Living in Covenant

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This quarter will teach how Jesus fulfilled the Law—in the sense that it was given full meaning. Jesus emphasized the deep, underlying messages of the Gospel, and this same message is continued through the apostle Paul and the writer of the book of Hebrews. Relationships of faith empower us to live the covenant and spread the Gospel message.

Unit I, “A Fulfilled Covenant,” contains four lessons that reveal a new sign of the covenant for Jewish and Gentile believers, as recorded in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, Hebrews, and Colossians. During the celebration of the Passover, Jesus explained to the disciples that He would initiate a new covenant through His death. Paul explains that the sign of the covenant is now a relationship of the heart between God and God’s people, not circumcision.

Unit II, “A Heartfelt Covenant,” has five lessons and gives new meaning and purpose to the Law. According to Matthew, Jesus began teaching the Law in a way that gave life to the hearer and doer. Unlike other teachers of the Law, Jesus preached the transforming righteousness of the kingdom. Jesus challenged the mere external observance of God’s law without internal transformation.

Unit III, “Covenant: A Personal Perspective,” has four lessons. It focuses on personal relationships between people as recorded in the books of 1 Samuel, Ruth, and Ephesians. Ultimately, those relationships pave the way for the Messiah. After Christ established the New Testament church, relationships between people have been based on relationship with Christ Jesus. These relationships continue the work of Christ Jesus by spreading the Gospel message.
God’s New Covenant
Jeremiah 31:31-34

I will write my law on their hearts and minds.
JESUS INSTITUTES THE NEW COVENANT

Adult/Youth

**ADULT/YOUTH TOPIC:** Making Promises

**Youth Topic:** Better Promises

Children

**General Lesson Title:** Jesus Makes a New Promise

**Children’s Topic:** Celebrate the New Promise

Devotional Reading Jeremiah 31:31-34

**Adult/Youth**

**Background Scripture:** Mark 14:12-31; Hebrews 8 Print

** Passage:** Mark 14:17-24; Hebrews 8:6-7, 10-12

**Key Verse:** Hebrews 8:6

**Adult/Youth**

**Background Scripture:** Mark 14:12-31; Hebrews 8 Print

** Passage:** Mark 14:17-24; Hebrews 8:6-7, 10-12

**Key Verse:** Hebrews 8:10

**Children**

**Background Scripture:** Mark 14:12-31; Hebrews 8 Print

** Passage:** Mark 14:17-24; Hebrews 8:6-7, 10-12

**Key Verse:** Hebrews 8:10

Mark 14:17-24; Hebrews 8:6-7, 10-12—KJV

17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. 18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. 19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? 20 And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

21 Th e Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks,

Mark 14:17-24; Hebrews 8:6-7, 10-12—NIV

17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.”

19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?”

20 “It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me.

21 “Th e Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who
betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” 22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.” 23 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He gave it to them: and they all drank of it. 24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. 24 “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.
10 “This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 11 “No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: People often make promises to one another in seeking lasting, committed relationships. How can one be assured that a relationship will last? In the books of Mark and Hebrews, Jesus is affirmed as the one through whom God’s new everlasting covenant is fulfilled.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:

1. Tell how Jesus is the initiator of the new covenant predicted by the prophets and illustrated in the Lord’s Supper.
2. Appreciate their standing and relationship with Christ because of the new covenant.
3. Approach the Lord’s Supper with greater reverence and awe for the Christ of the new covenant.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE betrayed can be read in numerous ways. EMPHASIZED Was He threatening, warning, bluntly stating a

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH — The words of institution, “This is my body” fact, lamenting, — The earliest account of the institution of the and “This is my blood,” echo the words of the Last Supper is found in 1 Corinthians 11:23- Passover liturgy: “This is the bread of affliction 26. Other accounts are found in Matthew which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.” 26:26-30 and Luke 22:14-23. — The writer of Hebrews announces in 8:1-2 that — Jesus’ prediction that one of the disciples would his “main point” is Jesus as the High Priest
of the heavenly sanctuary. This is the “more excellent ministry” that authorizes Jesus to mediate the “better covenant” that the writer describes (verse 6).

—The declaration of Christ’s more excellent ministry (verse 6) is in direct contrast to verse 4: “Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all” (NASB).

—The new covenant is explained as that foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34. This passage is quoted in Hebrews 8:7-13, the longest quotation from the Old Testament in the New.

Teachers of CHILDREN

—The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were celebrated during the week that Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples.

—Passover is the observance of God’s freeing the Israelites from Egypt.

—The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a seven-day celebration that commemorates the Israelites’ flight from Egypt.

—Jesus establishes a new covenant from God that lives inside of us.

—As Jesus eats His last meal with His disciples, He announces that one of the disciples will betray Him.

—Jesus gives thanks for the bread, representing His broken body—and the cup, representing His shed blood.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The gospel of Mark was probably written approximately AD 55–59 and is likely one of the first New Testament books written. Whereas Matthew was written with a primarily Jewish audience in mind, Mark primarily targeted Gentile Roman believers. Mark wanted the people to know that Jesus Christ was the servant of the Lord and the Savior of the world. Knowing this would help to strengthen their faith, even though they faced severe persecution. Although the gospel of Mark does not name its author, it is unanimously concluded by the early church fathers that Mark was the writer. According to 1 Peter 5:13, Mark was an associate of the apostle Peter’s. He received from Peter firsthand information regarding the events and teachings of Jesus, and Mark preserved the information in written form (gotquestions.org).

The book of Hebrews must have been written prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, because there is no mention of the Temple’s destruction and the ending of the Jewish sacrificial system. In addition, the author consistently uses the Greek present tense when speaking about the Temple (biblia.com).

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

It is generally agreed that Mark is the John Mark of the New Testament, mentioned in Acts 12:12. His mother was a wealthy and prominent Christian in the Jerusalem church, and the church possibly met in her home. Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey but not on the second, because of a strong disagreement between the two men about Mark (see Acts 15:37-38). However, near the end of Paul’s life, he called for Mark to be with him (see 2 Timothy 4:11). Although it is unclear regarding the authorship of the book of Hebrews, there are some clear indications regarding the intended audience for the writing. The original audience was Jewish. Hebrews 1:1 (NIV) states, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the
prophets at many times and in various ways.” The original audience of Hebrews was spiritually immature, based on the description in Hebrews 5:12 (NIV): “Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again.”

A history of suffering is another characteristic of the book of Hebrews: “Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering... So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded” (Hebrews 10:32, 35, