithfulness of the Church of Smyrna and knows our hearts and the faithfulness of each one.

The exhortation not to fear is central to the message of Revelation. Cowards are the first among those who will never enter the Kingdom (Revelation 21:8). The believers in Smyrna were to be brave and daring in the midst of their tribulations, and show that they were willing to follow the same footsteps of their Master, even if doing this cost them their lives, like Jesus.

B. Be faithful until death

This was another invitation that the Lord gave to Smyrna (v. 10). The Smyrna church could say: “No Lord, we’ve been very faithful to you and we’ve suffered a lot for your cause, but our love only goes so far.” But he invites them to remain faithful to the Lord and continue to suffer for his cause, for the reward would be worth it.

We must also keep in mind that this letter, like others, was written around certain keywords. In this letter, the binomial of keywords are: death / life. Therefore, we must pay close attention to the times that the apostle John used them.

The Church of Smyrna was a weak church, but with strong convictions. In their weakness, they were powerful with the strength of the Risen One (Revelation 2:8, Ephesians 1:19-23). Therefore, knowing what those believers were going through, the Lord was encouraging their faithfulness, inviting them to be loyal clear to the end.

3. Promise

We began this lesson by observing the Lord’s warnings to the believers in Smyrna. We also looked at Jesus’ invitations to the Smyrna Church, and then arrived at one of the “sweetest” moments of this letter, the promises that the Son of God made.

In our walk with the Lord, not everything is suffering and sadness. We must always God’s promises in mind, for He keeps them (Numbers 23:19).

A. “I will give you the crown of life”

The image here taken by the apostle John is that of the Olympic games, and refers to the laurel wreath that was given to the victors (v. 10; 1 Corinthians 9:25; James 1:12). The Church in Smyrna, who were suffering from all kinds of persecution and tribulation, will have immediately asked themselves two questions, which are valid for us today too: (1) Who was the crown of life for? It would definitely be for those who are “*faithful, even to the point of death*” (v. 10). The crown of life was for the believers of Smyrna, and will be for the believers of today, who are faithful to the Lord until death.

Curiously, such an award is not promised to those who speak more languages, to those who prophesy more, or to those who proclaim or declare greater blessings. The crown of life is for those of us who are faithful to Jesus Christ with perseverance.

B. You won’t suffer damage at the second death

There are those who believe that once we die, everything ends. Others think that at some point, all who don’t go to heaven will be annihilated. Neither one nor the other is true. After this life, there’s another, and it’s eternal. Some will go to eternal life and others to eternal damnation. This condemnation is the death mentioned in verse 11.

On the other hand, life on earth, compared to eternity, is very short. This is also what the Holy Scriptures talk about and we call the transience of life. The biblical writers used different images: a breath (Job 7:7; Psalm 144:4); the mist (James 4:14); the grass or the flower (1 Peter 1:23-24).

The Church of Smyrna was certainly suffering. The Lord’s promise was that if they remained faithful as they currently were, they would reach eternal life and therefore not suffer the second death (v. 10). The benefits and good things that await us in the life to come are incomparable to the transience of this life.

From the warnings, invitations and promises to the Church of Smyrna, we learn that being good Christians is not a matter of economic resources, status or religiosity, but of fidelity, convictions and perseverance towards the Lord Jesus.

Review/Apply: Ask your class to answer the following questions.

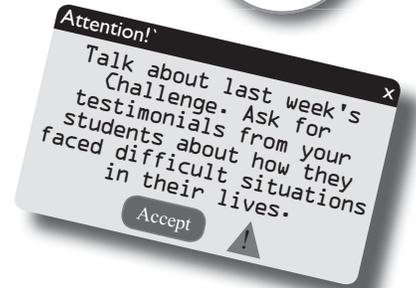
1. Do you find it easy to live your Christian faith in these times?
2. In the face of persecution against Christians, possible imprisonment because of your faith, mockery of study or work partners, do you think it would be more convenient to deny your faith in Jesus Christ?
3. Do you think the faithfulness and convictions of the Church of Smyrna could be a challenge to your personal faith in Jesus Christ? How? Why?

Challenge: Say to your class: This week if you have a difficult time at home, school or work that tests your faith in Jesus Christ, commit yourself to saying this prayer: “Lord, teach me to have the faithfulness and perseverance of the Church of Smyrna, rather than betray or trample Your name, Amen.”

The Church in Pergamum

Objective: That the students know the message that God gave to the Pergamum Church and apply it to their own lives.

Memory Verse: “...To the one who is victorious... I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.” Revelations 2:17



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Instructions: Ask your students to get in groups of two and stand face to face. Then ask them to praise their partner about good attitudes they have seen in her or him. This should take a minute per couple. At the end of the exercise, ask your students how they felt when they heard the praise.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard, sheets of paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Write the following words on the board: Praise, warn, invite, promise. Ask them to form groups and write a definition of each. Then, together come up with a definition and comment on them. The following are definitions from dictionary.com.
- Praise: the act of expressing approval or admiration; commendation; laudation.
- Warn: to notify, advise, or inform.
- Invite: to request the presence or participation of someone in a kind, courteous, or complimentary way.
- Promise: a declaration that something will or won't be done, given, etc., by someone.

Connect

Navigate

The city of Pergamum was the capital of Asia Minor. It was built on a high hill. In that city, many temples and altars were erected where cults and sacrifices were made to the Roman gods, Emperor Augustus and many other pagan gods. This is why in Revelation 2:13 it is referred to as the city “where Satan has his throne.” In that context, the Church of Pergamum developed and grew.

1. Faithfulness of the Pergamum Church

Ask your students to read Revelation 2:12-17 and discuss the praise they find in this passage for the Pergamum church.

First: Jesus told them “*I know where you live ... Yet you remain true to my name*” (v. 13). Our God is omniscient, he knows the deepest thoughts of our hearts, what we face, and each of our actions. By this expression, we understand that this church was active working to spread the gospel. Second: Jesus knew that in that place the opposition to Christianity was very strong. It was “*where Satan has his throne*” (v. 13), where the different gods and the emperor were worshiped. The celebration in these parties became an immoral debauchery where orgies, the use of alcoholic beverages and food in excess were manifested as part of the worship of the gods. It was a very difficult place for the church to exist. Third: Despite all this opposition to Christianity, they remained firm in their faith, even “When Roman authorities demanded that Christians say: Caesar is Lord, they replied: Jesus is Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3)” (BEACON Bible Commentary. Volume 10. CNP, USA:2012, p.523).

Unfortunately, in the time we live in, reality is no different. Idolatry, perhaps a little camouflaged, is still in society, alcohol and drugs are used frequently, and in one way or another we're all exposed to this reality. Even young people who enjoy the privilege of having a Christian home are in centers of study or work with friends or colleagues who participate in these things. Ask: What do they do when someone invites you to drink alcohol or try drugs?

2. Warning to the Pergamum Church

At this point, read Revelation 2:14-16 with your students and discuss what warnings are found in these verses. As we've been studying about the churches of Revelation, we see that God praised them, but also warned them about wrong actions they were taking as the church of Christ, and the consequences they will have if they didn't

change their attitude toward God. Jesus warned the church of Pergamum and said: *“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you ...”* One of the problems this church had was that they accepted the doctrine of Balaam. We find the story of Balaam in Numbers 22:1-14 - 24:25, 31:16. This doctrine taught that the children of Israel should be diverted from the ways of God. The second problem was that they ate things that were offered to pagan gods, which was prohibited for the children of Israel. And thirdly, he invited them to sin because he allowed for fornication. This weakened the church because it caused others to disobey God and participate in the worship of pagan gods. In addition to all of the above, this church was following “the teaching of the Nicolaitans” which taught erroneous doctrines and Christian indiscipline. Ask: Do these warnings apply to your lives, or to our church? Why or why not?

Jesus told them that if they didn’t change their sinful attitude He would judge them through His Word and they would be punished. He shows his love to the church by giving them a warning. Many times, we also receive warnings from God, sometimes through his Word, a sermon, a song, etc. Ask: What is our attitude towards a warning from God? What is our attitude towards the warning he gave to the Pergamum church? Sometimes we allow “false doctrines” to direct our lives. Currently, there are many false groups in Christianity that promote their false doctrines through the media. For example, the idea that Christian shouldn’t face suffering, needs or problems; or that God works according to the monetary amount of my offering; or that what I feel determines my Christian faith. Young people should base their faith on an in-depth study of the Bible to prevent the entry of these wrong beliefs into their lives.

3. Invitation and promise for the Pergamum Church

In verse 17, we find Jesus’ invitation to the Pergamum church, and the promises if they were victors.

A. Invitation

Despite all the sinful practices that existed in the church of Pergamum, they could still rectify their behavior and repent of living a mediocre life and a permissive Christianity with sin. This church was to let God fight their enemies (the Nicolaitans).

Jesus makes the same invitation to the church today: Change your attitudes and actions and live a sin-free life.

B. Promises

God not only offered them the opportunity to repent, but also gave promises to those who overcome. First, he promised them the hidden manna, that manna that Moses put in the ark of the covenant at the command of God (Exodus 16:32-34), which was kept fresh and not filled with worms. The manna decomposed overnight if it was stored. This manna was a symbol of the bread that would descend from heaven to give us eternal life. And this bread was Jesus as he says: *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”* (John 6:51).

Second, he offers them a white stone. This “reminds us of the method by which a jury declared a defendant in court innocent or guilty. A white stone was a symbol of innocence, while the black one indicated guilt.” (Revelation: an Eschatological Message. Calderón, Wilfredo. Góspel Press, Florida: s / f, p.75). The sacrifice of Christ justified us before God to be declared righteous by faith and made pure and holy before God.

Third, he would give them a new name which symbolizes a new life. Abraham was given a mission by God to fulfill, and for the fulfillment of this mission, God changed his name from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5). Thus, in this passage God told the Pergamum church that their life would no longer be the same because He would give them a new life.

Talk with your students about the promises that Jesus gives to everyone who overcomes sin, and what was most impactful from what was discussed during the class.

Review/Apply: Guide your students as they answer the following questions.

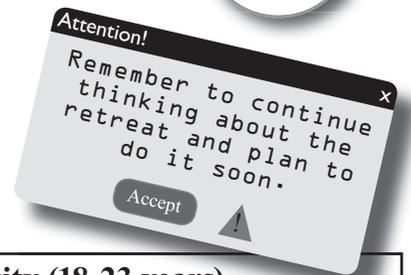
1. What does the expression “where Satan has his throne” mean to you as studied in the lesson?
2. Why do you think Jesus warns you when you aren’t walking in obedience to God?
3. What does Jesus invite you to do / experience through this lesson?
4. Do you think these promises can be applied to your life?.

Challenge: Plan, as a class, a one-day retreat where you and your students can reflect on what God wants from each disciple of Christ in order to have a better relationship with Him. Guide your students to examine their lives to see if there’s any false doctrine that’s guiding their relationship with God. Study what the Bible says about it and pray with them that their faith will be kept pure.



Objective: That the students know the warning, the invitation and the promise that God made to the Church of Thyatira, and apply it to their lives.

Memory Verse: *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.* Ephesians 5:11



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- **Materials:** White acrylic paint and two other dark colors of paint. Three disposable cups and three brushes for each group. Before the class, decided how many groups you'll have. For each group, prepare one cup by pouring a little of the darker paint into the bottom of the cup covering it evenly. Then, pour white paint on top of the colored paint trying to completely cover the darker paint. In the other two glasses pour only white paint. Try to make the glasses look like they have the same amount of paint in them.
- **Instructions:** Give three cups to each group (2 with only white paint and 1 with 2 colors in it) and ask your students to verify the paint color in each glass by mixing the paint. Give the groups the cup with two paint colors last.

When they discover that one of the cups wasn't entirely white, explain that this example represents the situation of many Christians who appear to be good Christians, but in the eyes of God, they aren't.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- **Materials:** Sheets of paper and blue and red pens or pencils (whose parts can be exchanged). Switch the pen parts so that the blue pen writes in red and vice versa.
- **Instructions:** Instruct your students to write their first name in blue and their last name in red.

Your students will realize that the pens' ink doesn't correspond to the color on the lid; When, they realize the switch, ask them if they have ever met someone similar to the pens, someone who appeared to be one way on the outside and another way on the inside. Then tell them that Jesus knew a church that was like that; it seemed fine if you looked at the outside, but there was really something wrong on the inside.

Connect

Navigate

Thyatira was a small city that belonged to the Lidia region in Asia Minor, what is now Akhisar, belonging to the Manisa region in Turkey.

Thyatira was well known for its guilds, especially linen weavers. They dyed purple fabrics, a color much desired by wealthy people. Acts 16:14 says that Lydia was a seller of purple cloth.

In this city, the sun god Apollo and the goddess of the hunt, the moon and nature, Artemis (Diana) were worshiped. Also, there was a woman named Jezebel who called herself a prophetess and who, according to Revelation 2:20, "*misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.*" Seeing this, God gave them a special message.

1. God's warning to the church

Revelation 2:18-24 begins with a presentation. Jesus Christ refers to himself as "the Son of God" (v. 18). It was necessary to highlight this point because for them, Apollo was the son of God (in this case of the god Zeus). Therefore, Jesus wanted to make it clear that only He was the Son of God.

Then, Jesus highlights the qualities of this church. He knew that they worked with love, faith, service and patience, and that they were doing better and better. However, this wasn't all. They were also allowing idolatry and paganism to enter the church without doing anything to fix that situation.

There was a woman whom God called Jezebel. This woman was upsetting the mentality of God's children, teaching them to do things contrary to God's will. We don't know exactly what her name was, but most likely God compared her to the Old Testament Jezebel. 1 Kings 16:31, 21:25 and 2 Kings 9:7 says that Jezebel encouraged her husband Ahab to worship Baal, she killed Jehovah's prophets, and persecuted Elijah with the same intention. She was a very pagan woman.

God gave this new Jezebel time to repent, but she didn't (v. 21). Then, God gave a warning. (Ask your students to read verses 22 and 23. Then, ask them to give their opinions considering the following questions: What did he say to the



prophetess and what did he say to those who practiced the same thing as her? Was it a single warning for everyone? What is different between what he said to the prophetess and what he said to those who followed her?)

God had definitely decided to punish this woman for her arrogance and not wanting to give up her bad deeds (Romans 6:23; Revelation 2:22a), but those who imitated her were given the opportunity to change and avoid all the evil previously announced.

Let's analyze this church a little more. (Form four groups to reread Revelation 2:19 and assign each group a quality: love, faith, service, patience. Tell them that each group should act out the quality that has touched them. They will only have approximately five minutes to prepare. Performances should not last more than a minute or two.)

After the role plays, talk with your students about how many times we appear to be good Christians, and settle for that, meanwhile we let the world continue to influence our lives away from God. Jesus Christ has called us to be a church loyal to his commandments. We must set limits in our lives and know how to say no to things that can take us away from God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by faith and not by works. We are of no use in the church if we aren't wholeheartedly committed to God. Our actions demonstrate what is in us, as it says in Matthew 6:21: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

The worst sin is to do something knowing that it's wrong. God doesn't overlook sin, as disguised as it may be.

2. God's invitation to the church

The word "invite", according to Dictionary.com, means: "to request the presence or participation in a kindly, courteous, or complimentary way."

In Revelation 2:25, God is inviting us to *"hold on to"* what we have; that is, it's encouraging us not to lose what we have. But what does that mean? What do we have and what should we retain? Looking at other versions of the Bible, they say the following: *"But until I come, you must hold firmly to the teaching you have"* (CEV), *"Hold on to the truth you have until I get there"* (MSG). In other words, God is asking you to continue acting with love, with faith, with patience, working hard in his work. In short, keep on retaining your salvation, that salvation that cost our Lord so much, and don't allow sinful influences in your life or within the church.

We must be clear that this part of the text is no longer directed at those who followed in the footsteps of Jezebel, but at those who stayed away from all those things. It shouldn't be believed that it was easy for this group of people. It surely took a lot of effort and suffering to go against the flow, but the words of Jesus Christ were refreshing, and at the same time, the prize for everything they had done so far.

This invitation is still valid today. Jesus Christ continues to invite us to keep our faith firm, to continue working with love and to wait on Him patiently, but without letting ourselves be manipulated by the world because He promised to return (Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7).

3. God's promise to the church

Finally, Jesus Christ ends by giving a great promise to all those who overcome and do his will to the end (2:26-29). Ask: What must we do to overcome? And what does it mean to do His will?

God doesn't expect us to be champions of any sport or competition; What he expects from us is that we overcome temptations, overcome in the midst of problems, and overcome obstacles that arise, such as discouragement, laziness and our fears. The Bible says in Romans 8:37 that we are more than conquerors through the One who loves us. Keep in mind that we will only achieve victory through Jesus Christ and not on our own; and for this we need to be in intimate communion with God.

Continuing with the study, doing His will means putting into practice the will of God. Only then will we get his promises.

Read verses 26 to 28 along with your students. (Write on cardboard the following words: AUTHORITY, ETERNITY, COMMUNION. Then, cut them into pieces by syllables. Form three groups and give each group a cut word for them to put together. Then, as you explain, paste them on a board.)

What Jesus Christ meant in these verses is that his faithful will reign with Him in eternity with all authority (Revelation 3:21), and that the relationship we will have with Him will be much closer and more intimate than we can have now. Our greatest prize will be Christ, that is, to be with Him forever.

Finally, this passage ends by saying: *"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* What God is telling us is that we must not be foolish but pay attention to his words, following his advice so that at the second coming he will find us ready.

Review/Apply: Ask your class to answer the following questions. We've included some possible answers.

1. What were the qualities of the Church of Thyatira? (Love, faith, service and patience (v. 19).)
2. What did Jesus Christ have against this church? (They tolerated Jezebel who called herself a prophetess and mislead Christ followers into sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols (v. 20).)
3. What was the warning the Lord gave her? (If she didn't repent of doing wrong, he would strike her child dead; and he would repay each according to their deeds (vs. 22-23).)
4. What does verse 25 mean? (We must take care of/hold on to our salvation.)

Challenge: Say to your class: We have seen that God is not impressed with good works alone; what he really seeks is people consecrated to Him. If you feel that you have simply been a good Christian, take on the challenge to be different, to go against the flow of sin and be a servant of God. Take time to pray with your students and invite them to consecrate their lives to God. Encourage them to continue praying during the week.



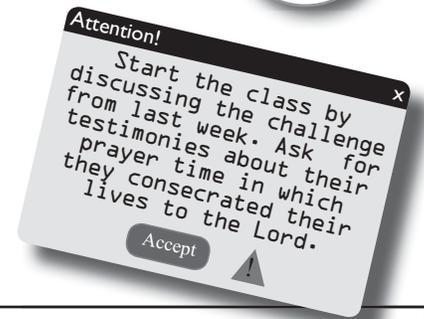
Living Dead?

Lesson 28

Annabella San José • Canada

Objective: That the students know the message that God sent to the church of Sardis, and as a consequence decide to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse: *I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.* Revelation 3:1c



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Different personal items. Pencils and paper.
- Instructions: Divide your class into two or more groups, depending on the number of students you have. Invite all students to participate by bringing you a personal item (i.e. wallet, cellphone, a coin, earring, etc.) As you receive the items, describe them out loud, highlighting the characteristics of each object. Then place them on the desk and cover them up. Then give the groups a set amount of time (i.e. 5 minutes) to write down on the paper as many of the objects as they can remember. Count them to see which group remembered the most.

God asked the Sardis church not to forget what they had heard from Him (Revelation 3:3). Relate remembering the objects in the game with the importance of remembering the Word of God and his will for our lives.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Matches, a candle for each student..
- Instructions: Form teams of four or more people. Each participant must have a lit candle. The object is to put out the other team's candles by blowing. The team that has more candles lit after a minute wins. They can't re-light their candles.

Explain to the students that God commands the Christian to remain alert for the coming of the Lord, and that they should ensure that the light of the knowledge of God and the Word they have heard remains shining in their lives (Revelation 3:3).

Connect

Navigate

God speaks about the Sardis church that looked like it was a living church, but was actually dead inside. Begin by reading Revelation 3:1-6. "Known biblically as the home of the church that received the fifth of letters to the seven churches in Revelation, Sardis was the capital of the Lydian empire and one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. Located on the banks of the Pactolus River, Sardis was 60 miles inland from Ephesus and Smyrna." ([Http://www.bibleplaces.com/sardis/](http://www.bibleplaces.com/sardis/)) [Accessed: November 13, 2019]. Today the region is located in Turkey.

1. Walking dead?

God saw that the Sardis church seemed to be alive, but in reality was in a decadent stage, struggling to show a spiritual liveliness that didn't exist (Revelation 3:1). They had stagnated in their past works and the good that they did before, and had begun to settle into a spiritual life that wasn't advancing. The same thing happens in the lives of many Christians today as well. Many young people who really got involved with all their hearts in an exemplary Christian life begin to stagnate in their relationship with God as time goes by. Imagine a river that stops running, doesn't return to where it came from but doesn't advance either. The water is still and seemingly fresh. After a while, someone disturbs the water and finds that it only looks clean from above. With the movement, a bad smell comes out because the animals, plants and everything inside rotted and died because the water no longer moved and couldn't sustain life.

It can be easy to pretend to have a victorious spiritual life. We get involved in many activities within the church, we talk like Christians and almost never do or think bad things. But we just don't keep growing and we start to stagnate. The problem is that our works won't be perfect according to the measure of God. That's



what happened with the church of Sardis in the sight of God (v. 2). God wants us to go forward every day and seek and obtain advancement and the entire sanctification of our lives.

2. See that you don't die completely

Amid the claim of a life of appearances, there was hope for the Sardis church, *“Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die,”* (v. 2). Apparently, there were still things that were good in the life of the church and the Lord called her to not let them die. With the passage of time, our life becomes more complicated. There are more tasks in school or university, the start of a new career, a new job, or a relationship. All this can begin to block our progress towards a life of complete consecration. Then there's no time to pray and we do it only during meals with the family. However, we read the Bible in devotional reading, we continue to attend Sunday School and the service on Sunday morning. There are still good things in us, and we're sure that we'll never stop doing them because we know that they're good. However, we no longer seek to improve them or spend more time on them. Remember, anything that's not advancing is doomed to die hopelessly. Remind your students of the example of the stagnant river.

There's a hope of not dying. Sometimes we present excuses such as: “I'm not doing bad things that I need to repent for; I'm not a sinner. I'm a Christian, and Christ died for me.” Failure to watch is the first phase of the fall (v. 3). Throughout our lives as Christians, we've learned many things that God wants us to do and maybe we aren't doing them anymore. James 4:17 tells us that is sin. So the call of the Lord is to remember what we've received and heard so that it helps us watch and remain firm until his second coming and we are declared victors.

3. Completely alive

Verses 4 and 5 show us another face of the Sardis church. Apparently not the whole church was dead; there were a few who remained faithful, firm and really had a close relationship with God and whom He considered as worthy. What a privilege to be considered worthy by God Himself. Those who were alive really were an example to others, so much so that the Lord says that those who overcome will be dressed in white like him.

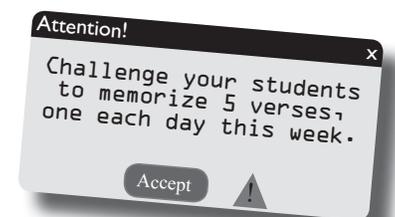
In the Christian's life, white always means the purity that God expects from his church and the victory of justification through Christ. Jesus promises that those justified by his blood will overcome. To overcome in the context of the letter to the church of Sardis is to reaffirm our works, reaffirm our lives, and change course if we're the living dead. Jesus also offers to confess our names before the Father and his angels. Explain to your students the importance of the fact that Jesus Christ will be our advocate in the final judgment.

Through the specific study of the message to this church, we've learned that spiritually can appear to have life, but be dead, and that this is part of a very dangerous process of falling away from Christ. We also saw that there are people who have been justified by the blood of Christ and who stand firm and are called “worthy” by Him. Both will be presented in the final judgment before God, but only those who overcome until the end will be confessed before the Father and his name will be in the book of Life. Our fight is daily. Overcoming is something we must do with each small or large decision we make (v. 6). Ask: Are you willing to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in your life? Allow time for them to pray silently, and in the meantime, ask if any of them want you to pray for them specifically. Take time to do this for each one individually.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to reflect on the following questions based on Revelation 3:1-6 and discuss them as a group.

1. How does this passage apply to your current spiritual life?
2. Can you tell us of real situations that show that a person pretends to be spiritually alive and is the opposite?
3. Can you develop a small plan on how to improve your spiritual life to be one of those who lasts until the end?
4. Can you develop a small plan in which you can help others stand firm in the Lord?

Challenge: Say to your class: This week I encourage you to memorize 5 Bible verses (6 are listed below) that talk about standing firm in the Lord. You can use these verses as a theme for your personal devotions. Plan to share in next week's class how this activity helped you improve your spiritual life. (2 Timothy 3:14-15; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Peter 3:17; Philippians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Matthew 24:42).



Take Care of Your Crown!

Lesson

29

Gabriela López • Mexico

Objective: That the students know the warning, the invitation and the promise that God made to the Church in Philadelphia, and apply it to their lives.

Memory Verse: *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.* Revelation 3:11



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Balloons and markers
- Instructions: Distribute two balloons to each student and tell them to write on the balloons two characteristics they have as Christians. Everyone will place their balloons in such a way that what they wrote can be seen by the whole group. Explain that each person can take two balloons that have a characteristic written on it that they would like to have. When someone takes a balloon, it cannot be taken back. A balloon can only be taken once. A person can have up to four balloons (if no one takes theirs and they take two). Once everyone has taken a turn, some may not have any (if someone took theirs and they didn't want any others). At the end ask: How does it make you feel that others want something that you have? What feelings or emotions motivate a person to really try to imitate something someone else is?

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Paper and pens/markers.
- Instructions: Ask your students to draw a tree on a piece of paper, with roots, branches, leaves and fruit. By the "roots" have them write the positive qualities that each one believes they have; by the "branches", the positive things they do; and by the "fruit", their achievements or successes. Once they're finished, they should write their name at the top of the drawing. Next, the students will place their tree on their back, so that the rest of their classmates can see it. Then they will take a walk "through the forest". Every time they find a tree of one of their classmates, they are to read aloud what's written on the drawing and then add "roots", "branches" and/or "fruits" to their classmates tree that they recognize in that person. At the end, ask them to comment on how they feel when they see what others have added to their tree.

Connect

Navigate

There are numerous teachings and lessons about the Church in Philadelphia where it's presented as a great example of good and right, it's one of the 2 churches that are approved of in Revelation.

However, in this lesson we will focus on six phrases that God addressed to this church which serve as guides for each Christian to evaluate their spiritual life and be found approved before God.

1. God knows us and guides us

Begin by reading Revelation 3:7-13. Verse 8 refers to the intimate and supernatural knowledge of the Lord, although the phrase is general and not specific to what deeds it refers to. Obviously works aren't greater than faith, but faith is undoubtedly linked to good works. James writes particularly about this in 2:18,22,24,26.

In the Bible, various passages speak of the relevance of works (1 Timothy 6:18; Titus 3:8,14; 1 Peter 1:17). While it's true that the Christian is not called to be a philanthropist, it is clear that the Christian's action will be compassionate, kind, patient, in congruence with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Although it's not specific what works the Philadelphia church did, it's obvious that these were positive. Every Christian should be certain that his works are good before God.

In verse 8, he goes on to say "I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut ..." Theologians agree that this statement refers to the open doors for the proclamation of the gospel. For the Christians of the first century, the use of the figure of the open door was recurrent. The apostle Paul refers again and again to this, as in Antioch when he reports that God "had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).



Numerous passages from Paul's epistles seem to indicate that an open door means a good opportunity for missionary work (Acts 14:27; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3), a work that's one of the main signs of faithfulness in Christian service. The Philadelphia church was called to missionary work, to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they had a favorable geographical position to carry it out.

"I know you have little strength ..." refers to the minority status of the believers in Philadelphia. At the time this church in Philadelphia existed, the congregations were small; that made them weak. It's likely that this congregation had little influence among the citizens of Philadelphia, but their works were blameless. Perhaps the believers in Philadelphia belonged to the proletarian class, without political or economic power, but had excellent testimonies. On many occasions, Christians recognize that by themselves, they don't have the capacity to do great things for God, but having the humility to recognize that without God they can do nothing makes it possible to allow the great power of God to act in their lives.

2. Let's keep His Word and not deny His name

This church not only believed in the Word of God, but obeyed it (v. 8). Sometimes churches or Christians believe in the Word of God but aren't characterized by obeying it. The Philadelphia church, in contrast, is characterized by their obedience to the Word of God. The believers in Philadelphia had shown loyalty to the Word of God despite the difficulties; the circumstances had not caused them to alter their obedience to the content of the message.

In this church in Philadelphia, a group is observed that kept the Word of the Lord, and this means that there was recognition of the authority of the Lord.

"... you have not denied my name" is a special feature of Philadelphia.

Throughout the history of the Church, the name of the Lord Jesus has often gone to the background. If someone asks you, "who are you?" And you answer, "I'm a Christian," the one who asked won't be satisfied. He'll insist on knowing what kind of Christian you are. These days, it's not enough to say this phrase since it sounds quite ambiguous. Sometimes it's even atrocious, since they usually link the word "Christian" to the Holy Inquisitions, to groups that only ask for money to be healed. To the ignorant, in some ways in our society, being a Christian can mean something unpleasant.

In the midst of these unfavorable images, the name of God is hidden, hidden from groups of "powerful", fearful, lukewarm "Christians", lacking in love and mercy. It's the Lord himself who considers his name to be more than enough for his children. And in the Church of Philadelphia, his name was considered sufficient.

3. Don't take our crown

In verse 11, a warning was given to the Church of Philadelphia. Those in Philadelphia had to be careful to firmly retain what they had. They couldn't lose what they already had. Sounds redundant, but many times in the Christian's walk, this task tends to fall out of sight. Some Christians choose a fairly relaxed life, with minimal effort, thinking: "If Christ has already died, and if I've already accepted him, there's nothing more to do." In a rather naive way, we believe that that's enough. However, we must seek a continuous relationship with God, which must grow and increase in intimacy, which will inevitably demand actions according to love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith and meekness (Galatians 5:22).

This Christian act has nothing to do with personal criteria, or with rules of our denomination, but with the commandments of God, which should be reflected in our practical life with family, friends, school or workmates, neighbors, in our communities, etc. since our relationship with our neighbor will be in proportion to our relationship that's maintained with God.

At the end, there's a promise for the victor who will be made "a pillar in the temple of my God" (Revelation 3:12). Being made a pillar suggests stability and permanence because "while a pillar gives stability to the building that rests on it, it itself is permanently fixed." Thus, when the trial time is over, the victor will become a pillar in the temple of God. There will be no chance of falling or being moved.

Review/Apply: Have your students answer the following questions and discuss them together.

1. What kind of works in the Philadelphia church was God referring to? (Works of compassion, kindness, patience, in congruence with the fruit of the Holy Spirit.)
2. What does it mean to keep the Word? (Obey what is in it.)
3. What should we really recognize when we claim to have little strength? (That our strength comes from God.)
4. What is the warning about taking care of our crown? (We must not neglect our relationship with God.)

Challenge: Tell your class: This week pray that God will provide us with an open door to preach the gospel of salvation to people hungry for the truth. Write in your own words the 6 phrases for the Philadelphia church.



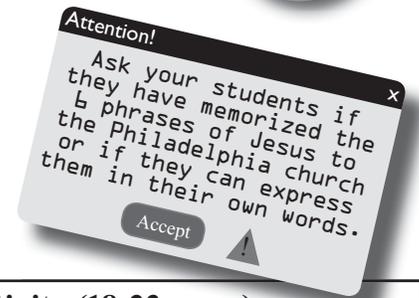
Useless Church

Lesson 30

Jim Lynch • USA

Objective: That the students become aware of their spiritual situation and seek the Lord to have intimate communion with Him and to achieve victory.

Memory Verse: *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.* Revelation 3:20



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Two blindfolds. A bottle and a cup, both filled with warm drinkable water.
- Instructions: Choose four volunteers (preferably 2 boys and 2 girls). Blindfold one boy and one girl and place them behind a table. Give the other two the bottle and cup of warm water. (Give the bottle to the boy and the cup to the girl). Tell them to act out the story you're going to tell them. Use the following example or something similar. "Two young people left to go home after a long afternoon of studying at school. When they got home, the young man played soccer for two hours and the girl watched a movie on television. At the end of the game, the boy wanted something cold to drink, and at the end of the TV show, the girl craved a hot tea. The boy was happy when a friend offered him a bottle (at this time the volunteer with the bottle of water should place it in the hands of the boy) and the young woman was very happy when her mother gave her a cup (the other volunteer should place the cup of water in the girl's hands). Blindfolded volunteers will probably have some kind of a reaction upon receiving a drink that they didn't expect. Ask the volunteers how they felt when they received what they didn't expect. Explain that our Lord Jesus Christ sometimes receives from us what he doesn't expect and that this causes Him to feel rejected.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Yellow and blue paint, paper for each group, a small bowl for water, and brushes.
- Instructions: Form groups and give each group the materials. Ask them to divide the paper in half and draw two circles, one on each side of the sheet, so that when they fold the paper in half, the circles coincide. Then ask the groups to paint one circle yellow and the other blue. When the paint is still fresh, have them fold the paper together again and rub where there's paint. Have them open the paper and they will see the color has changed. Finally ask them to paint a blue sky with a yellow sun with the paint on the paper.

Because the colors were mixed when they folded the paper, they won't be able to use the original colors.

Connect

Navigate

1. Become aware of our current spiritual state

For this church to become aware of their situation, the Lord didn't congratulate them on any behavior. He told them that he considered the church to be useless, and that this caused him to reject it (3:15-16). The Lord wanted Laodicea to be hot, but if not, he preferred it cold, never warm!

24 kilometers north of Laodicea was the city of Hierapolis, where there was a thermal spring. Due to this spring of hot water, there was a medicinal industry of hot springs waters that healed. This attracted many people from this region of Asia. In the city of Colossae, 16 kilometers east of Laodicea, there was a spring of cold water that provided refreshing waters. The water in Laodicea came from Colossae through long Roman aqueducts and when it finally reached the citizens, it was warm and tasted bad.

The Laodicean brothers and sisters understood that Jesus was accusing them of being lukewarm, and indicated that they were useless both for heat or refreshing.

The Lord quotes the reason why the church had become useless. "I am rich; I have acquired wealth, and don't need a thing." (3:17). The church had grown so much in its wealth and was so confident in its position that it believed that they had no need for the presence of the Lord.



Reality for God was the opposite: *“you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”* (3:17). The end result of the pride and self-sufficiency of the Laodicean Church was that the Lord was no longer present among them (3:20a). The phrases *“I stand at the door and knock.”* *“open the door”* and *“I will come in ...”* clearly indicates that the Lord was outside. It’s terrible to think that the Lord was relegated to an outside place and had to ask to enter. Ask: What is your situation today? On which side of the door of your life is Jesus?

2. Seek the redeeming benefits of the Lord

The first benefit that this church could obtain in Christ was *“gold refined in the fire”* in order to be rich. The city of Laodicea was very economically advanced. It had a lot of industry and many bankers. When there was an earthquake that destroyed the infrastructure, the city refused help from the Roman government for reconstruction. However, our Lord describes them as poor and unfortunate. He wanted the church to humble itself before Him to receive purified gold for free. God wanted to refine them as gold in the fire to have a righteous people serving him and having him as their God.

The second benefit that Christ wanted to grant to this church was *“white clothes to wear.”* One of the largest industries in Laodicea was the production of clothing made of dark wool from goats. Christ wanted the Laodicea people to be “dressed in white”; not confident in their own industry that left them ashamed in the eyes of God, but trusting in the only Savior who could cover their shame with purity.

The third benefit was *“salve to put on your eye”*. Archeology confirms that a second prominent industry in Laodicea was the production of eye and ear salve. Those of Laodicea were experts in healing eyes, but Christ had declared them blind. Only Christ can open the eyes of the blind (John 9:32), and he was offering this miracle for free to the Laodicean church.

3. Make the decision to approach Christ

A. Repentance and change

The first step for the Laodicean believers was to recognize that the Lord admonished and disciplined them because of his love for them (3:19). Hebrews 12:5-6 tells us that the Lord disciplines us because he loves us. Christ was verbally punishing this church because he loved her.

The second step was to seek the priorities of the Lord. If we want something new, we need a new passion. We have to scrutinize the Scriptures in order to “sit down” at the teacher’s feet and be sanctified in his truth (John 17:17). It’s also important to pray to our Father, seeking to fix that in us that’s deficient; to unite with our others in the ardent search for the Lord and to win others.

Third, remorse wasn’t enough. They needed to produce fruit worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8). Worldly sorry wasn’t adequate (2 Corinthians 7:10). Their sadness had to become real change.

B. Invite the Lord to intimate communion

Every believer in Laodicea had to heed the call of the Lord. *“Here I am”* was the way of that day and culture to say, “Pay attention!” or “Open your eyes!” We have to realize that the Lord is standing at the door of our lives knocking. Christ insists on continuing to knock on the door of our lives.

The individual who hears the voice of the Lord has to let the Lord enter. Opening the door means an invitation to come in. Jesus is a gentleman and won’t enter without the individual allowing it. He won’t violate the free will of the person.

Having let the Lord in, the person will experience intimate communion. The promise of the Lord is *“I will come in and eat with that person and they with me”* (v. 20). Dinner in that culture was the most important meal of the day, and eating together in every country at all times has meant friendship and intimacy. In having dinner with Him, we spend a time of more intimate fellowship with the Lord. In this intimacy, the guest becomes the host and giver of the food.

The result will be victory. *“The one who is victorious”*, who becomes aware of his spiritual state, seeks the Lord, is interested in His interests, and repents by letting him in for an intimate communion ... he will be invited to sit on the throne with Christ as his reward.

Review/Apply: Have your students explain the following phrases and how they apply to their lives.

1. “Here I Am!” (A way to get our attention. Jesus is calling us to consider something in our life that’s not right.)
2. “I stand at the door and knock.” (Jesus is coming to us, knocks, but won’t force the door open to enter.)
3. “I am rich; I have acquired wealth” (Trusting in our own works and believing that what we have is a product of our own effort and not as God’s blessing.)

Have them explain three ways that they can apply to their lives the phrase *“I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”* These should be personal responses, not necessary to share with the class.

Challenge: Say to the class: This week, invite Jesus on a special date. Set aside a specific time when you come before God in worship, supplication and study of his Word. Prepare in advance by making sure that nothing can get in the way of the meeting time. If you can make this a consistent practice, you will see great results in your life.



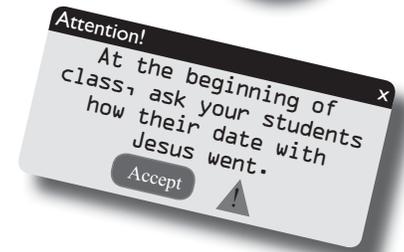
Signs on the Body

Lesson 31

Walter López • Mexico

Objective: That young people understand that the Christian life is authentic and goes beyond cultural fashions.

Memory Verse: “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I won’t be dominated by anything. 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NRSV)



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and fingernail polish.
- Instructions: Divide the class into groups and instruct them to spill the nail polish onto the paper so that it’s stained. After two minutes, ask them to clean up the stain from the paper.
It’s important that the student understands that the decision to put on a tattoo is for a lifetime and is not easily erased, so we must discuss it seriously and honestly.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Fingernail polish or Chinese ink and models of people on paper.
- Instructions: Ask for volunteers to paint with ink a design (tattoo) on the models.
Talk with your students about the fact that although it’s personal and can be a temporary marking, but is usually permanent, a tattoo can have significant effects on our lives.

Connect

Navigate

1. I have the right to do anything

The phrase “*all things are lawful* (allowed)” is not a phrase that the apostle Paul argues. This phrase was used by the Corinthians to justify their behaviors and behaviors. The apostle Paul added “*but all things aren’t beneficial*” and “*but I won’t be dominated by anything*” (1 Corinthians 6:12 NRSV). Paul didn’t support the actions of the Corinthians. On the contrary, Paul made them see that although they believed they could do what they wanted, not everything was beneficial for them or the church.

Paul’s words remain valid today more than ever. While it’s true that as Christians we experience full freedom, this is no excuse for doing everything we want. As members of the Christian community, our actions are associated with the faith of our brothers and sisters, and we have a responsibility to act according to the love of Christ. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, pointed out that neither the strong should belittle the weak, nor the weak judge the strong (Romans 15:1). If we understand this, we can create an environment of tolerance in the church regardless of our thinking.

2. Tattoos and piercings

Tattoos and piercings are two cultural fashions on which we must reflect. It’s worth looking at Paul’s words, “*but all things aren’t beneficial*” and “*but I won’t be dominated by anything*”. As Christians, we’re free, but this freedom has its highest premise in the love of others. No one can use his freedom to cause the other to fall, nor can the other judge his brother for something he doesn’t tolerate.

Tattooing is a practice that dates back many centuries. In the native peoples of America, the tattoo was a symbol of hierarchy, power, authority or nobility. Tattoos and piercing were a brand that distinguished a warrior, a priest or a ruler. In all indigenous or tribal cultures, tattoos have been and are a symbol of distinction or identification. It’s part of their culture.

In the religious sense, tattoos play a very important role. In the Mayan and Aztec cultures, the tattoo represented a very close relationship with the divinity. The tattoo was the symbol of distinction of his god. It was the mark and presence of the invisible in the life of the one who carried it. Tattoos were symbols with a deeply religious meaning. In the Old Testament, we find an explicit restriction in this regard. The first is in Leviticus 19:28 and clearly expresses a prohibition. Chapter 19 of Leviticus offers a series of rules for the people of Israel as they walk through the desert. Verse 28 says: “*You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord.*” (NRSV).

The prohibition of tattooing in the O.T. was associated exclusively with religious meanings. This practice was evidence of the religious life of the neighboring towns of Israel. God never allowed Israel to take customs or practices that involved other gods. The tattoo ban was for the religious significance of that time and in that context (Lev. 19:28). This was a pagan custom and therefore forbidden to Israel.



The Bible speaks more against idolatry to other gods than on the fact of the tattoo. In chapter 19 of Leviticus, we find requirements of consecration to the Lord. Following a cultural fashion can enclose us in a very subtle area of idolatry.

As for piercing, in some tribes of Africa, the perforations in the body have an aesthetic character. Women pierce their ears and nose because they are beauty attributes. Thus they define their culture. On the other hand, piercings in the ears are also associated with slavery. In both Rome and Greece, slaves had their ears pierced to identify them.

This is not a religious matter. In many of our cultures, tattoos and piercing remains a fashion promoted many times by “rock stars” “fashion artists” and other symbols of “beauty” outside the modesty of the children of God. This can become an idolatrous trend.

3. Tattoos and piercings today

Currently, tattoo and piercing don't have that religious character that was discussed before. Today, these two components are part of fashion that has gained strength in recent years. Television was responsible for disseminating all kinds of artistic stars, sports, men and women with tattoos and piercing anywhere on the body. In the 70's and 80's, tattoos were more related to American rock groups. After the explosion of mass media, these two practices spread everywhere.

We can point out that this practice is deeply influenced by the culture of hero worship. Television, movie and sports world characters have tattoos all over their bodies and are taken as normal. Some Christian “artists” even wear their tattoos and piercing. It would be worth asking, why do they do it? Who do they want to please?

Given this influence, the important question for us as Christians arises: Why do you want to get a tattoo? Or why do you want to wear a piercing? What are your reasons? There are some considerations that aren't taken into account. For example, in Central America, tattoos are associated with gangs. Tattoos have a very negative image in these countries. Without a doubt, if you decide to get one, you'll be a victim of social stigma, at least in the first impression you make.

In other countries, tattoos don't have such a bad image, but there are other factors to consider. For example, some employer companies don't allow the use of tattoos on their employees, and therefore, if you decide to have one, you reduce your employment opportunities. As the apostle Paul says, “not everything is for my good.”

Finally, there are medical treatments that require an MRI, and there are publications that report a pulling or burning sensation when undergoing that treatment that's caused by the ingredients in the inks used for tattoos. It's important to know that the inks used by people who dedicate themselves to tattooing aren't always trustworthy since there's no regulation that mandates what chemicals are appropriate for tattoo inks.

Finally, in terms of piercing, it's the same. Its use is only aesthetic, related to “looking good” or “being fashionable”. But are we called to follow fashions? Is our call to follow the fashion trends of this world? Or are we called to be light, salt and an example of love for other people?

There aren't only moral considerations. There are other weighty reasons against getting a tattoo. *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful for me, but I won't be dominated by anything.”* (1 Corinthians 6:12 NRSV). What are you looking for when getting a tattoo or a piercing? Are you looking to please God? It's hard to see how tattoos or piercings move the heart of God. If you have a tattoo or a piercing, it's probably for yourself, for very personal reasons, but not because God wants it. While God won't condemn you for doing so, he won't be grateful to you for putting on a cross or a religious symbol. How will this affect others? As Christians, we are free, but this is subject to love and respect for my neighbor.

Review/Apply: Ask students to answer the following questions and discuss them in class.

1. What did tattoos mean in the Old Testament? (A religious relationship with the pagan gods and the dead.)
2. What does the apostle Paul say about everything being allowed for us? (That not everything is beneficial and that nothing should dominate us.)
3. Where does the fashion of tattoos and piercing come from? (The influence of the media, and from public figures.)
4. Is a tattoo or a piercing a mark that distinguishes me as a child of God? (No, what distinguishes me is the love I have for my neighbor.)
5. What social consequences does a tattoo imply? (I can be marginalized or discriminated against; it can close doors to a job or cause problems with medical treatments.)

Challenge: Say to your class: Write in your own words two biblical references that forbid tattoos. If you know someone who intends to get a tattoo or a piercing in your church, share what you have learned and invite them to reflect on the social consequences. Also, if next week you'll be teaching the activity for 12-17 year olds, ask each student to bring a personal photo to next week's class.



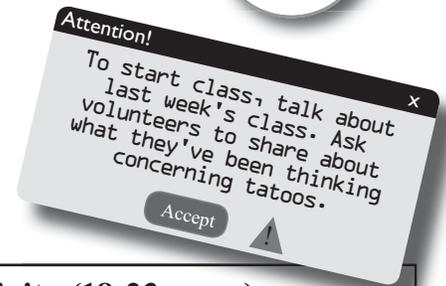
Social Media

Lesson 32

Viviana Perez • Argentina

Objective: That the students know how to use social media in today's society.

Memory Verse: *There's a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:...* Ecclesiastes 3:1



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- **Materials:** A decorated poster that looks like the start up page of Facebook. Also, during the previous week's class, ask each student to bring a personal photo. If you didn't request the photos, have photos cut out of magazines and ask each student to choose one that represents them.
- **Instructions:** Ask each student to come forward, stick their photo (or chosen magazine picture) on the poster of the Facebook page and briefly tell the group something about themselves.

When everyone has finished, ask them how they felt sharing about themselves with a group of people who are present and non-virtual. Then ask them how this compares to sharing on social media. What are the differences. With this exercise, we experience the difference between a virtual social network and a present social network.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- **Instructions:** Prepare in advance a written survey with the following questions:
 1. Do you have an account on any social network?
 2. How many times a day do you check your account(s)?
 3. How much time per week do you invest in your account (s)?
 4. What has been your biggest benefit from social media?
 5. Do you think social media has harmed you in any way? (For example, it takes our time, distracts us from time with friends, causes misunderstandings, etc.)Give the opportunity for different students to share their answers with the class. Finally ask this question for self-reflection: Do you think social media benefits us or harm us more? Don't push your own opinion, give them a few minutes to think about it.

Connect

Navigate

According to a study carried out in Germany by Volkswagen and MTV in collaboration with Nielsen, young people between 14 and 29 spend an average of two hours a day on the internet.

The report also reveals that the youngest are registered in at least three social networks and have an average of 195 contacts. (<http://www.marketingdirecto.com/actualidad/social-media-marketing>)

Also another survey on the internet revealed that 22% of a group of young respondents lie about their identity. In a conversation, a young woman revealed one of the reasons why young people today are so attached to social networks. She said that it made her feel noticed. "When I uploaded a photo, I immediately got comments. It was a way to fill a void. But little by little, it became a total dependence, to the point of preferring not to eat but to chat and and be on my cell phone."

While social networks help us improve, expand, and strengthen our social relationships, it's also true that today it's one of the greatest vices and advertising and influence tools in terms of consumption, trends, materialism, discrimination, violence, sex, vices and other things.

Write on a board in two columns: Correct uses and Incorrect uses of social networks. Talk with your students about it.

Cyberbullying is harassment through social networks. It's the use of electronic information and media such as email, social networks, blogs, instant messaging, text messages, mobile phones and defamatory websites to harass an individual or group through personal attacks or other means. It may constitute a criminal offense.

Cyberbullying allows hostile behaviors, attacking reputation, damaging privacy through comments, inventing stories, false profiles are created, impersonation of personality, photos are tagged, insulted, threatened, blackmailed with uploading photographs, etc. Everything that's done is an effort to cause anguish in the harassed, who in some cases end up moving or worse, committing suicide. The aggressors think that it's only a joke, but the one who suffers can be really affected.

1. How do we invest our time?

Brainstorm, with this variation: Give each student an adhesive paper where they will write something in which they invest their time. As they share their answer with the class, they'll stick their adhesive on the board.



Ecclesiastes 3 is a compilation of what we all basically do at some point in life, from birth until we die, good things and bad things, positive things and negative things. Verse 11 says “*He has made everything beautiful in its time,*” meaning that when we do things in a wise and prudent manner, it will be beautiful. But the key is that it must be done just in the right time, not before or after, but in the right time. For example: “Peter” is on Facebook when it’s time for the family meal and the mother calls him to eat a thousand times, until it ends up annoying him and her. Is Peter doing things at the right time? Another case: “Anna” is messing with the text messages on her phone in class. The teacher catches her attention, but she doesn’t stop. The teacher approaches and removes her cell phone. It wasn’t the right time. We can make an endless list of things we do at the time that isn’t right, from getting a boyfriend at a very young age to not stopping texting when your best friend is confessing something serious to you in person.

It’s important to remember that when we strive to do the things we have to do at the right time, everything will be more likely to work out and it will probably be beautiful as Ecclesiastes says.

The way we invest our time communicates about what we consider important in our lives. We need to stop and evaluate to be sure that what we do today will make us proud tomorrow and bring us satisfaction and peace. If not, we should ask God for wisdom and discernment to know how to invest our time in a correct way and in worthwhile things. There’s nothing better than doing what pleases the Lord. For example, reading the Word of God clarifies our ideas, cleanses our hearts and opens our understanding to renew us in order to make correct decisions.

2. How do we use social media?

Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 6:12. The Message version of the Bible says: “*Just because something is technically legal doesn’t mean that it’s spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I’d be a slave to my whims.*” When we read this passage we realize that the phrase says that we are free to do what we want, or that everything is lawful for us, but if we’re intelligent, we must know that not everything we would like to do suits us. Some things can be good, necessary, and productive; but others can be harmful, destructive, or unnecessary.

That’s why it’s important that God guides our actions and decisions, because when we do things apart from Him, or do things that we know he don’t like, we must know that the end won’t be good, because it will end in pain, disease, death, etc.

Ask: How are we using social networks in light of Romans 14:19 and 15:2? We know when something on the web or social media doesn’t suit us; we know when something contributes to peace and when not; we know if what we say or others say is edifying or not. Criticisms, photos that highlight defects with the intention of mocking, false information, malicious intentions in relationships, etc. are just some of the things that are surely and unfortunately happening on social media for destruction, but not for building.

We must be alert because the temptation to do what’s not appropriate will always be present. God’s advice in his Word is not that we stop using social networks, because “everything is lawful to me”, but we must analyze what’s appropriate. He also says, “I won’t let myself be dominated,” that is, we won’t let the media current manipulate us, but it’s we who will make a difference in the use of social networks, using them to contribute to peace, mutual edification and being kind to our neighbor.

3. How can we make better use of social networks?

Ask: What could we do to take better advantage of social networks? Social networks are one of the best tools we have to transmit the gospel. We must be creative and willing to be those messengers that God needs, asking the Lord to use our points of contact to be a channel of blessing and hope to others.

Ephesians 4:29-30 tells us that the words we use, whether spoken or written, must be used to edify, that is, to help others be better. They cannot be corrupted words, bad words, vulgarities, lies, insults or similar words. They must be good, appropriate, honest words, with a touch of grace and wisdom, because if we don’t do so, the Holy Spirit will be saddened.

We must also take care of the photos we upload.

So, in conclusion, we can use social networks, as long as we use them for building and without letting them dominate us.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to answer the following questions:

1. What can I do to use social networks in the right place and time?
2. How can I use social networks to generate something constructive?
3. How can I detect if social networks are controlling me?
4. And if I realize that social networks are controlling me, what can I do to free myself?

Challenge: Say to your class: What do you think if this week you use social media to convey a message of hope in Jesus? You can also write down on a piece of paper every time you use social media. Write down your start time and end time. Then, at the end of the week you will have an average of daily hours that you used social media.



Homosexuality?

Objective: That the students identify in the Word of God the Biblical position regarding homosexuality, and gain an understanding of the role of the church on the subject.

Memory Verse: *Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* Hebrews 4:16



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and colored pencils.
- Instructions: Ask students to draw a picture portraying the reaction of the local church if a homosexual person were to enter during a worship service. Once they have completed the drawing, allow them to explain the meaning of what they drew (including the possible homosexual stereotype). In the course of the class, they will have the opportunity to examine their positions on today's topic.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils for each student.
- Instructions: Have your students divide their sheet of paper into three columns. In the first, have them write: "What I know", in the second, "What I want to learn", and in the third, "What I learned". Ask the students to fill in the first two columns with the topic being homosexuality. At the end of class today, have your students fill in the third column.

Connect

Navigate

Homosexuality is an issue that bothers most Christians. When starting the class, it's important that you establish some rules with the students to maintain order and respect among all. One rule would be to not use offensive synonyms to refer to homosexuals. Another is to be open to the direction of the Holy Spirit to hear the voice of God above our own positions. For practical reasons in this class, the term homosexual will also include lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and transvestites, etc. It's important to clarify with the class a difference between homosexual and effeminate. Effeminate is understood as men with female traits and movements and which aren't necessarily indicators of homosexuality.

1. Homosexuality Today

Current society doesn't reach an agreement regarding the issue of homosexuality. Some are quick to condemn it and others to excuse it. There are activist groups that fight for gay rights; other groups fight against them. Some defend the right to sexual preference, others would like to sentence them to death. Science has not provided strong studies that prove that the origin of homosexuality is always genetic, the product of personal experiences, or a decision. Despite the openness that has existed in some places towards homosexuals, the majority still live stigmatized, rejected and violated. Our society doesn't fully understand homosexuals, but lends itself to attack them. Commonly in schools, workplaces and meetings of friends, homosexuals are frequent victims of jokes and teasing. There are those who have even chosen the path of violence to manifest their position against homosexuality.

2. Homosexuality in the Bible

The first biblical reference we find is in Genesis chapter 19. Two angels went to see Lot to rescue him from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The men of the city surrounded Lot's house and asked to see the men to have sex with them. They were delivered by the power of God, but the cities were destroyed. When God was forming the people of Israel, he gave very clear laws about it. Leviticus 18:22 indicates that homosexual activity is forbidden by God. Leviticus 20:13 indicates that the punishment was the death penalty. Homosexual activity was practiced by the Canaanite peoples, neighbors of the Israelites. God explicitly indicated the prohibition of such activities to his chosen people. For the modern reader of the Bible, the punishments of Leviticus 20 may seem exaggerated, but at the time of Israel's formation, it was important to show the difference between the morality of God's people and neighboring peoples. Like other sexual sins (adultery, incest), homosexual activity was punishable by the death penalty.

In the New Testament, we also find mentions about homosexuality and they are equally blunt. Romans 1:18-32 tells us how man falls and departs from the grace of God by his own actions and decisions, and the consequence is reflected in his own life. Verses 25 and 26 refer to homosexuality as the consequence of idolatry to the body itself. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, he mentions that homosexuals won't enter the kingdom of heaven.

The language used in the previous verses speaks strongly against homosexuality. Paul also clarifies: "Flee from sexual immorality." The Bible makes no difference between one sin and another. So when Romans 3:23 says that we all sin and are destitute of God's glory, it includes both the liar, the adulterer and the homosexual. In 1 Corinthians 6:10, we see that the list of people who will be left out of God's kingdom includes not only those who commit sexual sins.

When John Wesley asked his mother Susana what sin was, she said: "Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself." (<http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/sin.htm>) [Consulted: December 12, 2019] Ask: Do you think the one who commits a sexual sin deserves greater punishment than the one who steals or lies? James 2:10 says that no matter what sin we commit, we are responsible for it before God.

3. The role of the church concerning homosexuality

As we saw in point 2, the Bible condemns homosexual activity. But it also condemns idolatry, theft, murder, lies, and other sins (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6,21). Ask: Why does the church seem to be so severe with homosexuals and tolerant of other sins? An alcoholic can seek help in the church. A thief can approach in search of God's forgiveness, and even a murderer can reach mercy. What can a homosexual who approaches the church expect: rejection or an opportunity to find God through the Christian community?

The church does its best to prepare itself to help the needy, the orphans, the widows, the poor, the sick, to visit prisons and bring good news to prisoners. Ask: Are we ready as a church to work with homosexuals?

For Juan Stam, "instead of being hostile and condemning, we must create an atmosphere that invites homosexuals to seek any counseling they need." Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death, but it also says that God's gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus. So everyone, including homosexuals, has the opportunity to approach the throne of grace to receive mercy (Hebrews 4:16). Ask: "What should be the attitude of the church in dealing with homosexuals?"

The church must understand that the gospel also applies to homosexuals, and take the initiative to bring the gospel to them; it must be clear that the gospel is a transforming power. Jesus forgave many people and said, "Do not sin anymore." The church's message has to be clear in that regard and lead the sinner to a change in behavior.

Review/Apply: Allow time for your students to write a letter to the church in which they are a part. The letter should begin "Dear Church, this is what I learned about homosexuality ...".

Challenge: Encourage you students to write down some ways during the week in which the church can approach the homosexual community, without compromising biblical principles and without offending homosexuals. Tell your students: "Next week, we'll discuss what you wrote regarding homosexuality."



Smart Entertainment

Lesson 34

Yeri Nieto • Mexico

Objective: That the students understand that entertainment is wonderful, as long as it's healthy.

Memory Verse: *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* Philippians 4:8



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Pencils or pens, and a piece of paper with a grid designed for writing out your schedule of an ordinary school or work day.
- Instructions: Ask your students to fill in their schedule of a normal day, filling in the spaces with the activities they're involved in and how much time they spend participating in each activity (try give detailed accounting for every hour). Then ask them to examine their sheet and write at the bottom the thing or things that they are using the majority of their time for. Ask them: "Do you think you are using your time wisely? If not, what do you need to change?"

- Example:

Time	Activity
6:00-7:00	Get Ready
7:30-2:00	School
2:00-3:00	Snack/Rest
3:00-4:00	Chores
4:00-6:00	Homework
6:00-7:00	Dinner
8:00-9:30	Finish homework/TV

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Various posters/pictures of well-known celebrities (such as singers, athletes, musicians, actors, etc.).
- Instructions: Stick the various posters on the wall and ask, "What do these people do to be so well liked?"

The answers will vary, but in essence, they are liked because of what they do. For example, a soccer player trains and is always playing, he's very dedicated; He cannot afford carelessness because it would lower his professional performance. The same goes for a television actress: She spends a lot of her money on her beauty because she lives off her image and if she neglects it, she could lose opportunities to be on screen.

The characters on the posters reflect what they do every day.

All people, whether famous or not, reflect with their words and actions what they consume daily.

Connect

Navigate

Entertainment is not only necessary in life, but indispensable to find meaning in it. We all have the right to have fun! And we currently have many options to do so, such as traditional games, sophisticated X-BOX or PSP, television programs, virtual communities on the Internet (such as Messenger, Facebook or Twitter) among others.

1. Life with entertainment vs. life of entertainment

Our life needs to have entertainment. The problem is that many people don't live "with" entertainment, but live "for" it. That is, all day is focused on entertainment. For example, the time that a student should use to review their class notes is spent on the Internet, chatting or viewing updates to their virtual space. The time that a person should spend on doing their homework better is spent playing a soccer game on their PSP or playing a game on their Ipad or chatting with their friends.

Watch out! Entertainment time should not occupy the central part of our life. It's just a distraction, not what's most essential for us. However, there are other more serious problems..

2. The violent reality

Unlike the last century when rationality still prevailed over what was consumed, pleasure prevails today. We live in a hedonistic world. This has resulted in entertainment that only seeks to satisfy people and not serve as a simple pause or distraction from work or school life. And that's dangerous, although many people (especially young people) want to justify it, saying that "it doesn't affect me."

This is accentuated by the fact that the most popular games are those related to wars, such as _____. The most watched series on television, such as _____ contain explicit violence. Many songs contain explicit lyrics of incitement to fanaticism, intolerance and intimidation against those who don't think like us, like _____

In the cinema, in the same way, it's not easy to find movies that have a positive message. The common thing is to watch films such as _____. People attending the movie will celebrate that at the end of it, thieves and gangsters beat the cops and others who are responsible for doing good.

There are also violent messages on open television. Today, talk shows are popular during family hours. These are programs where a moderator with actors present real-life situations, for example, a marital infidelity. They point out each other's faults, they get angry, they judge each other, they expose their problem to the public, while the host makes a mockery of what happens. In the end, there's a "specialist" (a psychologist who shares the relative values of society or a lawyer who promises to help the couple in their divorce) who gives their opinion and helps the moderator (regularly someone who, because of those cases, is made famous) to close the case. Soap operas also promote social values that are far from the kingdom of God. Soap operas foster adultery, fornication, conflict, revenge, hatred and violence. That is why it's so common to listen to teenagers talking like the character of a certain soap opera, or talking to adults with hateful and bitter phrases, without room for forgiveness!

And what about wrestling, some cartoons or series that exalt drug trafficking, etc.?

The reality of violence is not just outside our homes. It's comfortably installed in our room. And we, like members of the kingdom of God, aren't doing anything to expel it. What should we do?

3. Some Suggestions

God's salvation is holistic (Matthew 1:21; 1 Timothy 1:15). That is, God is very interested not only in our spirit, but also in all other aspects of our life, i.e., the physical, the mental and the social. But how sad it is to see that what Jesus said is fulfilled every day! *"People loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil"* (John 3:19).

If we are to entertain ourselves, may our entertainment still give glory to God. Here are some suggestions: Let's stop consuming books, magazines, movies, songs, TV shows, series, etc., that encourage violence. The people of Israel did evil again in the eyes of the Lord because they weren't serious about sin (Judges 8:33; 10:6; 13:1).

One story that can enlighten us is that of King David when he sinned by committing adultery (2 Samuel 11). How did the king fall? It all started because he abandoned his purpose by being at home instead of doing something constructive (11:1-2).

Can we see how powerful leisure time is? Watch out! David should have fled from lust, but preferred to let it settle in his heart and carry out his desires. The results were devastating.

"What harm can come from me watching a violent or immoral movie?" Don't play with fire! The devil, our adversary, *"prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* (1 Peter 5:8). Let's fill our minds with thoughts worthy of the children of God (Philippians 4:8).

The most beautiful thing we can read for these worthy thoughts is the Word of God. Let the images in our mind be produced by the Scriptures.

Let's also have times of prayer.

And finally, let's not stop gathering in community worship.

These three good actions will change our mind, and when people's minds change, reality begins to transform in the name of Jesus.

Review/Apply: Guide your students to complete the table to the right by writing in actions that would change their minds and ultimately change reality.

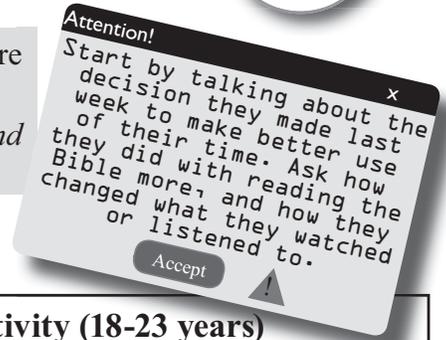
Challenge: Say to your class: This week try not to spend time watching TV or videos, reading books or spending time with anything that encourages violence or immorality, and start reading the Bible (we suggest the New Testament letters). See how it's possible to get away from this reality and give glory to God.

Changing My Mind Changes the World		
Reality	Action	Result
Violence	Don't watch programs that encourage violence	I will be a more peaceful person
Anger		
Hate		
Abuse		
Resentment		
Impatience		
Disobedience		
Evil		
Infidelity		

Exercise!

Objective: Encourage your students to participate in a sport, but making sure that it doesn't take the place of God in their life.

Memory Verse: *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?* 1 Corinthians 3:16



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Jump rope and 4 or 5 small balls, a small basket or bowl (that your balls will fit into).
- Instructions: If possible, take your students to an open area. Divide them into three groups. The members of each group will choose one person to jump the rope, another to throw the balls into the basket/bowl and the other person will perform any other sport they can do in the available space. For example: One member per group will come forward to jump rope, whoever completes the most jumps will win; the person throwing the balls gets points for each ball that stays in the basket; the other game is up to you - or use a plastic ball and some empty cans placed on a table, they must throw the ball from a distance of at least 3 meters. They receive points for hitting the cans, or create your own game. The group that has the most points will be the winner.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Prepare six cards with a name of a sport on each one (football, volleyball, gymnastics, karate, etc.). Place each card in a sealed envelope.
- Instructions: Form three groups and have each choose two envelopes. Each group must act out what's in their envelope for the rest of the class. The other students will have to identify the sport that's being acted out. The group that identifies the most sports will be the winner.

Connect

Navigate

Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthians in order to help with the problems of division and disorder that were there. Corinth was a cosmopolitan city with an outstanding port and shopping center; it was the most important city in Acaya. It was also characterized by being full of idolatry and immorality. The church was composed mostly of Gentiles (those who weren't Jews).

In Corinthians 9:24-27, there's a comparison between sports and the Christian life. Paul says that to win a race, purpose and discipline are needed. He used this illustration to explain that the Christian life demands hard work, self-denial and serious preparation. As Christians, we run in order to obtain our heavenly reward. Spiritual progress depends on us.

The Bible shows in several verses the importance of having a healthy body. Jesus himself must have been in excellent physical condition because he traveled great distances by walking. Also many of the great characters of the Bible were strong warriors.

1. Sports and the Bible

The apostle Paul refers in several of his writings to the games and sports of his time, making spiritual applications.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul compares a winning athlete, who has to discipline himself if he wants to win, with a Christian who must live in a way that keeps his faith firm until the end of his days.

In 2 Timothy 2:5, he tells us about honesty in competition. We know of some athletes who have won a triumph and then it has been discovered that they had used drugs to have more strength, or that they had broken certain rules. They lost their title, ashamed before their families and followers. We cannot cheat or dodge certain things in the Christian life.

Similarly, the Bible mentions the false prophets of Israel. God says that *"The prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly."* (Jeremiah 23:9-10). They didn't please God.

The apostle Paul's references to the games of his time don't mean that he frequented the Colosseum of the Roman Empire, or that he was fond of sports, much less a fanatic. But the lives of many citizens and inhabitants of the Roman Empire did



revolve around the games in the Colosseums, which were extremely violent, bloody and cruel, like many of the popular sports of that time. History tells us much of these “games.” The “kingdom of God” and the race or spiritual struggle occupied the attention, time and energies of the mature Christian. He wasn’t supposed to enjoy bloody and cruel games. Healthy games were to be momentary and casual fun for him. However, he was to use his time wisely, not becoming consumed with entertainment.

Trophies or material crowns ... what permanent value do they have? They aren’t eternal. The really important thing is to live life in Christ so that we can say together with Paul the words of 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

Now this doesn’t mean that we can’t have time to practice and enjoy physical sports. Remember that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We must take care of our body, feed it well, participate in sports or other physical activities, and do all we can to preserve the physical home of the Holy Spirit.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1, we are taught that there’s a time for everything, as long as we have our priorities very clear. What is more important, playing sports or reading the Bible? Actually, these two activities don’t have to compete against each other; if we organize ourselves well, we can dedicate the time that each deserves.

2. Sports and our testimony

Some people say that the true personality of a Christian is observed on the playing field. We must be very careful with the testimony we show our fellow athletes, friends, family and brothers and sisters of the faith. The spirit of competition is good; it will motivate us to reach goals and achieve triumphs in many areas, not only in sports. But we must strive to show at all times who the Lord of our life is. Here are some suggestions:

1. Don’t become obsessed with the game, neglecting your spiritual life in the process.
2. Give priority to the work of the Lord and not to sports.
3. Be careful about missing church meetings and activities in order to practice and play sports.
4. Make your Christian attributes stand out both in the games and among the players: do the right thing, practice self-control, avoid cursing, fighting, drinking intoxicating drinks or doing anything that offends God. Don’t cheat or gamble, be a good example and inspiration for other players.
5. While there are activities among those who play sports, don’t leave the brothers and sisters of the faith (Romans 12:10).

3. Sports and the proclamation of the Gospel

Sports is often a land occupied by the enemy, but we have faith that with our prayers and testimonies, many players, coaches and fans will be convicted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit to follow Him. Instead of sports being a pretext for not going to church, it will be a useful tool for evangelization and keeping our body healthy.

The testimony of Christian players in different sports disciplines has impacted many young people. In the United States, an American football player publicly demonstrated his Christian faith. Tim Tebow prayed before and during games, and wrote “John 3:16” on a shirt he wore after the game, and many other acts of testimony. The photos of these actions have been published by different social networks and he has many followers. Millions of his young fans searched Google for the meaning of John 3:16. Tim Tebow, in many of his statements, has asked his nation to return to God. We need more people like him in our world with the courage to publicly show their faith and be willing to positively influence the lives of young people. Maybe your students are very interested in sports and don’t know how to share the gospel with their friends. Here are some suggestions:

1. Make a list of your teammates and pray for them.
2. Pray specifically for: The hearts of athletes to be open to God’s message, non-violence in sports, non-use of drugs, the testimony of various Christian athletes, etc.
3. Plan with your local church or youth group evangelistic projects based around sports, such as sports tournaments, where there is a message of faith and hope along with the games and awards.
4. Encourage your students to play sports because it’s good for their health, but remembering that above all things is love, service and communion with God.

Review/Apply: Guide your students to look for the Bible verse and explain how it relates to sports. (You can do this earlier in the lesson if you prefer.)

1. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. (The athlete must discipline himself in his training if he wishes to reach the prize. In the same way, the Christian must prioritize things in his life and live with discipline to maintain his faith.)
2. 2 Timothy 2:5. (The winning athlete must do so legitimately. No traps, no dodges, no cheating. In the same way, the Christian must be sincere and loyal in his daily walk.)
3. Jeremiah 23:9-10. (Relates the false prophets to bad athletes. They don’t please God.)

Then, encourage your students to prepare an outdoor evangelism plan using sports.

Challenge: With your class, think about organizing an evangelistic sporting event. If you still don’t have the vision to use sports to proclaim Jesus, I encourage you to take a first step in this regard and see these games from another perspective. This means praying for each athlete, coach, judge and spectator who is in sporting events. Ask God to show Himself through the Christian athletes, ministries, and brothers and sisters who have prepared evangelistic programs for athletes.



Objective: That the students understand that we have only one God, creator and holy one, who reveals himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it's the gift of God.* Ephesians 2:8



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Three transparent containers: one with water, another with ice cubes and another with boiling water.
- Instructions: Instruct your students to look at the items you brought. Form two groups and ask them to discuss within the groups what the differences and similarities are between the contents of the three containers. Let them describe what they see. Then ask: “What’s in the containers?” Explain that although they appear differently, the three containers all contain the same thing - water. Water, composed of two molecules of hydrogen and one of oxygen (H₂O), is the same substance in each container; it’s just in three different states of matter: solid, liquid and gas. Help them think about the Trinity. Ask them to give two examples of things or situations that can express the same idea. Have them draw their examples.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Different colors of paper and scissors.
- Instructions: Form groups and ask them to make five equilateral triangles (three equal sides, three equal angles) of different sizes, without using more than the scissors. The group that achieves it first will be the winner. After they are done, have each group talk about the characteristics of the triangle. God is one (like the triangle) but at the same time he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit (like the sides or angles of the triangle). In order for the triangle to exist, all three elements must be present.

Connect

Navigate

It’s difficult for many people to explain the doctrine of the Trinity. However, it’s necessary to understand and be clear about the following three important points of our Christian faith:

1. The Trinity is not the belief in three gods

The Bible clearly teaches, both in the Old and New Testaments, that God is one: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*” (Deuteronomy 6:4). The apostle Paul also mentioned it to Timothy “*For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus never claimed to be “another” God, but said that He and the Father were one: “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30). In the Old Testament, there are some passages in which God seems to speak to himself in the plural: “*Let us make mankind...*” (Genesis 1:26); “*let us go down and confuse their language*” (Genesis 11:7); “*Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?*” (Isaiah 6:8). In these passages the plurality of divinity is clearly observed. One God in three people.

2. The Trinity doesn't suffer from multiple personalities

Christianity doesn’t believe that the Trinity represents a person in different roles. Showing himself sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son and sometimes as the Holy Spirit, as if the Divinity suffered from multiple personalities. God never ceased to be God by coming as Jesus into the world. Jesus was 100% man, he suffered, he was hungry, he cried like any of us, but he was always God, 100% God. The New Testament presents with great clarity that Jesus Christ is God. Share the following passages and ask them to indicate what each passage teaches about the deity of the second person of the trinity.

- John 1:1-4: Jesus existed from the beginning. You can change the word “Word” for Jesus.
- Romans 9:5: Christ is God above all things.
- Philippians 2:5-6: Christ didn’t rest in his deity but became a man to save us.



- Colossians 2:9: In Jesus dwells all the fullness of God.
- 1 Timothy 3:16: God was manifested in the flesh through Jesus Christ.
- 1 John 5:20: He is true God.
- Revelation 1:8,11-13: Jesus is the beginning and the end. He’s eternal.

The Bible also affirms that the Holy Spirit has characteristics, attributes and rights that only correspond to God.

- Job 33:4: He is creator.
- Psalm 139:7: He’s omnipresent.
- Romans 8:11: He imparts life.
- 1 Corinthians 2:10: He knows the deep things of God.

3. The Trinity works together

God didn’t create Christ as a lesser god, as some sectarian groups teach. It’s important to point out the existence of biblical passages that present the three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in joint activities:

- Mark 1:10-11 at the baptism of Jesus, the voice from heaven (God the Father) was heard, Jesus was present in the body and the Holy Spirit manifested himself as a dove.
- Matthew 28:19 in Jesus’ command to baptize where God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned.
- 2 Corinthians 13:14 in a salutation of the apostle Paul, who presented the three as capable of pouring blessings on the readers of that letter.

Because of our inability to understand the person of God, He took the initiative and decided to become one of us in the person of Jesus Christ so that we could learn what He’s like and what his purposes are.

Now both Jews and Gentiles are free to come to God through Christ and find peace: *“For through him (Christ) we have access to the Father by one Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:18).

“The three people of the Trinity are united in ensuring peace. This access to the Father is the culmination of God’s eternal purpose, when we all can enter once and forever into the presence of the Lord.” (United in Christ, Ephesians. Hoke Smith, Jr. CBP, Texas:1996, p.52).

“Therefore, the highest and most complete achievement of Christ, the peacemaker, is the trinitarian access of the people of God, in which through him and by the same Spirit we come confidently to our Father.” (The message of Ephesians. John Stott. United Certeza, Buenos Aires:2006, p.97).

Jesus said that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father. *“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”* (John 14:9) and that’s why it can be said that Jesus came to make God known. *“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.”* (John 1:18). And in the joy of knowing God, we find that we have no trouble accepting the mystery of the Trinity. Our access to the Father is through Him (the son who gave us his peace, and preached by John-14:27), by the same Spirit, the Spirit who regenerates, seals, and dwells in his people, who testifies to our spirit that we are children of God, who helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us.

Review/Apply: Ask your students (individually or in groups) to read the Bible verses and then write the verse under the attribute that it corresponds with: God the Father, God the Son or God the Holy Spirit.

Challenge: Say to your class: This week, ask your friends questions related to the doctrine of the Trinity. For example, “Do you believe in the Trinity? Do you think the Trinity is a person or three different beings?” Take note of the responses to share with your classmates in the next class.

Attributes of the Trinity			
Characteristic	The Father	The Son	The Holy Spirit
Called God	Galatians 1:1,3	John 1:1	Acts 5:3-4
Creator	Isaiah 64:8	John 1:3	Job 33:4
He dwells in the believer	2 Corinthians 6:16	Ephesians 3:17	Romans 8:9
Resurrects the Dead	John 5:21	John 6:39-40	Romans 8:11
He has a will	Matthew 7:21	Luke 22:42	1 Corinthians 12:11
Speaks	Matthew 17:5	John 5:25	Acts 13:2
Gives Life	John 5:21	John 6:33	John 6:63
Loves	John 14:23	John 15:9	Romans 15:30
Searches the heart	Jeremiah 17:10	Revelation 2:23	1 Corinthians 2:10
Omniscient	Psalm 139:1-4	John 2:25	1 Corinthians 2:10-11
Omnipresent	Jeremiah 23:23-24	Matthew 28:20	Psalm 139:7-10
He is Saddened	Genesis 6:6-7	Luke 19:41	Ephesians 4:30
Is called Lord	Luke 1:32	Acts 2:36	2 Corinthians 3:17



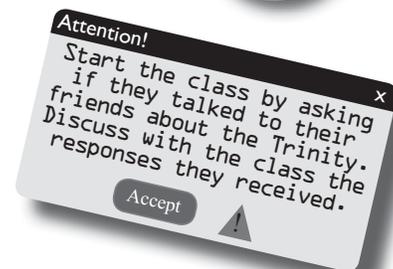
The Son of God

Lesson 37

Joel Castro • Spain

Objective: That the students are reinforced in their belief that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, came to save us, justify us and make us children and heirs of God.

Memory Verse: *Whoever has the Son has life; whoever doesn't have the Son of God doesn't have life.* 1 John 5:12



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Balloons
- Instructions: Each student will place an uninflated balloon in their mouth and cover their nose with one hand. At the count of three, everyone will begin to hold their breath. Whomever can last longest without breathing will be the winner. The balloon will help to see who releases air through their mouth.
Ask each member to share how they felt when they were unable to hold their breath any longer. Just as air is a necessary to have life, we need Jesus Christ to have abundant life.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Thick adhesive tape.
- Instructions: Put a piece of the adhesive tape on the back of each student's hand, leaving a few centimeters of the tape in the air. Let everyone try to remove their tape using their hand that has the tape on it.
By our own strength, we can never remove the sin that we carry. We need Jesus Christ to cleanse us.

Connect

Navigate

Jesus Christ was sacrificed for the benefit of our souls. In that vicarious work (vicar, one who occupies the place of another) of our Lord Jesus, we find three blessings:

1. Atonement

The term "atonement" may sound a little strange, but it was an action widely practiced by the people of Israel. It's mentioned 88 times in the book of Leviticus alone. The "atonement" was a ritual that consisted of sacrificing animals as an offering to God for the forgiveness of sins. Some synonyms for "atonement" are: Cancel, forget, repair, remedy and ignore. These verbs involve the act of absolving all sin to provide communion between the people and God (Leviticus 16:15,29,30).

Today, Christ is our sacrificial Lamb. He came to atone for our sins. John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus approaching him, said: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). His sacrificial work on the cross brought us the forgiveness of all our sins.

There are two passages that relate the atonement to the sacrifice of Christ:

1. "The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement ..." (Leviticus 16:27). Jesus was taken from Jerusalem to a hill called "Golgotha" to be sacrificed or slain for our sins (Hebrews 13:11-12).
2. "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." (Leviticus 17:11). The wonderful element to atone for our sins is found in the blood of our Lord Jesus. His blood was the price he paid to redeem us from our sins (Luke 10:45). Also, John exclaimed: "...the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:7b).

Thanks to the Son of God, we have communion with the heavenly Father. His blood took away and canceled every sin that separated us from Him. Christ is our intercessor, He has reconciled us with God (Hebrews 4:16).

2. Justification

Without Christ, we are condemned to life imprisonment. "For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23a), sin condemns us to death. Since we deserved condemnation for our sin, Christ came to take away all our guilt. This is called justification.



Our faith in Jesus Christ justifies us because his grace was expressed through the atonement; that's why we have to fully trust Jesus (Romans 3:23-24).

In the New Testament, we find two examples of how Jesus Christ advocated for the guilty to be justified. The first case is found in John 8:1-11. A woman was caught in the sin of adultery and was brought to Jesus by the Pharisees, wanting him to condemn her. Jesus was at that time teaching the Word of God to the people, but when the adulterous woman was brought before him, he demonstrated his forgiving love by saying: *"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."* (v.11). Christ justifies us of whatever our sin is. However, He expects us to repent and obey his commands: *"Go now and leave your life of sin."*

The second case was his crucifixion in the middle of two criminals. One of them took the opportunity to ask for mercy from Jesus. As he was being crucified, he put his faith in Jesus, claiming a place in His coming Kingdom. Jesus justified him with the following words: *"...Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."* (Luke 23:43).

These two cases show us that Jesus Christ brought us the benefit of justification. It doesn't matter how sinful we've been or what sin we've committed. If we come humble and sorrowful before him, He will forgive us and take away all our guilt. Glory to God!

3. Promises of Blessing

Jesus made two promises for those who accept his atonement and justification. First of all, we have the promise of his return. He told his followers: *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.... I won't leave you as orphans; I will come to you.... Do not let your hearts be troubled and don't be afraid."* (John 14:3, 18, 27b).

Jesus Christ, the son of God, will return again to take to heaven all those who accepted him into their lives and weren't ashamed of Him. This promise is about to be fulfilled. Perhaps it seems to us that the political, moral, and spiritual situation of our time give indications of his early coming. His return will not be to be born again of a virgin, but to take his people. The angels witnessed to this fact when they said: *"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11). He'll return to give us our inheritance of eternal life.

Secondly we have the promise of his Holy Spirit. This promise was fulfilled at the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2). However, He wants to continue pouring out his Spirit on every heart regenerated by his blood. There's a requirement to receive his Holy Spirit, and that is to receive by faith Christ as one's personal Savior. This means to be justified by his atoning blood. Without this first step, this promise cannot be fulfilled (John 14:17).

Jesus Christ came to make abundant life possible, and is only achieved through the work of this promise in each heart. Jesus said: *"Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive* (John 7:38-39a).

Review/Apply: Ask your students to analyze the following statements and determine if they are true (T) or false (F)

1. The angels declared that Jesus Christ would return again according to John 14:3. (F)
2. Justification is that vicarious work of Jesus Christ on our behalf and is made possible by our faith. (T)
3. To this day, God commands that his people receive the atonement of sins through the sacrifice of animals. (F)
4. Jesus Christ is the Son of God who makes humanity's friendship with God possible. (T)
5. Works are the basis of our justification. (F)
6. Jesus Christ was the perfect Lamb to atone for our sins. (T)
7. The adulteress was justified by the Pharisees. (F)
8. The Holy Spirit is a real promise to everyone who has been forgiven of their sins. (T)
9. Atonement was a ritual that meant the cancellation of all sin of the people. (T)
10. Jesus Christ will return; it's a promise that will come true. (T)

Challenge: Say to your class: Do you really enjoy the fullness of life? Have you accepted the gift of the heavenly Father - his only begotten Son? Today is a good opportunity for you to make the decision to receive salvation and with it the benefits that come from following Jesus Christ.



The Third Person

Lesson

38

Oscar Pérez • Dominican Republic

Objective: That the students learn that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and that he fulfills the mission entrusted by the Father to build the church.

Memory Verse: *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* John 14:26



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Blindfold. Obstacles on the floor such as books, chairs, etc.
- Instructions: Form two groups. One volunteer from each group will walk through the obstacle course blindfolded. Another volunteer will guide them by using only the words: right, left, forward, backward.
The Holy Spirit is our guide. We must be attentive to his voice and decide to obey his instructions.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Three boiled eggs, a serrated knife to cut the eggs.
- Instructions: Start the class by forming three groups. Ask each group to carefully cut the egg in two equal parts (without removing the shell) and answer the following questions.
 - a. How many parts do they see?
 - b. What is the name of each of part?
 - c. What part is not necessary for the egg to existence?

After answering the questions, explain how this example relates to the Triune God. Have each give two more examples of how the Trinity can be represented.

The illustration of the egg is a very simple example that helps us understand the mystery of the Trinity. An egg has three different parts: a shell, white and yolk, but they form an egg. God is in essence one, manifested in three different people.

Connect

Navigate

Due to the proliferation of religious groups with erroneous doctrines and an expression of charismatic worship, a pertinent understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity is necessary, and specifically of the nature and mission of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is always present and active in the church of Christ, convincing the world of sin, regenerating those who repent and believe, sanctifying believers, and guiding all to the truth of Jesus Christ.

1. The nature of the Holy Spirit

A. The personality of the Holy Spirit

At present, there's a tendency to believe in the Holy Spirit as a force or energy. But the Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. "In addition to the terms 'Spirit', 'Spirit of God', and 'Spirit of glory', our Lord refers to the Holy Spirit as 'the Comforter' or 'the other comforter'. This is not an impersonal term, but it applies to Christ himself and is translated as 'Advocate' in 1 John 2:1. It means comforter, guide, instructor, or 'he who strengthens us when we are with Him.'" (Introduction to Christian Theology. Wiley, Orton and Paul Culbertson. Beacon Hill Press, USA:1976, p.135). These terms help us understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian and the church. We need to have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. In chapters 14 to 16 of the Gospel of John (if you wish, you can allow time for students to find the ten personal acts of the Holy Spirit in these passages), there are at least ten personal acts attributed to the Holy Spirit: (1) He will be sent, (2) to teach, (3) to come, (4) to convict, (5) to lead, (6) to speak, (7) to hear, (8) to show, (9) to take, (10) to receive. The Holy Spirit is also referred to as the one who will: Inspire the messages from God to people (1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:21); direct the affairs of the church (Acts 13:2; 16:6-7); and be an agent of regeneration (John 3:6) and in entire sanctification (2 Thessalonians 2:13). These passages show that the Holy Spirit is not an abstract influence, nor a quality, nor an attribute, nor an energy, but a person. Considering the actions that the Bible indicates to us regarding the activity of the Holy Spirit, we can affirm our belief regarding the personality of the Holy Spirit and trust in his work in our lives.

B. The deity of the Holy Spirit

We can also see the deity of the Holy Spirit through a considerable number of passages: (1) Eternity (Hebrews 9:14); (2) omnipotence (Romans 15:9); (3) omnipresence (Psalm 139:7); omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). In Acts 5, we read that Peter accused Ananias of lying to the Holy Spirit. He told him that what he claimed was a lie to God. This proves that the Holy Spirit is God: *“Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit . . . You haven’t lied just to human beings but to God.’”* (Acts 5:3-4). Faced with the current beliefs of the world that tend to deny the deity of the Holy Spirit, the church must know the biblical passages that sustain our faith.

C. The Holy Spirit, third person of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity was clearly expressed in ancient creeds and faith confessions. The essence of the Trinity, and its manifestation in three persons, is part of the mystery that we won’t understand with exact precision until heaven. However, the mission of each Person of the Trinity is understandable. The following words were engraved in my mind in a theology class. Much to my regret, I don’t remember the author: *“The Father is the eminent Creator; the Son is the eminent Savior; the Holy Spirit is the eminent Sanctifier. However, in each particular mission, the three people act.”*

2. The mission of the Holy Spirit in the church

The Holy Spirit begins his mission in the events of creation (Genesis 1:2); He manifests himself in a special way in the life and ministry of the prophets, and in a very unique way in the life of Jesus. However, his mission becomes more objective and evident starting with Pentecost. The Church is ministered by the Holy Spirit and will continue until the return of Jesus Christ. Let’s review some specific tasks of the Holy Spirit’s mission in the church:

- A. He’ll teach you all things (John 14:26b).
- B. He’ll remind you of everything Jesus has told you (John 14:26c).
- C. He’ll testify about Jesus (John 15:26).
- D. He’ll convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).
- E. He’ll guide you to all truth (John 16:13).
- F. He’ll glorify Christ (John 16:14).
- G. He’ll distribute his gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11).
- H. He’ll produce his fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).
- I. He’ll sanctify the church (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; Ephesians 3:14-21).

The Holy Spirit is a Divine person, the third person of the Trinity, and Sacred Scripture corroborates these teachings. He fulfills a mission to build the church of the Lord until his second coming.

Since the mission of the Holy Spirit is to build the church, we must be sensitive and integrate his teachings into our lives; we must be obedient and humble in obeying these teachings; we must strive wholeheartedly to live in holiness, exercising the gifts and fruit and thus fulfill our mission in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Review/Apply: Separate the first word from the second word in the following pairs, mix them up, and allow time for the students (individually or in groups) to match them back up again.

- Eternity: Always existing.
- Omnipresence: Present everywhere.
- Omnipotence: Almighty.
- Omniscience: All-knowing
- Trinity: A single essence and three different people
- Comforter: Counselor, the one who strengthens.
- Fruit of the Holy Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Challenge: Say to your class: Write a five-line paragraph about what you have learned about the person and mission of the Holy Spirit. When you get home, connect with your contacts and send them your thoughts about what you’ve learned. Then, ask their opinion about it. In this way, you’ll be sharing your faith in Christ. May God bless your mission.



Free From the Power of Sin

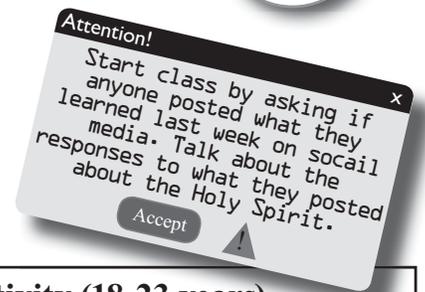
Lesson

39

Juan Carlos Fernández • Cuba

Objective: That the students realize that only through Jesus Christ will God free us from the slavery of sin, if we repent and ask for his forgiveness.

Memory Verse: *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Romans 5:8



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Large sheet of paper or blackboard, markers or chalk.
- Instructions: Ask your students to come up with a definition for “sin” based on what they understand. Write their ideas on the board. Using the most appropriate ideas, form a definition of what sin really is, based on the Bible and in their own words.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Ask your students to form groups and then select an experience (personal or of a friend) to show how they became slaves to sin or how they lost control and submitted to sin due to a sinful situation. For example drugs, premarital sex, lies, theft, etc. Then they must dramatize it (it should not last more than 2 minutes) for their peers to analyze and give their opinions.
- Students will have a clear idea of the danger involved in submitting to sin, as well as the possibilities of remaining under the yoke of slavery to sin forever.

Connect

Navigate

The word “sin” has fallen into disuse in the secular world. The dictionary defines it as “any reprehensible or regrettable action, behavior, lapse, etc.; great fault or offense” (Dictionary.com).

1. The drama of sin in Eden

Adam and Eve, having the opportunity of doing good, bowed to evil and put it into practice, creating chaos in their own world (Genesis 3:1-20).

God showed his good will and love by cooperating mankind, who ignored his commandment and disobeyed, and promised a way to redirect him to the path of his will. It’s right there, where the rescue plan is first announced: “*And I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel*” (Genesis 3:15). And with the coming of Christ to the earth, it was fulfilled. God became man in the person of Jesus Christ. He made a pilgrimage to earth with men and women and finally offered himself as a sacrifice for the rescue of all mankind. This was the solution for the consequences of the first act of disobedience.

2. Slaves of sin

Many people, especially young people, flaunt a poorly focused freedom, trying to show that they can enter and leave sinful situations without these having any negative effect on them.

John, an 18-year-old boy, wanting to give evidence of his freedom to his classmates, started smoking drugs. Shortly after he started with cocaine, he went on to inject heroin. A few minutes ago, I just returned from his funeral. His parents were destroyed.

Vanessa, a 21-year-old girl, went out with some friends for a walk with strangers. She wanted to buy a color TV, but she couldn’t do it with what she had. She knew about the sexual connotations of the walk, but it would only be once. That was 5 years ago. Today she is one of the most “famous” prostitutes in the city.

Ben, 19, had never had sex. His friends pressed him about it every day. He started dating a girl who had just arrived in town. After that relationship, his life changed and he changed sexual partners frequently. Two years later, Ben is no longer the same. He must have a monthly check up because he has AIDS.

Sin is usually addictive. That is why so many people are trapped in it, and many die, never being able to escape. Only Jesus, through his blood shed for the sins of the world on Calvary, can make us truly free (John 8:34-36).



3. A spark of light in the dark

However, there's what we could call a secret force that urges us to approach God. This force uses no words, yet it has the ability to show us the good and the bad (2 Corinthians 4:6). Some have called it "prevenient grace." The just and good God who saves, and also condemns, desires that everyone follows the path of good (Romans 2:4-5). On the one hand, God draws us to Him. On the other hand, we have the freedom to accept or reject his salvation.

A. Promises of freedom

People are captive. Many don't know it, but the facts show that our statement is a reality. Only the man or woman who approaches God, asking for his forgiveness and to be saved, manages to experience true freedom.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) Only those of us who have been forgiven can experience salvation. It's an act performed in the soul, a present fact which is evidenced by a change in attitude towards life itself. It's a merciful act that shows God's love for us when we repent and seek him with sincerity (John 3:16).

B. Saved to serve

It's beautiful to know that one day, after the typical ups and downs of this existence, we'll be with our Lord in the place that He went to prepare for us (John 14:1-2). However, it's usually somewhat daunting to see how a large part of Christians concentrate only on this glorious hope, forgetting the present context. There's too much pain around us to ignore. While we are here, we have inescapable responsibilities: Preaching, discipling, helping our neighbors in everything, taking care of the environment, fighting against the injustices of life, etc. These and others are tasks totally inherent to Christianity. It's imperative that Christians serve for love of God (Mark 10:45) and don't work for love of the reward of heaven. We shouldn't avoid sin for fear of hell, but for the love of God and for gratitude for the change He has made in our lives. The principle of the famous Sonnet to the Crucified perfectly sums up this idea: "I am not moved, my God, to give You love by thoughts of heaven that You've promised me; nor am I moved by thoughts of dreaded hell for that alone, to cease offending thee." (Anonymous). With these principles in mind, we can be certain that our contribution to the extension of God's kingdom on this earth will be much greater.

In the midst of a world too alienated to realize its condition, the church has the inescapable responsibility of being a spokesperson for the news of salvation, and at the same time, being an agent of change. It's imperative that the church is a living example of what a saved person really is. It's absolutely necessary that together with the revelation of God through the wonders of nature and other sources, the church helps meet the needs of our dejected world and becomes a faithful bearer of the message that frees human beings from chains of sin.

Review/Apply: Have your students unscramble the letters to find the hidden words. Then have them answer the following questions.

tsul	(lust)	udnnsseeknr	(drunkenness)
dremru	(murder)	sajleuoy	(jealousy)
radlutye	(adultery)	rgena	(anger)
goyr	(orgy)	ynve	(envy)

1. What is the basic lesson taught in the story of the Garden of Eden? (Genesis 3:1-20). (Humans had the opportunity to choose of their own free will between good and evil.)
2. How can we truly be free? (John 8:36). (We can truly be free only by asking for and accepting God's forgiveness made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for us.)
3. Why is it reasonable to think that the God who saves and condemns urges us towards the path of good? (Romans 2:4-5). (It's reasonable to think that God urges us towards the path of good because He is just.)
4. Explain, according to your experience, what it means to be "saved".
5. Briefly explain in the light of the lesson what the Christian's reaction in his daily behavior should be in light of the elements of "reward and punishment". (Neither fear of punishment nor love of reward should motivate us in our efforts to avoid sin and love and serve others.)

Challenge: Say to your class: In life, more or less frequently, one way or another, we are all tempted. When thoughts that tempt you to act against God's will, as expressed in his Word, come to your mind, what is your attitude? What is your plan of defense? Examine your life and make the decision to act correctly. Find Bible verses that support your response to the invitation that sin offers you. Write down your progress.



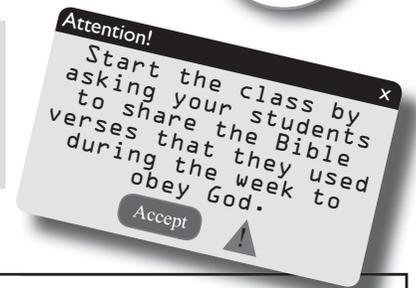
I Believe Your Word!

Lesson 40

Aldo Genes • Paraguay

Objective: That the students understand that the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit and reveals to us who God is, as well as our sin nature.

Memory Verse: *How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.* Psalm 119:9

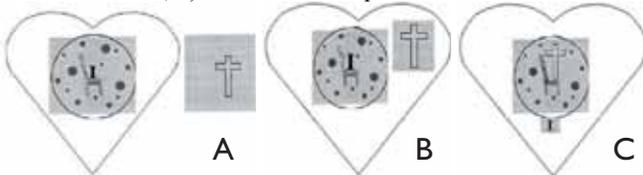


Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Present the three drawings shown below. Ask your students to explain the drawings. Finally, explain the following: a) the “I” is us human beings and the decisions we make to control our lives; b) the “chair” represents the throne of our heart; c) the “cross” represents Christ.



- Picture A represents the person who has no relationship with Christ. They sit on the throne of their hearts.
- Picture B represents the person who has admitted their sins and has ask Christ into their life, but they still control their life.
- Picture C represents a person who has wholly consecrated their life to Christ, the Holy Spirit has filled the believer and governs his life. The “I” doesn’t disappear, but it now submits to Christ.
- Have your students get into pairs and have them explain to their partner what each heart means.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Ask your students to write their own definition of what the Bible is and what sin is. After writing the definitions, allow some time to discuss their answers and let them tell how they came to their conclusions. Continue to development the lesson while including the concepts that they have used and clarify them.

Connect

Navigate

1. The Holy Scriptures

In saying that God took the initiative to reveal himself to man, we need to know the three ways in which He has revealed himself:

A. God’s revelation in history

God showed himself in Abraham’s call by telling him to go to an unknown place but with a known mission (Exodus 3). It was also revealed in the call of Moses and in the powerful way he rescued his people from slavery (Exodus 12:37-51). Some time later, he showed himself in the conquest of the Promised Land (Joshua) and in the subsequent rising of the great King David, who foreshadowed one greater, who is Jesus (2 Samuel 2:1-4a and 5:1-5). God revealed himself in the punishment of his unfaithful and idolatrous people Israel in permitting the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity (2 Chronicles 36:6-7; 2 Kings 24:10-12; 14-16; 2 Kings 25:1-17) and then restoring the promised land to the faithful remnant.

These acts speak to us in a concrete way about how God has shown himself in history. On the other hand, Romans 1:20 clearly expresses to us that everything created reveals the supreme being who was the architect of the immensity that we observe.



B. God's revelation in Christ

God revealed himself in many ways to mankind until at one point, he became incarnate in Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 1:1-3). He did this because of the effects of sin from the beginning. He is a personal God and there's no better way to meet someone than personally. Therefore, God became a man, and in Jesus we see the maximum revelation of God.

C. God's revelation in the Scriptures

The Bible is a very old book, but it continues to speak perfectly to us in these times. The fundamental reason for its relevance lies in the fact that human nature doesn't change, much less does the work of God in our lives.

The Bible is divided into two main parts: the Old and New Testaments. The first consists of 39 books and the second of 27 books. Together they total 66 books, thus making a library, which is ultimately what the word "Bible" means. This library of 66 books was written as "*prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*" (2 Peter 1:21). These writers came from different social strata, with different levels of education and vocations, who used language and human styles so that men and women like us could understand.

When we refer to "plenary inspiration," we mean that the 66 books are inspired by God. All the books of the Bible have the same degree of authority and we must obey them because it's the Word of God. The word "inspiration" is understood as if God himself had breathed and written the words (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This doesn't mean that God made robots of the biblical writers and that He dictated word for word what the Holy Scriptures contain. God didn't annul the personality and style of the writer, but yes, he ensured that the message contained in his Word was reliable.

The message of the Bible is clear and necessary to guide people to salvation. That message is not ambiguous or contradictory. The question of salvation is clear and no one can ignore this aspect.

Ask: What does the Bible mean to you personally? What do those around you (classmates, friends, etc.) think about it? Do you have any experience in which the Bible spoke to your life?

2. Sin: Original and Personal

Although the Scriptures define sin in different ways, the Old and New Testaments affirm that sin is an act and a state or condition. The Bible gives multiple definitions of sin. Probably the best is expressed by John when he tells us that sin is "lawlessness" (1 John 3:4).

A. Sin as voluntary transgression

Sin is violating the known will of God. James 4:17 says: "*If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.*" Ask: Could you give everyday examples to explain that definition? It's interesting that the verse doesn't say that he who does evil is sinning, but he who knows how to do good and doesn't do it sins. For example I know that the good thing is not to lie but I lie. I know that the good thing is to obey, but I disobey, etc.

B. Sin as moral corruption

It's also known by the names of: "innate sin", "original sin" or "inherited sin". This means that, even after being forgiven for the sins we've committed, we still have the need to eradicate the impurity of our human nature. This bad nature is the one that seduces us to continue disobeying God; to have a tendency to disapprove of Him. Ask: Where and how did sin arise? In Genesis 3 we find that God set limits on humans, but they went ahead and overstepped those limits. From that action, the tendency for everyone has been to disobey God and oppose his authority. Later the apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 points out that through that act of disobedience, sin entered the world and brought death. A child, although small, knows that he has done something wrong and denies or hides it. Ask: Who taught that child to lie? That is one of the simplest evidences to show that, from Adam, we are inclined to do evil and not to obey and do good.

For both sins, God provided a "divine remedy." In both cases, the blood of Christ operates for our good and our victory over sin. His Word is clear of the double action he wants to do in us. On the one hand, he wants to "*forgive our sins*" (voluntary transgression) and on the other "*cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (moral corruption) (1 John 1:9). God wants to "cleanse our hands" (voluntary transgression) and "purify our hearts" (moral corruption) (James 4:8). For both cases, faith is required to turn to Jesus Christ so that He works through His Holy Spirit.

Review/Apply: Ask your students to read the following sentences and fill in the answers (words in parenthesis).

- God has taken the initiative to reveal or make himself known to humans in three ways. Complete them.
 - Revelation of God in (history).
 - Revelation of God in (Christ).
 - Revelation of God in (the Bible).
- The Bible has a total of (66) books. The Old Testament has (39) books and the New Testament has (27) books.
- The Bible refers to sin in two different ways and they are:
 - Sin as a (voluntary transgression)
 - Sin as (moral corruption)
- The definition of sin in 1 John 3:4, is: ("lawlessness")
- Genesis 3 tells us about the beginning of (sin) in the human race.

Challenge: Propose to your students that this week they memorize the names of the 66 books of the Bible in order. Have them ask a classmate or you as the teacher to assess whether or not they memorized them. Encourage them to make a commitment to God to read his Word every day and ask for his help to obey it.



We Have a Father

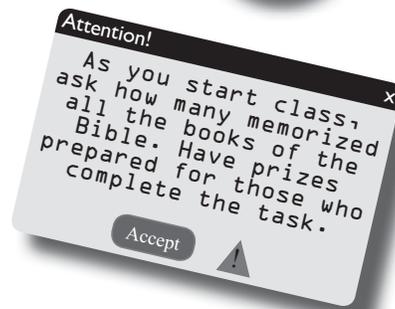
Lesson

41

Francisco Borrallés • Mexico

Objective: That the students understand that justification, regeneration and adoption are simultaneous works in those who seek God through Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse: *Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and won't be judged but has crossed over from death to life.* John 5:24



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and colored pencils.
- Instructions: Give each student a sheet of paper and pencils to make a sign offering a reward for something that's lost that they value a lot (i.e., a puppy, a backpack, a cell phone, etc.)
Allow time to discuss: Why would someone be willing to give a reward for recovering an item that was lost? How would you feel to get the item back? What would you do with it when it was returned?

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Ask your students to share an experience in which they wanted to be part of a club, organization or group of which they have been rejected or denied.
What feelings did you have? Did you take any action?
Discuss the importance of our feelings to want to belong to something or someone.

Connect

Navigate

Leprosy has been considered an incurable, mutilating and shameful disease, so much so that those with the disease were systematically confined in what was called Leper Colonies which was officially recommended as a preventative measure.

Nowadays, many people live in a situation that may well be compared with leprosy. It's a real problem that causes us anguish, and gives us the feeling of living apart and segregated from others. I'm referring to the life of sin. A simple analysis of our life and the results of our actions is enough to realize that it's necessary to find a solution. On the contrary, if we've made the decision to receive Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we are assured of all that God has done in each one of us, in addition to receiving the invaluable gift of eternal life.

1. Justification

"Justification" is a kind and judicial act that results in "the administration of justice." That is, in justification, God establishes his justice for us but without putting aside his goodness.

In the Word of God, we read that all the authority to judge has been given to our Lord Jesus Christ, and He said: *"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life"* (John 5:24). We also need to always keep in mind that spiritually speaking, there's no human law or action that can justify us (Acts 13:39), so the justification of our life, the forgiveness of our sins, is the gracious act of God that applies to our being at the moment we exercise our faith in Jesus Christ, when we accept him as Savior and declare him as our Lord.

The justification of our being can only be done by having faith in the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by that same act, we have peace in our relationship with God. No religion through commandments or rituals, no philosophy that's applied through physical or mental exercise, can give us the blessing and freedom of the burden that sin produces. *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* (Romans 5:1).



The most beautiful feeling that we've ever had in our heart was when we understood that there was no more guilt. There is no longer any reason to be held accountable for our sins. We have been justified for free and our sins have been erased. God's justice has been manifested in our lives, the blood of Jesus Christ took away all stains from our hearts. Those spots that, like leprosy, were on our soul, are no longer there! (Romans 3:24–25).

2. New Birth

The New Birth is a work of grace from God, by which the moral nature of the repentant believer is made spiritually alive and receives a distinctively spiritual life, capable of experiencing faith, love and obedience. According to this verse, the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord, God makes us reborn again and we are spiritually resurrected. That is, our being is regenerated. Therefore, what had been destroyed and corrupted by sin was made new with all its original purity and cleanliness (1 Corinthians 6:11). This is evident in our life because we reject those sinful and morally bad things that attracted us before, and seek what gives us peace, communion with God, and love for our neighbor. What attracted us sin has been eradicated, and the damage caused to our soul has been corrected. That is, God has regenerated our lives!

This is the time when we must make the decision to strengthen our new life, to feed ourselves spiritually, and learn to live the life that God as a loving father wants for us. Let's take into account that we are new creatures, and we must seek that which will strengthen us and provide spiritual growth. Old things must be left behind (2 Corinthians 5:17). In this new life, God has prepared a special plan for each of his children. Being made by God through Jesus Christ, our purpose is to live a life of obedience to God, characterized by good works (Ephesians 2:10).

3. Adoption

Adoption is that kind act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer becomes the child of God. It's what happens after God has forgiven our sins and cleansed our being ... He adopts us as his children!

Adoption is the action of accepting. This verb refers to accepting a child who is not biologically yours, and granting them the same rights with the fulfillment of various requirements and obligations established by law. God is the one who adopts us, we who were previously destitute of his glory, and we become his children, having fulfilled the requirement of faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, who gave us the right to be called his children (John 1:12).

The result of this wonderful truth for our lives is that we will no longer live feeling segregated and belittled, no more humiliation and confinement because of sin (spiritual leprosy). Now we are children of God; we have the testimony of his Holy Spirit. He is the one who now directs our life and empowers us to turn away from evil and seek God. Through the Spirit, we have love, joy and peace in our lives, and we are heirs of his glory and joint heirs with Christ Jesus (Romans 8:15–17).

If we've understood these biblical truths and recognize the transcendence of God's work in our being, we must respond to it by living a life of obedience and devotion to our Heavenly Father. Being grateful to God our Lord and to Jesus Christ our savior, let's now surrender our whole being by becoming servants of righteousness (Romans 6:16-18).

Review/Apply: Ask your students the following questions and have them answer by looking up the Bible verses that support their answer.

1. Why can't a person who has not received Christ in his heart be a child of God? (Romans 3:21-25)
2. Why do the unsaved have no spiritual home? (Ephesians 2:1-3)
3. Why can't people who practice sin and live without repenting belong to the kingdom of God? (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Challenge: Say to your class: This week, I would like you to write a composition or essay about today's lesson. Explain in your own words what a new life in Christ means to you. Include what it means to be justified and adopted by God, and describe what the relationship with the Christian family looks like. Share it with your friends in the next class.



End to Pure Suspense

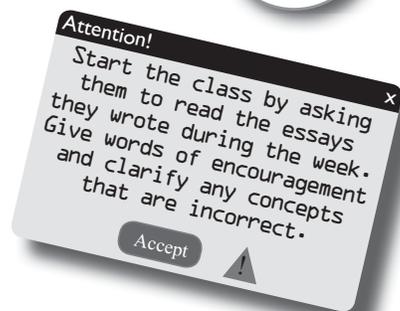
Lesson

42

Leandro Massacesi • Argentina

Objective: To affirm the biblical teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead, the judgment and the destiny that every human being will have at the end of the world.

Memory Verse: *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.* 2 Corinthians 5:10



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: cloth, tablecloths or newspaper.
- Instructions: Ask the class to read the passage in Acts 5:1-10 and dramatize it. They will have to use the cloth or newspapers to create their costumes. Ask how they can apply the teaching of the passage to their lives.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Ask the students to prepare a modern day skit based on Hebrews 5:1-10. The skit can portray a situation from home, school, work or church. Give a few minutes for each group to prepare. Have each group present the skit and discuss how it can be applied to everyday living.

Connect

Navigate

1. All, without exception

Just as we were born, one day we will have to leave this world, and this is common to all human beings. However, in light of the biblical teachings, we can clearly see that we will all also participate in another transcendental event ... that's the resurrection of our bodies (John 5:28-29).

To be clear, the term resurrection means "to come back to life" (Introduction to theology. Wiley-Culvertson. BHP, USA:1976, p.474). Now, since the soul doesn't die with the body, it cannot be subject to resurrection. So, it's our body that will rise.

When? At the moment Jesus returns a second time to receive his children.

Why all? Because whether we've accepted God's favor or not, we will all be present, on our knees, before the King of kings and Lord of lords, declaring with our mouth that He is the Lord. We will all have to listen to the final verdict of God's judgement (Hebrews 9:27 and Romans 14:11-12).

The condition for the resurrection of believers is to be saved. There's no possible gospel, no hope, without resurrection. Because He rose, we will rise! That is the dynamics and power of salvation.

The apostle Paul helps us better understand the subject in 1 Corinthians 15:12-22. Paul's synthesis is very important. Adam's sinful nature has been passed down to all of his descendants; it's what we call original sin. Jesus, with his death and resurrection, overcame all sin and the subsequent eternal death of our spirit and our physical body. Hence, Paul's clear explanation: In Adam we die, in Jesus we live again ... now and in our final resurrection. It's the great triumph of God, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."*(John 11:25-26).

This is reason enough to exalt Jesus, and to say in a loud voice: Jesus is life!

2. All visible ... all exposed

Whether we want it or not, or can imagine it or not, the Bible tells us about the final judgment, which will take place at the time of our resurrection.

The number of biblical passages on the subject is abundant, but some are essential to highlight, such as Revelation 20:11-13, where the apostle John's description of this event exceeds what a film director could imagine.

In this biblical passage, we find God on his throne, with all the resurrected people of all ages and from all places, assembled before Him. We also read about the judgment of each person according to what is written in the book of life. In verse 15, we see the result of the judgment for those whose name isn't found in the book of life.



Romans 2:16 also declares “... on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.” “Only he (God) is the all wise and he alone knows the most intimate secrets of men’s lives. Not only does he understand their actions, but he understands their deepest thoughts and hidden motives.” (Introduction to theology. Wiley-Culvertson. BHP, USA:1976, p.479)

Today, it’s interesting to see that people flatly reject the idea that one day they will be held accountable. Moral issues, if they are of any interest, are related only to the current moment and to matters of personal happiness.

The good outcome of this judgment will simply depend on our response to God’s will and invitation to salvation.

3. All the time in the world

If there’s something we usually complain about, it’s about not having enough time. Whatever the verdict of our judgment in the presence of Jesus will be, a shortness of time will not be the problem.

Do you want to spend more time playing your instrument with the praise group? Do you want to chat longer with your friends online? Do you want to go to bed late at a camp? Perfect ... you’ll have eternity to enjoy those wonderful moments.

But do you want more time for surfing the internet for porn, for dangerous outings, free sex, playing the boyfriend of several girls or the girlfriend of several boys, to lie, to smoke, buy and waste everything you have, to avoid seeing your family or your children and forget about your obligations? There will be no time for these things, only eternal suffering in paying the consequences of your bad decisions.

We believe that those who are saved by believing in Jesus Christ our Lord, and are following in obedience, are assured of glorious eternal life. But, those who resist doing God’s will to the end will suffer eternally in hell.

It’s very rare these days to talk about hell. In some cases, the synonyms are very creative, such as “the oven” or “down there”, but the Bible, even in its various translations, speaks of “eternal fire” (Mark 9:43-44), “gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41-42) or “lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15).

Now with these descriptions, we can imagine the most terrible and painful things. But at its core, punishment in hell is described as an eternal separation from God. Given that, darkness, fire, or gnashing teeth are nothing.

Matthew presents us with a very concrete and simple image at the same time. Jesus will be the judge, and his judgment system is very practical, according to Matthew 25:31-46 “... and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (v. 32), “He’ll put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”(v. 33).

Beyond the concrete fact of the need for conversion, something to take into account of when thinking about our award is the attitude that every Christian should have toward the less favored and marginalized of this world, described as: THE HUNGRY , THIRSTY, NAKED, PRISONERS, SICK AND FOREIGNERS in all of their versions of age, race or gender.

The church, that is each one of us, has the responsibility to assist others in their spiritual needs, as well as their physical and economic ones, as long as possible, helping them avoid eternal punishment and total and eternal separation from God (Philippians 3:8; 10-11).

Let’s get even more involved. Gather in different ministries and be strengthened by the power of the resurrection so that all the weary of this world will come to eternal rest, so that the tears of the sad are dried by Jesus, so that those who suffer no longer feel pain, so that those deceived and disillusioned by life enjoy an eternity without nights in the light of the presence of the Lord of lords (Revelation 21:4; 22:3-5).

Review/Apply: Ask your students to decide if the statements are true or false.

- Every person will be judged, no one will be exempt. (T)
- All aspects of life will be reviewed, including “the secret thoughts of all”, “the intentions of the heart,” and “every idle word.” (T)
- The resurrection of everyone is a minor issue. (F)
- The Bible isn’t very clear about who will go to heaven and who will go to hell. (F)
- The book of life will be opened on the day of judgment, and those whose names are written there will have eternal life. (T)

Challenge: Say to your class: As a class, let’s make a plan to help our community. Identify a place that needs volunteers, for example a nursing home, an orphanage, a compassion program for children. Then we offer our help and share Jesus with them.



What is the Church?

Objective: To show students that the church is a community that confesses Jesus Christ as its Lord and Savior, and its mission is to continue sharing the message of the salvation Jesus Christ can give us.

Memory Verse: *Salvation is found in no one else, for there's no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.* Acts 4:12



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Instructions: Choose a student to be “it”. This person is to go around the room touching other people. When someone is touched, they are to say “electrified” and then they must remain immobile, until another person, who is free, comes to touch them and then they are free to move again. Play the game for five minutes.

Every person is caught in sin and we can be used by God to lead them to Him, and He'll rescue them and set them free.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: A pen and 10 or 15 - 5 x 7 cm cards. On each card write a word related to the lesson: God, Jesus Christ, love, death, sinner, pay, rescue, repentance, forgiveness, freedom, church, preach, Bible, heaven, hell.
- Instructions: Divide the class into two teams. Each team will designate a different representative to act out the word found on the card. The members of the other team will try to discover the word. You will keep the cards in your possession, and will alternate the teams. The winning team will be the one who guesses the most words in 30 seconds. You can reward them with some sweets.

Connect

Navigate

1. The Nature of the Church

In the Gospel of Matthew, we find the statement that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and Jesus affirmed that upon that statement he would build his church.

The Christian Church is a divine-human institution. Divine because it was born from the heart of God and was established by Him. It's human because God determined to fill it with men and women who voluntarily responded to his call and were redeemed by the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 16:18 tells us that the foundation for the church is Peter's statement that Jesus is the Christ. Colossians 1:18 indicates that Jesus is the head of the church.

2. The Mission of the Church

The Lord Jesus Christ established the church with a specific purpose: “The mission of the Church in the world is to share in the redemptive and reconciling ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Church fulfills its mission by making disciples through evangelism, education, showing compassion, working for justice, and bearing witness to the kingdom of God.” (Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, Article XI, NPH, Argentina: 2017, p.33).

The Lord Jesus Christ, after being resurrected victorious, entrusted to his disciples (and with them to the church) the delicate mission of proclaiming salvation in his name (Matthew 28:19-20). He also promised that he would give the necessary capacity to carry out this mission (Acts 1:8). With the passing of time, in some places the mission of the church has been displaced, or it has been replaced by other types of messages and activities that don't help people see their need to repent of their sins and live a life of obedience to God. Some Christians believe that they have been reached by God to only enjoy salvation. However, the mission is to announce the good news of salvation in Christ to those who haven't yet had that experience (Luke 24:47) and integrate them into the community of faith so that they develop as disciples.

3. The Message of the Church

A. The problem of sin

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, broke God's law. When they disobeyed, they chose to turn away from Him, and in the process, attracted to themselves a series of problems whose result is death (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Death consists not only in ceasing to exist physically, but also in separation from God (Revelation 20:14,15), for which there's no solution if the person dies without Christ and without repentance.

Man needs to be shown his sinful condition and the death that awaits him, because until he does, he won't acknowledge that he needs to be saved.

B. God's solution to the problem of sin

Brainstorm, asking the class what the problems in our society are, and what proposals for solution political leaders suggest to solve those problems, such as crime, corruption, violence, etc. Then ask what solution proposals we find in the Bible for the problem of sin, and write down the answers on the board.

The Bible says that God doesn't want anyone to be lost, but that everyone is saved through repentance (2 Peter 3:9). The plan of salvation for man is an initiative of God's love, and the church has the mission to announce salvation by divine grace through which we are free from sin and made children of God. The grace of God redeems man from sin and guilt. Because the natural man in his sinful condition ignores this plan, the Lord entrusted the church with the responsibility of communicating the message of salvation that includes the following 2 aspects:

1. God loves sinners: God's motivation to act on our behalf is his love (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Matthew 1:21). Knowing that man himself cannot get rid of the yoke of sin, he provided the only solution: His Son. As a church, we must announce that God loves people, people who are sinners and are condemned, and therefore, need to be saved.
2. Jesus Christ, the only solution to the problem of sin: Although humans have devised different ways of trying to justify themselves and different ways of trying to reach God, none of them are useful. Salvation is a loving act of God, who freely grants us, through the sacrifice of his Son and through faith in Him, the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 2:10). Only by the atoning death of Christ can God deliver us from guilt and sorrow for sin (Romans 10:8-9; Philippians 2:11).

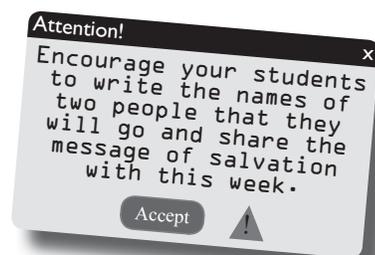
The church has the privilege and responsibility of announcing that salvation, that is, the solution to the problem of sin, is found only in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In order to receive the benefit of salvation in Christ, it's necessary to believe in Him with all our heart as the only and sufficient Savior, and also to confess it with our mouth (Romans 10:9).

The church is the community of believers in Jesus. Christians are the church of Christ, and we have the mission to continue his work announcing that only in his name is there salvation and forgiveness of sins.

Review/Apply: Allow time for your students to answer the following questions. Possible answers are provided.

1. What is salvation according to the Bible? (The forgiveness of our sins and eternal life granted by God, thanks to the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.)
2. What is the human entity entrusted with the mission of announcing the good news of salvation? (The Church.)
3. Make a list of the evils that society suffers because of sin. (Violence, corruption, immorality, etc.)
4. How can we, in this class, announce God's plan for the salvation of people?
5. Is there anything that stops you from fulfilling the mission of sharing about the salvation of Jesus Christ? Yes or no. If yes, what?

Challenge: Say to your class: Who will you tell that Jesus Christ loves them, wants to forgive their sins and give them eternal life? Write down the name of two people that you will share the Salvation message with this week. Share your experience in the next class.



What are the Sacraments?

Objective: That the students know the means of grace that God provided for our benefit.

Memory Verse: *“Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” . . . both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:36b, 38b*



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: A large transparent bowl full of clean water and various objects that are dirty (a fork, a glass, a pencil). Rags to dry with.
- Instructions: At the beginning of class, form two groups. Show the dirty objects to the class and give two or three to each group. Tell them they have one minute to change the appearance of the objects. Once the time is up, check to see which group cleaned them best. Then ask about the changes that occurred and how it resembles what God does in our hearts.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard and chalk, or large paper and a marker.
- Instructions: On the board or paper write the word “SACRAMENT” in large letters. Divide the class into two groups and ask students to write a definition of the word, (without using Google or a dictionary). The definition should describe the concept well and should be written so that it could be found in a dictionary (for example “of the quality of...”) The group with the best definition will be the winners.

Connect

Navigate

1. What is a sacrament?

The word “sacrament” is derived from the ancient Roman Latin “sacramentum” and was formed by joining two words “sacred” and “moment” or “instrument or medium of”. Based on this, the etymological meaning of the word is “a sacred moment” or “an instrument to give grace from God.” We can literally understand that a sacrament is an instrument that God uses to impart grace. The grace of God refers to the gifts that God gives us without deserving them, including salvation, eternal life and a life transformed here on earth. Actually, all we have is a gift from God. Sacrament is also defined as: “An external and visible sign of an internal and spiritual grace that’s given to us by Christ ...” (Beacon Theological Dictionary. CNP, USA: s / f, p.611).

In participating in the sacrament, the Christian must understand the true meaning of this ritual.

2. What is the meaning of Baptism?

The word “baptism” in its original language was related to the concept of “baths or washings” that were an important part in the religious ceremonies of antiquity. From past times, cleanliness was included in religious ritual ceremonies. Of course, physical cleanliness was a symbol of total cleanliness.

In the New Testament, the sacrament of baptism was clearly exemplified by Jesus at the beginning of his earthly ministry. Jesus approached his cousin, John, for him to baptize him. It’s wonderful to read the story of Jesus’ baptism and notice how the Spirit of God was present and the Father declared how happy and pleased he was of his son’s obedience (Matthew 3:16-17). In fulfilling this ritual, Jesus was teaching the importance of a public statement about the inner life of a person. At the end of his ministry, Jesus instructed his disciples that all who believe in Him as savior and Lord of their lives should be baptized (Matthew 28:19).

The meaning of baptism was also explained by the apostle Paul in Romans 6:1-13. Baptism is an analogy of being buried with Christ in his death (Romans 6:4a) and then, when one comes out of the water, being raised to begin a “new life” (Romans 6:4b), as was the resurrection of Jesus. The apostle urged Christians in Rome to truly live a new life, literally “dead to sin” (Romans 6:11). For example, when a person literally dies, he can no longer do the things he did in life, like walking in the park or drinking a fruit juice, etc. In the same way, Paul asked the Romans to consider not doing any of the sinful actions they had previously committed in their old life, but



that they live a different life. It's wonderful to be able to go through the waters of baptism as a Christian and publicly commit to living a new life clean from all sin. God makes it possible.

In Acts 8:26-38, we see the story of a eunuch who read a prophecy about the Messiah, and upon hearing the story of Jesus, didn't hesitate to want to be his faithful follower. In some Christians, the question arises if they are truly ready or if they can move forward with a commitment such as living the new life in Christ. Although it's important to make the decision with respect and seriousness, it's also important to know that our testimony is a blessing to others, and that Jesus himself will be present to help us fulfill his commands.

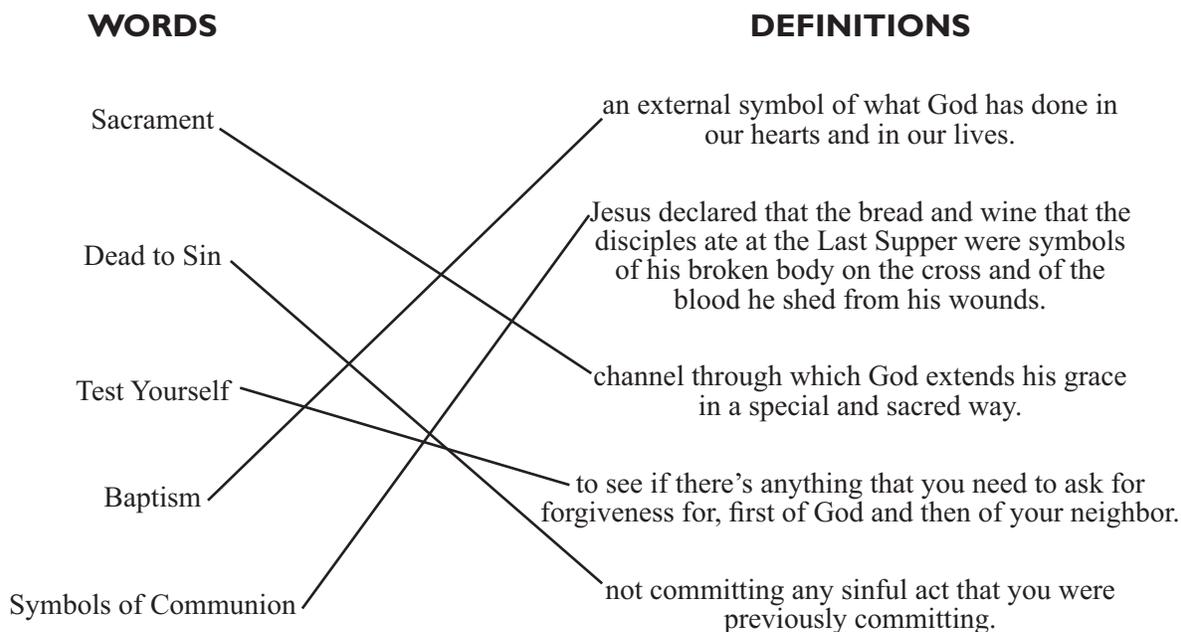
3. What is the meaning of Communion or the Lord's Supper

The sacrament of communion was instituted by Jesus himself during the last days of his life here on earth. The gospels tell the story of Jesus' last supper with his disciples, before being arrested by the religious leaders of his time, and then being unjustly sentenced to the death of the cross. The accounts of Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25 and Luke 22:14-20 can be compared. In these passages, Jesus taught his disciples that his sacrifice on the cross represented the sacrifice of the lamb (flesh and blood) that would reconcile the human race with God (replacing the Old Testament sacrifices).

Jesus told them *"This is my body, which is for you; . . . This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, . . . in remembrance of me."* (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Jesus declared that the bread and wine that the disciples were eating and drinking were the symbols of his body that would be hurt on the cross and the blood shed from his wounds. The Master also asked them to do this *" . . . whenever you drink it, do in remembrance of me."* (1 Corinthians 11:25). That is, he wanted his followers to remember his sacrifice on the cross by taking the cup and bread in the form of communion, and by remembering this, they would also testify to others for salvation.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27-34, the apostle Paul taught Christians in Corinth that this ritual of remembering Jesus' sacrifice on the cross should be taken with respect and order, and not "unworthily." Paul asked that each one "prove" himself (1 Corinthians 11:28) and see if there was anything for which one should first ask forgiveness from God or neighbor. Similarly, in Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus taught that before giving offerings, the person must first reconcile with whomever he had a conflict. In this way, we can understand more clearly why the sacraments of baptism and the sacrament are also called "means of grace", because through them, God helps us to take important steps of consecration and reconciliation. By accepting that Jesus lovingly sacrificed for us to forgive us, a natural response is to want to consecrate ourselves to Him (publicly by baptism) and to desire to forgive others and be at peace in our human relationships (by participating in the sacrament with Jesus).

Review/Apply: Correctly connect the words with definitions.



Challenge: Say to your class: What is your perspective on the sacraments? Write a paragraph about what you have learned about the sacraments of the church. Remember that the Word of God and I, your teacher, can guide you to take the necessary steps for a greater commitment to Jesus.



Objective: That the students recognize the ministry that the church today has to the sick.

Memory Verse: “. . . and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Luke 9:2



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Furniture and classroom objects.
- Instructions: Form two teams and ask them to discuss some home remedies they use in their families when they're sick. Then have one team act out what they would do if one of them was sick to their stomach and have the other team act out what they would do if one of them had the flu. Each team will improvise everything necessary for staging, dialogue, set design, etc.

As you conclude, ask if it's important to turn to God when we are sick.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Divide the group into groups of three or four. Have the groups discuss experiences they know of or have had that dealt with people who were very sick or terminally ill and how God worked in those lives and the person was healed. (If you consider it necessary, you could write two or three testimonies of people who were miraculously healed, and have the students analyze them and share them with the group).

Connect

Navigate

In the Bible in the Old Testament, God shows us his power to heal the sick. Miraculously, without the need to use medication, only with faith in Him, people were healed. 2 Kings 5:1-14 tells of the case of Naaman, the general of the Syrian army. He wasn't Jewish, but God healed him through the prophet Elisha. Another case is that of King Hezekiah who had a terminal illness. The case of King Hezekiah was a lost matter. God Himself sent the prophet Isaiah to notify him that he should make final preparations because he was going to die. The facts related to his healing are of such importance that they are recorded three times in the Old Testament (2 Kings 20:1-7; 2 Chronicles 32:24-31; Isaiah 38:1-22).

Psalms 103:3 in the Message version of the Bible says: "*He forgives your sins—every one. He heals your diseases—every one.*" For God, there's nothing impossible. God has all power to save and heal. In Isaiah's prophecy about the promised Messiah, it's affirmed that by his sacrifice on the cross, we have secured divine healing. Isaiah 53:4-5 says: "*Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*"

This continued in the New Testament with Jesus Christ, who healed many sick people miraculously, as cited in the Gospel of Matthew 4:23-24. In the biblical context, it's mentioned that there were already doctors who did the work of curing and healing the sick. The issue was that few people had access to them because there were few doctors, and most people didn't have enough money. As in the case of the sick woman with the flow of blood (Luke 8:43) who had consulted many doctors, she had spent all her money and no one was able to heal her. Jesus Christ was the only option when this woman had lost all hope of being healed.

It's also important to note that during Jesus' ministry, not all people were healed; that is, God doesn't always heal the sick. In his infinite wisdom, He sometimes heals the person, yet at other times he allows the disease to remain or progress until the person dies. This is evident in the miracle in the pool of Bethesda where there was a multitude of sick, and he only healed one (John 5:3,6-9); we also see it in the life of Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) and in the life of Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23).

1. Divine healing in the ministry of Jesus

A fifth of the gospels is dedicated to narrating the healing miracles of Jesus throughout his ministry and the controversies they caused among the people. Jesus healed people using different methods. (Share the following quotes among students and ask them to explain the different methods Jesus used to heal people in that time.)

- By the faith that the person demonstrated: The healing of the demon possessed boy (Mark 9:23-24); the two blind men healed (Matthew 9:27-29).
- Putting his hands on the sick or when they touched him: Jesus healed a leper (Luke 5:12-16); the hunched woman was healed (Luke 13:10-14) and the woman with a blood flow (Luke 8:43-48) as well.



- Using his word: The healing of the 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-19); when he healed the widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:11-19).
- Using saliva or mud: With the deaf and speech impaired man (Mark 7:31-36), blind people (Mark 8:23; John 9:6-7).
- Through the intercession of others for the sick: The centurion interceded for his servant (Matthew 8:10-13); The Syrophenician woman interceded for her daughter (Mark 7:24-37).

2. Conditions for divine healing

Jesus performed many miracles during his ministry, and in each of them, certain conditions were manifested for the miracles of healing to occur. (Distribute the following quotes among the students and ask them to explain the different conditions for the miracles of healing to occur).

- It was necessary to want to be healthy: In John 5:1-14 Jesus found a paralytic who had been in that condition for 38 year and asked: *"Do you want to get well?"* (v.6)
- It was necessary to ask for healing: Mark 10:46-52 tells of the healing of the blind Bartimaeus, who cried out for healing.
- It was necessary to have faith: The miracles that Jesus performed were because he saw the faith that people had in Him. Luke 8:40-58 tells of two miracles in which Jesus saw their faith: that of the woman with a flow of blood, (v.48) and the case of Jairus (v.50).
- It was to show the glory of God: One of the greatest miracles that Jesus performed was when he raised Lazarus after 4 days of being dead. Although it seemed that it wasn't possible for him to revive and heal him, Jesus had a purpose (John 11:40). Many times, God allows us to go through serious or terminal illnesses so that by healing us, his glory will be manifested in our lives and people will believe in our all powerful God.

3. Divine healing for the church today

Read Luke 9:1-6 and 4:16-20 and have them comment on the passage using brainstorming. In these passages, we find the mission that Jesus entrusted to his disciples: *"To proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."* To accomplish this mission, every disciple needs divine power and authority. Jesus Christ gave us the mandate and authority to proclaim the good news and heal the sick (Mark 16:15-20). Therefore:

- Divine healing should be a regular practice of the whole church (Acts 5:14-16).
- The prayer of faith and the anointing of the sick was a custom of the first Christians, and we must continue practicing them (James 5:13-15).
- God gives the gift of divine healing to certain members of the body of Christ, to be used for the benefit of the sick (1 Corinthians 12:28). We believe there are brothers and sisters in the church with this gift, and are used by God to heal others, but without seeking attention or allowing people to wrongly place their faith in them and not in God.
- We also believe that God uses doctors and medicines to heal the sick.

Divine healing must be holistic. Jesus Christ, throughout the course of his ministry, showed a genuine interest in healing people's physical bodies, but even more so in their spiritual healing. The mission was integral. He healed them and declared them free from sin. God is not only interested in a part of the human being, but in his whole being: Spirit, soul and body. This implies that people are saved, and are healed physically, mentally and emotionally.

- Physical healing: it's when God heals us of diseases of the body, whether internal or external.
- Mental or emotional healing: It's the healing that God performs in people with diseases such as psychosomatic diseases, nervous control, anxiety, stress, depression, schizophrenia, or other mental disorders.
- Spiritual healing: It's the greatest healing that God performs in the human being, when he cleanses them of sin and death, offering them a new life in Christ.

Talk with the students if this mission of holistic health is being fulfilled in your local church.

Review/Apply: Give them time to read each passage, reflect, and then answer the questions individually or as a group:

- According to James 5:13-15 What should Christians do when a person is sick and what results will be obtained? (Call the elders of the church, pray with faith and anoint him with oil. The person will be healed and their sins will be forgiven.)
- According to 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, Why does God sometimes choose not to heal Christian who are sick and pray to him?
 - So we don't boast about ourselves
 - For us to depend more on him.
 - For us to be humble before God.
 - Because our testimonies in the midst of the affliction are a powerful tool to help others know and follow Jesus.
 - Becomes sometimes, not being healed is best for us and for his plan long term.
- What strategies should our church implement to offer comprehensive healing to all who are in need? (answer freely)

Challenge: Say to your class: Our mission as a church is to carry this message of hope to every person, the message that Christ heals and saves. Today is the day to share this good news. During this week, think of a sick person you know. Pray for them and with them. Also prepare a greeting card with words of encouragement on it and share with them some Bible verses you learned today.



Will He Come Again?

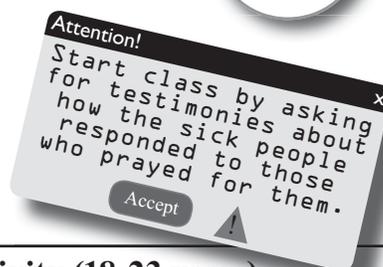
Lesson

Aldo Genes • Paraguay

46

Objective: That the students reinforce or correct their understanding of the Biblical teaching about the second coming of Christ.

Memory Verse: *Therefore keep watch, because you don't know the day or the hour.* Matthew 22:13



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils. (You can prepare worksheets with the questions ahead of time or simply dictate the questions to your students.)
- Instructions: Ask your students to imagine what their lives will be like in 10 years. Then allow some time for them to answer the following questions:
 1. How old will you be?
 2. Where will you be living?
 3. Will you study a university degree? Which?
 4. Will you work? How or in what?
 5. What will your marital status be at that age?
 6. Will you continue in any Christian church?
 7. What possible ministries will you be exercising?
 8. Will Jesus come a second time to earth in the next 10 years?
 9. In what spiritual condition will he find you if he comes in the next 10 years?
 10. Do you think Jesus will come a second time?

Allow your students to share their answers and discuss what they think the future will be like.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Divide the group into pairs and ask them to discuss the question: "What distracts you from thinking about the reality of the second coming of the Lord?" (Example: Fear, lack of knowledge, finishing your professional studies, your current job, your current boy/girl friend, your current friendships, your favorite hobbies, your fluctuating spiritual life, one day focused on God and the next focused on the world, etc.).

Encourage your students to discuss the situations they consider to be distracting them and discuss the importance of keeping in mind the reality that Jesus Christ will return someday ... maybe tomorrow.

Connect

Navigate

1. The Second Coming of Christ is a reality

In the Bible, we find that the Lord Jesus made two great promises to his disciples before returning to heaven. The first one was that once He left, He would send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). The second, that He would return (John 14:3). The two men in white robes (probably angels) who met at the time of our Lord's ascension, also reaffirmed such a promise (Acts 1:10-11).

The Old Testament, in Numbers 23:19, says: "God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" In other words, God will fulfill what he promised. Jesus himself reaffirmed it in the New Testament by saying: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Luke 21:33).

The two great promises that Jesus made to his disciples are repeated themes in the New Testament. This is the beautiful hope that sustains the faith of believers in Christ. The first promise was fulfilled with the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The church awaits the fulfillment of the second promise, the return of Jesus Christ.

2. Our responsibility before the Second Coming of Christ

Concerning the second coming of Christ, there are some aspects that we must take into account:

- a. No one knows the day or the hour: Truly, there are many preachers, pseudo Christians and even charlatans who have pretended to know more than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In Matthew 24:36, Jesus made a very important clarification: "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matthew 24:36).

Paul systematized the teachings of the Lord as follows: "... for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). If anyone has gone through the unpleasant visit of a



thief, did he receive the respective notification of such a visit? Or, if you haven't been through that experience, do you think you will receive a careful note, a text message via your mobile phone, or an email communicating the intentions of the thief? And, if you received it, would you ignore such a warning? I guess your answer is "no." In the same way, the second coming of the Lord Jesus will be as sudden as the unexpected visit of a thief.

- b. It will be an event like a two-sided coin: on one side of that coin, there will be the fulfillment of the blessed promise. Those of all ages and from all ages who believed in God will be glad to receive the return of Jesus Christ. The other side of the coin will be for those who aren't prepared. For them, this event will be one of despair, tragedy, of a late understanding that God's promise was real. "The coming of the Lord is the dawn of the eternal day for the people of God. But it's also the dusk of the eternal night for the unbelieving world" (Beliefs for Life. W. T. Purkiser. CNP, USA, s / f, p.88).

3. The Second Coming and the risks we run

Interestingly, within the context of the same words of Jesus concerning his second coming, we find a warning for each of us.

In Luke 21:25-36, he tells us to avoid becoming our worst enemies. Why this expression? Because many times we don't believe in ourselves; we limit ourselves from doing great things. We don't forgive ourselves when the Lord has long since forgiven us. Or we sin or slip from grace and then we also suffer the consequences.

The expression of verse 34, "*Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down ...*", can also be translated or interpreted in the following ways: "*Be careful not to let yourselves become occupied with too much*" (Good News Translation); and "*Take heed of yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged*" (Jubilee Bible 2000). Interestingly, the Word doesn't say: "pray asking God to take care of your hearts"; but "Look out for yourself, take care of yourself."

What are the risks are we taking? The risks are that our hearts are filled with vices and worries of this life (v. 34). A vice is a bad moral, and habit, and often the worries of life are linked to materialism or even to genuine desires of self-realization. Anything that relegates God to a second or third level of our lives is an enemy that takes us away from God.

Let's be careful not to become our own enemies so that the second coming of the Lord doesn't surprise us (v. 35).

4. The Second Coming and personal and church responsibility

What is our personal responsibility and what are the responsibilities of the church? Matthew 25:13 tells us: "*Therefore keep watch, ...*" To watch is to be on guard; to carefully observe a mandate; to take carefully watch over something. The passage is in the imperative mode. This means that the Lord gave us the order not to fall asleep spiritually but to be attentive.

The Lord's mandate is not "prepare," but "watch." We must be ready, because at any moment the Lord may come or calls us to give an account before Him.

Let's not be fooled by those who teach that after the second coming of the Lord, there will be another opportunity for the unrepentant. The Word of God is clear in telling us that when the groom comes, he will enter and close the door, and those who prepared and waited will be with him (Matthew 25:10-13). Hebrews 9:27 also tells us: "*Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*" Therefore, after the second coming of the Lord and after death, there are no more opportunities left. Our personal responsibility and that of the church is to create awareness to be ready.

Review/Apply: Guide your students to answer the following questions.

1. What were the two great promises that the Lord Jesus made while still on earth? (The first was to send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). The second was that He would return (John 14:3).)
2. What two facts did we look at regarding the second coming of the Lord?(a) No one knows the day or time. b) It will be an event like a two-sided coin.)
3. What does it mean: "it will be an event like a two-sided coin"? (It will be the fulfillment of the blessed promise to those who believe in God. But, for those who aren't prepared, it will be a day of despair and tragedy.)
4. What are the risks with which we run in relation to the second coming? (The risks are that our hearts are filled with vices and worries of this life and we're surprised by the coming of the Lord (Luke 21:34).)
5. According to Matthew 25:13, what is our personal responsibility and that of the church? (To create awareness to be ready, and to be ready and waiting for the second coming of the Lord.)

Challenge: If it's possible, take your students to participate in a prayer meeting in your local church. Remember that it's a way to watch. Also, you can organize a prayer vigil with your pastor or youth president for the next few days.



Can We Be Saints?

Lesson

47

Eudo Prado • Venezuela

Objective: That the students understand that God's will is for us to be holy, made possible by faith in Jesus Christ through baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse: *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Thessalonians 5:23



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils
- Instructions: Have your students fold their sheet of paper in half and have them write the words "holiness" and "sin" at the top of each half. Then, ask your students to write down ideas that they think connect these words or how they are related. Gather the sheets of paper and read three or four of them, then start the lesson. As the lesson progresses, confirm or correct what they have written.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Ask your students to identify four aspects of their behavior that they consider negative and that in their opinion negatively affects other people. Have your students list them in order of priority from one to four. (Number one will be the most negative).

Explain that spiritual transformation depends fundamentally on the grace of God and is not something that's achieved only by human effort.

Connect

Navigate

At times, the word "holiness" may seem out of place in today's world, and partly because it's only heard in the church. However, for those of us who follow the Christian faith, the word "holiness" has great significance. Holiness characterizes the nature of God, and is the lifestyle that He requires of his children. Holiness has to do with living apart from sin and walking in obedience to God, with the help of his grace. So that we can fully enjoy the will of God, He has provided "entire sanctification," or baptism with the Holy Spirit, through which he purifies our hearts from original sin, or sinful nature.

1. God's call to Sanctification

Society offers young people a lifestyle contrary to God's will. At first glance, the negative part may not be perceived, but the way, apart from God, always leads to physical and spiritual destruction. Ask one of your students to read Proverbs 14:12. A disorderly sexual life can cause a sexual illness (AIDS or venereal diseases), and many times, even death or in other cases an unwanted pregnancy. Practices such as pornography or drug use progressively deforms a young person's values, and leads them to other destructive attitudes. Satan is very clever and only shows us the pleasant part of temptation, subtly hiding its terrible consequences.

Contrary to this, God makes a serious call to "sanctification." It's a particular and repeated call that appears innumerable times in the Bible. And it's for all Christians without exception, even for young people! When we accept the call to sanctification, we can experience "...what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2).

In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12, we find the following important ideas about the doctrine of sanctification. Divide the quotes between students and ask them to find what the passages say about the theme of holiness:

- Sanctification is the will of God for the Christian; "... how to live in order to please God, . . ." (v. 1), "It's God's will that you should be sanctified . . ." (v. 3).
- The apostles lived sanctified and taught how to live it; "... we instructed you. . ." (v. 1), "For you know what instructions we gave you. . ." (v. 2).
- Sanctification is the separation from all evil; "... that you should avoid sexual immorality . . ." (v. 3), "... no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister." (v. 6)
- Sanctification is living in Christian love, having honest conduct, and having a good testimony before the world: "love for one another", "love each other" (do good, v. 9), "work with your hands" (not be idle, be



responsible (v. 11), “win the respect of outsiders so that you won’t be dependent on anybody.” (v. 12)

The Thessalonian Christians lived in an extremely sinful world, full of idolatry and sexual immorality. Their Christian faith was tested in every area of their daily life. Our world is also full of similar evils that are presented as a challenge to our Christian beliefs and our commitment to God and the church.

The following list shows some common practices among young people today that are destructive and dishonor God: Hearing and singing songs with sensual lyrics, having obscene conversations, screaming or angry expressions, lies, playing violent video games, pornography, laziness, disobedience to parents, wearing indecent clothing, etc.

Ask your students to reflect briefly on the following questions: What negative attitudes of your old life remain in your life? What things do you still do that don’t please God? What things should you do to reflect holiness in your life? How would you advise someone who has any of these problems?

2. God wants to “sanctify us” completely

Sanctification begins at our new birth or conversion when we are cleansed from the guilt of our past sins. This stage is called “initial holiness.” But God’s purpose is that we grow more and more every day in the life of holiness, reaching the likeness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). For this, it’s necessary that the sinful nature, which continues in the heart after conversion, be removed through a second work of God’s grace.

1 Thessalonians 5:23a says, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.” God is the one who performs the complete transformation in us by uprooting the sinful nature of our heart.

The next part of the verse says “. . . your whole spirit, soul and body . . .”. This teaches us that entire sanctification will affect our thoughts, feelings and attitudes. All of one’s personality is sanctified. Ask: Why do we need to be entirely sanctified? (A basic answer could be that the experience of entire sanctification allows us to serve God with full freedom and efficiency, and manifests the fruit of the Holy Spirit in its fullness (Galatians 5:22-23).)

In this part of the lesson, invite students to pray to the Lord for baptism with the Holy Spirit, and direct them in this approach. Pray in advance for the Holy Spirit to guide you, and give students the opportunity to testify about their experience with God.

3. Permanence and growth in holiness

Without a doubt, it’s hard to serve God in the world in which we live. Actually, it has never been easy to obey God, for each generation of Christians has had their own particular struggles. But we can say that sanctification is a guarantee of our spiritual firmness.

The final part of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 teaches about the power of God to keep us in the sanctified life. Entire sanctification is a permanent dependence on God’s grace to do his will.

After being baptized with the Holy Spirit, we still need to continue growing in holiness until “final glorification.” Secondly, it indicates the goal of God’s sanctifying work is to present ourselves without blemish before the Lord at his coming. When the Lord returns, he must find us “holy,” that is, living in holiness (Hebrews 12:14b).

The last verse of study, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, says: “The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.” Here, Paul assures us that God, who called us to sanctification, is faithful to fulfill his purpose and his promise to sanctify us entirely and keep us in that condition.

Many Christians think that they can’t overcome the bad habits or temptations against which they have fought for a long time. And they’re right, they can’t do it themselves. But with the power of God ... yes they can. They don’t have to remain tied to sinful attitudes that offend God, destroy their spiritual and physical life, and harm other people. We must only rely on God’s grace to overcome temptations and sin.

Through the baptism with the Holy Spirit, God wants to give us the complete victory over “original sin,” the source of all evil work. We only need faith and obedience to live a sanctified life!

Review/Apply: Ask your students to write the meaning of each phrase in their own words.

1. Initial Holiness. (Holiness at conversion or new birth.)
2. Entire Consecration. (A condition of being entirely sanctified. You have given all to God.)
3. Entire Sanctification. (Purification of the heart through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.)
4. Growth in Holiness. (Living apart from sin, and obeying God.)
5. Final Glorification. (When we die and are in the presence of God.)

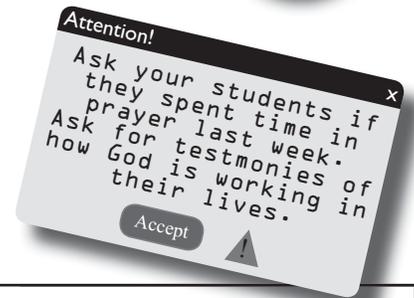
Challenge: Say to your class: Try to be transparent with God in your personal prayer. During the week, meditate on what we’ve been talking about, and identify those areas of your life that you haven’t completely surrendered to God. Ask him in prayer to cleanse your heart and sanctify you completely. If you want, go to a spiritually mature person to help you in prayer for this reason.



Accepted or Rejected

Objective: That the students understand that the Jews didn't accept Jesus as the Messiah, but that we should receive him as Savior.

Memory Verse: *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*
Matthew 21:42b



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Instructions: Ask a volunteer to leave the classroom. Have the rest of the students choose a Bible story; it could be the “triumphal entry.” When the volunteer returns, the other students should act out the story. The ask the volunteer, “what did you see?”. Possible answers may be: I saw a path, I saw many people, or I saw the disciples. The students must give the volunteer clues in order for the volunteer to recognize the story. You can continue to play, allowing others to volunteer and using different stories.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Instructions: Choose a story but don't share what it is with anyone. Divide the class into two teams. The teams will ask the teacher questions in order to discover what the story that he has chosen. The members of the teams will take turns asking questions. The teacher can only answer with “yes” or “no”. If the answer is yes, the team can ask another question. If the answer is no, the next team will ask a question.

Example: The triumphal entry of Jesus. The teacher says: “It's a historical fact.” The first student may ask: “Is it in the New Testament?” The teacher says “yes” and the student keeps asking questions; but if the student asks: “Is it in Paul's letters?”, then the teacher answers “no” and it's the next team's turn.

Connect

Navigate

While Jesus was on earth, he used fresh and contemporary language to help listeners understand the message he wanted to convey regarding the kingdom of heaven. One of the methods was the use of parables.

Jesus decided to go to Jerusalem, knowing that he would give his life there. His entrance into this city was very special; it's known as the “triumphal entry” and the church celebrates it every year on the Sunday before Easter Sunday (Matthew 21:1-11). The theological and spiritual reality that happened on that day was recorded by the evangelists through one of Jesus' parables.

1. Jesus accepted and rejected

The description made by the evangelists of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem refers to people who said they looked forward to the promised Messiah (Matthew 21:8-9). But the historical reality, expressed in the words of Jesus, shows us that the interests of the Jewish people were elsewhere; they were far from recognizing him as Messiah or as savior of this world (Luke 19:41-44). In this portion of the Bible, we find a phrase that's key to understanding the rejection of the Jewish people, and it appears in verse 44: “... *you didn't recognize the time of God's coming to you.*” God was with them personally and they didn't recognize him as such.

In the parable of Matthew 21:33-46, Jesus taught about the reality of his non-acceptance by the chief priests and the elders of the people. “The wall around the vineyard was a hedge of thorns so that neither the wild boars could enter to spoil the vineyard nor the thieves could enter to steal the grapes (v. 33). The large vines had their winepress, which consisted of two grooves that were made either from rock or built of bricks; one was somewhat taller than the other, and they were connected to each other by a channel. The grapes were stepped on (smashed) in the high groove and the juice then passed down the channel to the lowest. The tower served a double purpose. It served as a watchtower, so that thieves wouldn't enter when the grapes were ripe;



and it also served as a refuge for workers.” (Commentary of the New Testament. Volume 2. Barclay, William. Clie, Barcelona:1995, pp. 147-148).

What are some inferences of the biblical context that can help us here?

1. The vineyard (Matthew 21:33) represents the house of Israel. God’s chosen people. This is an image very similar to the one found in Isaiah 5:7.
2. Father of the family (Matthew 21:33) refers to God.
3. The tenants (Matthew 21:35,38-41, 45) are the leaders and representatives of religion in Israel.
4. The son (Matthew 21:37) and the stone (Matthew 21:42) is Jesus properly.

Jesus clearly stated that his message wasn’t received and that He himself was rejected. The parable fully describes God’s intentionality in saving the human race through his Son. But, the son was dismissed by the farmers and killed by them, referring to the Israelite religious leadership. It seems curious and inexplicable that those who knew most about the sacred texts (the prophecies), those who taught in the synagogues, those in charge of guiding the people in the truth of God, didn’t receive and accept that same God. This is the case of Jesus when he lived among the Jews.

2. Jesus extended his salvation to mankind

The divine purpose of salvation was revealed by Jesus in this parable (Matthew 21:41,43). The people of God would not be Israel, but rather all those who received Jesus in their hearts and accepted his atoning sacrifice. Verse 43 reflects the universal character of the kingdom of God from the new covenant in grace. Jesus came to establish a new model of salvation. He is the only person through whom salvation can be obtained. This is a radical change in the concepts conceived in the minds of the two great divisions of the world (Gentiles and Jews).

The Jews for many years sought divine favor through rituals, animals and priests, with the belief that only they deserved the salvation of God, as a people chosen by Him. The Gentiles on the other hand had their mentality in receiving help through countless gods, a mainly polytheistic culture.

Jesus totally changed these saving concepts: It’s through his blood and his sacrifice on the cross that He’ll give salvation to the human being. Removing the separation wall between Jews and Gentiles, he arranged that every man, woman, youth, and child could receive him in their heart through faith.

Today, there are still people who are looking for salvation and the savior in the wrong places. It’s not through compliance with rules, it’s not through images, it’s not through man-made gods, it’s not through mythologies, but it’s by receiving Jesus as the only Savior and Lord into our lives.

You can take the time to ask for conversion testimonials, or to make a call for those who have never received Christ as their savior.

Palm Sunday is the celebration of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, but it may be the day Jesus really enters the lives of those who have never received him. It was a day of deep sadness for Jesus when he saw the spiritual condition of the people of Israel, but it can be a day of immense joy for God if Jesus enters their life (Luke 15:7).

Review/Apply: Guide your students to connect the words on the left to what they represented in the parable.

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------|--|
| 1. The vineyard | <u>3</u> | Representatives of the Jewish religion |
| 2. Landowner | <u>4</u> | Jesus |
| 3. The farmers | <u>1</u> | House of Israel |
| 4. The son | <u>2</u> | God |

Guide your students to write the corresponding words in the blanks.

The divine purpose of salvation was revealed by Jesus in this parable. Matthew 21:41-43 clearly exposes the reality of salvation for the human race without distinction. The people of God would no longer be Israel, but those who received Jesus into their hearts and accepted his atoning sacrifice.

Challenge: Tell your class: During this week, write a poem or a letter thanking the Lord for your salvation. We would like you to share it with us the next time we meet.



Promise Fulfilled

Lesson

49

Eduardo Olivares • Mexico

Objective: That the students recognize that Christ fulfilled the promises that were announced before his birth.

Memory Verse: *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die." John 11:25*



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Write this lesson's Bible memory verse on cardboard. Cut out each word to form a puzzle. Prepare two puzzles.
- Instructions: Divide the class into two groups and give each group a puzzle. Give two minutes for the groups to discover the Bible verse and memorize it.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard or posterboard, chalk or markers.
- Instructions: Ask each student to write on the board a promise from God that they consider important in their lives. Then ask them at what time in their lives did they experience the fulfillment of those promises of God in their lives. Give time for some brief testimonials. It's important that young people understand, and assimilate, that God's promises are true because He's faithful.

Connect

Navigate

A tragedy had happened, an injustice, the apprehension, summary judgment, crucifixion and death of Jesus. All this had penetrated deeply into his disciples and followers.

Imagine for a moment suffering the loss of a loved one. Perhaps those of us who have experienced a similar situation can understand a little. This type of experience brings pain, grief, emptiness, crying, restlessness day and night, with the desire to see that person alive again. This is how the disciples and followers of Jesus felt, with a feeling of abandonment, loneliness, uncertainty, of not knowing what would follow, what would happen next. Imagine that a couple of days later, that loved one is seen alive again. First it would cause astonishment and even a little fright, but then all the pain would dissipate, resulting in immense joy and happiness. That was what happened with the resurrection of Jesus. In the midst of the pain and grief, they had forgotten, or at least lost sight of, the promises of the Lord. Paradoxically, the gospel accounts indicate that the authorities took the matter of the promise of resurrection more seriously than the disciples themselves, given that they sent armed guards to watch over Jesus' grave and avoid an eventual abduction of his body.

1. Appearances of Jesus after his resurrection

Scholars differ about the exact number and order of Jesus' appearances during the 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension. But Acts 1:3 tells us that *"After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive."* Jesus proved to his disciples that he had risen.

He showed them that his teachings were true. He even left a note for us who weren't present at that time: *"... blessed are those who haven't seen and yet have believed"* (John 20:29). Although many theories try to deny the resurrection of Jesus, our faith must remain firm.

Let's read some biblical passages related to his appearances. Assign a biblical passage to each of your students (or groups) and ask them to read it and write down how the passage relates to Jesus' appearance after his resurrection.

- To Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:14-15).
- To the other women (Matthew 28:9).
- To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:15).
- To Simon Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5).
- To the disciples, (Luke 24:36; John 20:19).
- To Thomas and the other disciples (John 20:26).



- More than five hundred (1 Corinthians 15:6).
- To the seven disciples by the sea of Tiberias (John 21:1).
- To James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
- To the eleven apostles (Matthew 28:16-17; Mark 16:14).
- To the apostle Paul (Acts 9:5).

In each appearance, Jesus showed himself for a specific purpose. On some occasions, he used the Hebrew greeting “peace to you.” But in all recorded occasions, love, compassion, genuine interest in people, in his followers was shown.

It should also be considered that several prophetic texts in the Old Testament pointed to the resurrection of Jesus: Psalm 16:9-10, “*nor will you let your faithful one see decay.*”; Psalm 22:22, following his death, will announce his name to his brothers; Psalm 118:22-24, “*The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*”.

2. Miraculous fishing and its teaching

In John 21:1-14, he refers to the episode of miraculous fishing in one of Jesus’ appearances after his resurrection. One approach that can be given is relative to human skepticism regarding the teachings and promises of the Lord. Jesus instructed them to cast their nets to fish (v. 4), but expert fisherman Simon first argued that they had been trying to fish all night without success, but in an act of faith, he additionally said; In your name, in your word, I will cast the net (v. 5). The results were amazing (v. 6).

Simon Peter may have thought: “But I’m the fishing expert; he’s asking me to do something against my knowledge and intuition about how to run my business and profession. He doesn’t know anything about fishing, I know fish and I know how to fish. This is what I’ve dedicated myself to, and what He’s asking of me is not a practical plan. If I do what he says, it will be a waste of time and energy, and my colleagues will think that I’ve lost my mind.”

However, Peter’s skepticism didn’t prevent him from putting some faith into action, because it was the Lord himself who was giving him the instructions. Thanks to that faith, he experienced a miraculous catch and was overwhelmed by this experience and teaching, proving that Jesus does know about fish.

He also knows the life of each person. You only need to be attentive to what He says, be it a promise, instruction, or teaching. This requires faith, conviction, and trust. That was, among other thing, what Jesus wanted to teach his disciples in this episode after his resurrection.

3. The resurrection, foundation of the Christian faith

In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul expands on the theme of the resurrection. He recounted that Christ died for the sins of all, was buried, and rose again on the third day, precisely according to Scriptures (v. 4). After recounting some of Jesus’ appearances after his resurrection, including the appearance to himself (v. 5-8), the apostle Paul was emphatic in stating that if Christ wasn’t resurrected, vain is preaching and vain is faith, while sin still remains in believers. “*If there’s no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith*” (1 Corinthians 15:13-14.) Paul encouraged believers to believe that in Christ, humanity will enjoy the resurrection. Those who believe in Him will be resurrected. The resurrection is synonymous with victory.

The great difference between Christianity and other religions is that the God of Christians is alive. He developed his ministry, was sacrificed for everyone’s sins, and rose again, fulfilling what was stated in Scripture. The symbolic tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem has a picture inside with a simple but forceful phrase; “He is not here, he is risen.”

Just as Jesus fulfilled the promise of his resurrection, so he will fulfill each and every one of his promises. He is faithful.

Review/Apply: Guide your students to answer the following questions.

- Do you trust the promise of resurrection? Do you have confidence that this will happen to you?
- What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ mean to you? Have you ever gone through an experience that you felt that no matter what happened, you would see the Lord?
- How can a person’s life change by knowing the message of the resurrection?

Challenge: Say to your class: What are you doing to take care of your communion with Jesus in your daily life? Take time to reflect. According to John 5:29, those who do good will experience resurrection of life. Doing evil brings resurrection of condemnation.



Where Can I Serve?

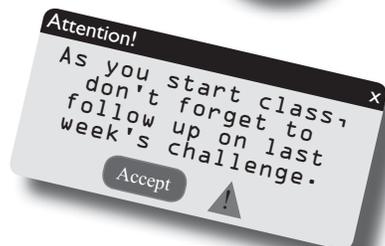
Lesson

Fabián Benítez • Argentina

50

Objective: That the students understand how valuable it is to serve the Lord in a particular ministry.

Memory Verse: *You didn't choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—...* John 15:16a



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Posterboard of any color and scissors.
- Instructions: Check with the teachers who work with children in your church and ask if they need pictures or teaching materials that teens can prepare ... something that's simple and easy to prepare. Use your creativity. On Sunday before class, present the project to your students and ask them to do it in five minutes. You can help organize them so that they can finish it.

When they've finished, discuss whether they achieved their goal or not. What was most important; that the work was done, or who did the work? Help them to conclude that who does the work isn't as important as the work being done.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Blackboard or posterboard
- Instructions: Choose a student and tell them you want them to pretend that they are an entrepreneur and they need to hire workers. Have them write on the board with the help of their colleagues (classmates) the characteristics that their employees should have. Also have them describe any tests they should conduct to know who to hire.

It's important to have qualified people for a certain job. What does this tell us about work in the church?

Connect

Navigate

Sometimes we think that the church is like a company made up of people who come together to meet an objective, or a group of people who agree to achieve something together. It's true that we have goals about what we do and that we should be organized and at work, but the church is much more than a business organization. The church gathers a group of people who have been saved by Christ, that is, a spiritual family. Therefore, the true importance of the work we do in his kingdom doesn't refer to the type of ministry we do personally, or the function we fulfill in our church, or the position and / or responsibility granted to us; The really important thing is that in service to God, we can do it as part of this family. Acts 1:12-26 says that after Jesus ascended to heaven, the apostles and some of the Lord's followers were gathered in the upper room.

1. God has a special place for his children

Acts 1:17 says: *"He was one of our number and shared in our ministry"* (referring to Judas). Many times, Christians simply feel like workers that are part of a big company that is run by Jesus Christ, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, with the logical objective of preaching the gospel. That's true, but it's not the only important thing; for God, each of us is important. We can see two great goals: The first is your life, that is, who and what you "are." Therefore, this verse, referring to Judas says: *"he was one of our number"* (first objective). How good it is to be one among the children of God, how good it is to be someone. How good it is that Jesus takes me into account for who I am and not for what I do. This is very important in the Christian life, being someone important to God. Verse 17 tells us that Judas was considered one of the disciples.

Once we've understood the place we have in God, we are ready to learn the second objective, which is also very important. The second part of verse 17 says: *"... and shared in our ministry."* Judas had a task assigned to perform. God allows us to have a part in his work: we can participate in service. We're going to do something in the church, but it doesn't matter so much in which ministry I'm going to be because I'm going to do what God asks me to do. Then we deduce that the true importance is, first of all, knowing "who I am", and secondly, knowing "what I do". In other words, the first objective is "what He does in me," and the second is "what He does through me."

Judas enjoyed that privilege, was part of the disciples, and had a task to perform. Unfortunately, he decided to yield to his own interests and hand over the Son of God to be crucified.



When the other disciples were waiting for the promise that God said he would send, they could reflect on themselves and the reality of remaining faithful to Christ and fulfilling his work.

2. God always chooses someone for each ministry

Acts 1:24 says, “*Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen...*” We don’t choose the ministry in which we will serve in the work of God. It’s Jesus Christ himself who chooses us to do something special. John 15:16 says, “*You didn’t choose me, but I chose you...*” Jesus Christ chooses what he will do “through us.” We all have some capacity with which we can serve God. In addition to this, as Acts 1:17 says: “*and shared in our ministry.*” It means that we should all participate in some activity in his work. We said that we’re part of the Lord’s church, so we can help as soon as we have the opportunity. Let’s not despise the place that Jesus gives us, but “share in the ministry.”

Judas despised the place he had in the ministry and had to be replaced. We have to reflect and understand that serving God is a privilege. He can use many other people, but he wants to work with us. That doesn’t mean that others cannot. We must learn to see our part in the ministry of the church as a point within a line. God will use us in the right place and time in the appropriate ministry. He as the owner of the work will know where and when to use us. It’s our task to do our best to serve you. Many times it will be easy and pleasant, other times it will be difficult and demand a lot from us. It’s the intention of our heart that God wants in his service. We must be attentive to listen to his voice and be guided by Him. That time before the arrival of the Holy Spirit, there were a few days when the disciples faced their own prejudices and goals, but surrendered completely to Christ..

3. Disobedience drives us away from Christ

Acts 1:25 says, “*to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.*” Unfortunately, Judas lost the place that God had given him. While it’s true that the passage refers to the place in the ministry proper, it’s vitally important to understand that Judas first lost the privilege of being part of the disciples. Although he was physically with them, his heart had already turned away from Jesus. Although the word “transgression” is not found in the original language, the translation in the King James Version refers to the deviation of Judas from the right path, that is, “sin.” We should consider this example to guard our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Jesus said in John 15:5 that apart from Him, we lose our place; like His disciples, and we can do nothing on our own. Our relationship with Jesus is the key to living as Christians and being able to serve him effectively in the church. The fruit we give must be a result of that deep daily relationship with Him. We can do many things and do them well, but Christ demands even more. He requires permanence in Him. Let’s value and take care of the ministry that God gives us. Let’s love Christ, because if we do, we can obey Him and love him as He asks us. Let’s ask him to fill us with his Holy Spirit; only then will we have the perfect love.

The disciples waited in obedience and prayer for the arrival of Pentecost. God fulfilled his promise, cleansed them, and filled and trained them to perform the entrusted work. Immediately after the arrival of the Holy Spirit, the fearful man who denied Jesus three times had the courage to stand before a crowd and present Christ. The result: more than 3,000 people accepted Christ as their Savior. The secret was a life transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Review/Apply: Guide your students to identify if the prayer is true or false.

1. I serve God in the ministry that I want. (F)
2. God has a plan for where he wants me to serve. (T)
3. I am important to the body of Christ. (T)
4. I am the most important person in the body of Christ. (F)
5. I am indispensable in the church. (F)
6. No one can do the ministry better than me. (F)
7. Jesus is only interested in the work I can do for Him. (F)
8. “Doing” is more important than “Being.” (F)

Challenge: Say to your class: This week, reflect on the following questions: Do I feel forgiven? Do I feel accepted by God? Seek God in prayer. The disciples spent about a week in the Upper Room praying for God to send his Holy Spirit and enable them to accomplish the task he had given them. Do the same. Seek God in prayer and ask Him to enable you to serve Him.



What Will You Give?

Objective: That the students decide to know about Jesus, to seek and worship him as a result of reflecting on the story of the Magi's visit to Jesus.

Memory Verse: *On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.* Matthew 2:11



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Three boxes wrapped in wrapping paper with one of these objects in each - something made of gold or that looks like gold, a scented candle or incense, and perfume. Envelopes with the clues for each group.
- Instructions: Prepare the clues for each group with the following sentences.

Gift 1: It shines; It's very expensive; It's found in mines.

Gift 2: It's prepared with aromatic vegetable resins and oil; It has a very nice smell; It has to burn.

Gift 3: It's an aromatic resinous substance; It's yellow; In ancient times it was used to embalm the dead.

Form groups and give each one an envelope with the three clues. They must discover what the gift is. The first group to do so may open the box corresponding to the gift described.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Ask your students to draw the most memorable Christmas gift that they remember getting. Have them write five characteristics of the gift and its importance in their lives. Let each student read the characteristics and have the rest guess what the gift was.
- There are gifts in our life that impacted us for different reasons; for their value, for helping with a need, because they remind us of a special person, etc. Accepting Jesus in our lives is the best gift we can receive.

Connect

Navigate

Christmas ... one of the happiest times of the year. The streets are filled with lights, ornaments and friendly men dressed as Santa Claus. Some houses are adorned with traditional trees and in others scenes of the manger are built representing where Jesus was born. Many families make plans to get together to celebrate. Some come from afar and it's a reason to forget past disagreements. In the commercial establishments, the familiar carols are heard. For many people, Christmas is synonymous with gifts. From very distant lands came men called magi looking for Jesus and bringing gifts. Who were these magi? What was their motivation in seeking Jesus? What were the gifts they gave?

1. Visit of the Magi

We don't know much about the magi who visited Jesus. The story tells us that they came from the East to Jerusalem (Matthew 2:1). The word "magoi" from which magician came, originally referred to the priestly class of the Persians and Babylonians. Over time, the word magician acquired the meaning of charlatan, fortune teller or sorcerer. But in Jesus' time, they were considered good men who sought the truth.

These magi were men versed in philosophy, medicine and natural sciences. They were prophets and dream interpreters who studied the sky. It's interesting to know that in those times of antiquity, people knew about astrology. There was a belief that the future could be predicted by the stars, and that a person's destiny was decided by the stars under which he was born. This was because the stars follow unchanging courses; they represent the order of the universe, so when a different bright star suddenly appeared, or the invariable order of the heavens was broken by some special phenomenon, it seemed as if God was intervening in his own order and announcing something very special. We don't know which star the magi saw; but their profession included observing the heavens and a heavenly glow announced the entry of a great King into the world.



2. Looking for Jesus

The most shocking thing in this story is that they came from far away looking for Jesus. They were guided by the same star that had announced the birth of the child. These magi were very important people, of great reputation in their country. Possibly they were advisors of kings and princes. They were used to receiving the honors of others. However, this wasn't an impediment for them to travel looking for someone much more important than them. Ask your students if they would leave their comfortable lives, their friends and their entertainment to follow a call from God, even if they didn't see the future. That was just what the magi or wise men did. They didn't care about the danger of the road, nor the length and cost of the trip. They wanted to meet the child and did everything possible to achieve their goal. Seeking and knowing Jesus was the best thing they could do and they shouldn't care about the cost.

The biblical account doesn't tell us how Herod found out about the presence of the magi, but explains that the news disturbed him and other people as well. Herod knew that the Jews were waiting for their Messiah or Savior and he knew the prophecies. But his interest wasn't sincere. Although he said he wanted to worship him, he really wanted to eliminate him (Matthew 2:3,8,13).

We have two types of searches for Jesus, one sincere and another of personal interest. Talk to your students about wrong reasons to seek Jesus. For example, just for health, for help in difficult situations, for getting a job, etc. Many of these people, after they get what they want, turn away from Him and continue their life in sin, while the sincere search is what leads to true consecration.

3. Offering Gifts

The magi continued their journey guided by the star. And they rejoiced when they reached their destination (Matthew 2:9-10). The Bible tells us that when they saw the child, they worshipped him. That was the reason for their trip. After a long search, they found Jesus. They knew who he was, that's why they loved him.

The New Testament doesn't say how many magi there were, but the idea that there were three arose without a doubt because there are three gifts that are mentioned. Later legends made them kings. And an even more recent legend gave them names: Gaspar, Melchor and Baltasar. Even later, a personal description was assigned to each one, and the gift that each one gave to Jesus was specified.

Since ancient times, it has been seen how appropriate were the gifts that the wise men brought and how each one harmonized with some characteristic of Jesus and his work.

Gold is the gift for a king. So Jesus was "the Man born to be King." But he was to reign, not by force, but by love; not from a throne, but from a cross. The Jews recognized him at the Triumphal Entry; even Pilate ironically inscribed "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" on the sign on the cross. But no one understood the type of king Jesus was.

We must remember that Jesus Christ is King. We can never meet Him on equal terms. We must always approach Him in total submission.

Incense is the gift for a priest. It was in the temple worship and in their sacrifices that the sweet scent of incense was used (Exodus 30:7-8). The function of a priest was to show people the way to God. The Latin word for "priest" is "pontifex", which means "he who acts as a bridge." This is the mission and privilege of the priest, to serve as a bridge between God and people. That is Jesus, who opened the way to God; he made it possible for us to reach the presence of God (1 Timothy 2:5).

Myrrh is the gift for one who is going to die. Myrrh was used to embalm the bodies of the dead. John tells us that Nicodemus, who visited him at night, brought myrrh and aloes to Jesus (John 19:39).

Jesus came into the world to live and die for mankind. He came to give both his life and his death for us. These gifts represented the redemptive functions of Jesus.

The gold for a king, the incense for a priest, the myrrh for one who was to die ... these were the gifts from the wise men who predicted that he was to be the true King, the perfect High Priest and finally, the supreme Savior of the world.

What motivates us to know about Jesus? The magi diligently sought the way to Christ. As part of their worship, they offered gifts. Reflect with your students regarding their relationship with Jesus. Encourage them to look for him as a personal Savior. Jesus wants our life and service as a gift.

Review/Apply: Guide your students to choose the correct answers and then ask them to write three things that they can offer Jesus as a gift.

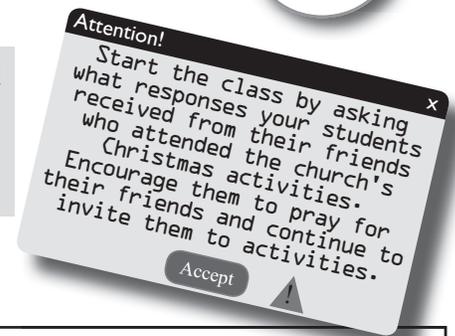
1. The name of the King of Judea when Jesus was born was: a. Pontius Pilate b. Herod c. Augustus Cesar d. Annas
2. The city where Jesus was born: a. Jerusalem b. Judea c. Bethlehem d. Israel
3. It was used to prepare the body of a dead person for his burial: a. gold b. incense c. myrrh d. vegetables
4. The word that the term magician comes from. a. magical b. magoi c. magi d. wizards

Challenge: Say to your class: Now that you know Jesus, it's your task to help others see him and get to know him. Invite at least three of your friends to the activities that will take place in our church for Christmas. Then pray for them and encourage them to look for Jesus in their lives.



Objective: That the students understand that their commitment to God must last throughout the year.

Memory Verse: *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.*
1 Peter 1:15



Connect

Navigate

Introductory Activity (12-17 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Ask the students to make a list of good things they stopped doing this year. Tell them to put the reason why they stopped doing it in front of each item. And then allow those who wish to share what they wrote.

It's important that the students understand that reflecting on why we stop doing some things can help us avoid future failures.

Introductory Activity (18-23 years)

- Materials: Paper and pencils.
- Instructions: Have your students fold their paper in half. On the left side have them make a list of things they want to accomplish in the coming year. On the right side, across from each item, have them write down the materials, the time and the people that it will take to reach that goal.

Students need to understand that God uses materials and human resources, as well as our planning, to help us reach our goals.

Connect

Navigate

The beginning of a new year always generates new expectations. People make purposes, plans, goals, etc. At this time, we all want to be different people. There's a magical feeling in the air that brings nostalgia, illusion and enthusiasm. But what makes this date so special? Why are good wishes born and our joy widens? It's because we always look for the opportunity to improve what we've done or to amend those mistakes that have left us with bad experiences. Ultimately, we all want to start over.

1. New Year?

The time of the new year begins with the wave left by the celebration of Christmas, so you still feel the atmosphere of celebration. Many people are on vacation and are relatively relaxed. The atmosphere is full of positive thoughts. This has an impact on the way we perceive reality and our senses are at their limit. All this makes us feel faced with a new challenge. Many of us are out of the routine at this time, which creates a willingness to do things better than before.

However, it's appropriate to evaluate Where does our motivation come from? How influenced are we by the atmosphere? How authentic are our good intentions? The problem of making very ambitious plans at this time is precisely that they lie in this encouraging environment. As followers of Christ, our motivation must focus on Him, not emotions. Although the new year is a beautiful time, we can set the trap of falling into "false enthusiasm" which leads us to a series of good intentions that don't go beyond that. In reality, things don't change completely from one year to another; in fact, sometimes the picture is not as encouraging as our senses perceive it to be. If not, think of January, back to school, work, activities, debts to pay, etc. Many people leave their New Year's resolutions at their home table on the first day of work. Many students leave their desire to do things better under the bed when school starts. Ask: Has that happened to you? If the answer is no, surely the motivation comes from elsewhere, but it's not emotional. But if your answer is yes, it may be good to consider the source of motivation.

2. Motivation comes from God

As Christians, the source of all enthusiasm and joy must come from God. Our happiness rests in Him. Nehemiah 8:10 says, *"the joy of the Lord is your strength."* First, the New Year's resolutions and our goals



must be identified with God's plan. This plan has no other interest than our holiness. It follows righteousness, faith, hope, happiness and love. Although the time of the new year is one of great motivation, it usually disappears since it's temporary. But, the motivation that comes from God remains, because it's a response to the love of God that accompanies us all year long.

When we focus our attention on God, we have a greater chance of meeting our goals. Thinking about God generates commitment because we want to respond to his love, but above all, to the trust that He places in us. It's very good that we think about goals and purposes to start the year, but it's not the new year itself that is the source of our motivation.

Mainly we have to know that obedience is a safe vehicle for traveling in God's way. When we obey, we please God. 1 Peter 1:13-14 tells us that we must prepare for the immediate future. Prepare our understanding, be attentive to what we do, and trust in the grace of Jesus Christ. Also, we must change our lives so that we leave behind what is not appropriate. Peter not only refers to our New Year's resolutions, it's advice to take into account every day of the year and make decisions that help us grow like Christ.

3. New Opportunity

Every beginning brings new expectations. The emotional impulses that are reflected during this time of the year are not all bad. You can always take advantage of that enthusiasm and direct it towards a good goal. The problem is not in the beginning of a new year, but in the genuineness of our intentions. However, we have a good reason to make new plans. That reason is that God has never left us. Another year has passed and we've seen the grace of God. He has not stopped being by our side. Maybe we had bad experiences, or maybe we had to leave some things, people, or places. But God is still with you (1 Samuel 7:12). That motivates us to remain in Him, because although many things are gone and the year with them, God has remained. It's an excellent opportunity to renew the road, to amend the course and if we've fallen behind on the road, it's time to catch up and follow the steps of Jesus.

It's time to stop and consider our weaknesses and put them in the hands of God. It's time to renew our commitment. There's no better way to start the year than by changing one's attitudes and the way of doing things. It's time to move towards a life of holiness. And if for that we have to take other paths, we must do it. It's not good to always remain in the same failure. Albert Einstein said that if we want to have different results, we have to do things differently. As Christians, we have the opportunity to live differently every day. Let's take this time to renew ... not because it's a new year and things are automatically new, but because there's a possibility that they are new in Him.

Peter challenges the church to live in holiness in every way of life (1 Peter 1:15). The only way to do it is to have the infilling of the Holy Spirit. God is holy and calls his children to be holy. Ask: Have you thought about setting yourself the goal for this year of seeking the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Paul tells the Thessalonians that God, who calls us to holiness, is faithful and will fulfill this in us (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). Give your life, your dreams, your plans and desires to Him. Consecrate yourself to him in a genuine way.

This renewal must be persistent and prolonged. The invitation is that the purposes and good intentions at the beginning of this year don't rely upon emotion, but in Him who makes it possible for us to start and finish another year well. You may have dreams that you want to fulfill this year: Finish your studies, start a new project, find your call to serve, perhaps start a ministry among people in need, etc. What better way to start than to recognize that your strength for this year is not because a new year begins, but because you have the guarantee that God will be with you. He is faithful.

Review/Apply: Read the questions aloud to the class and discuss them together.

1. What plans do you have for the coming year?
2. Which plans require an effort beyond your strength?
3. What will you do to achieve your goals?
4. How can you improve your relationship with God this coming year?
5. What will you do to achieve it?

Challenge: Say to your class: If there's a goal that you didn't meet and it cost you a broken friendship or a lost job, etc., think now about what you can do to keep it from happening again. Make a list of things in your life that you want to leave behind and a list of goals for the new year. Pray, asking God to help you meet those goals.



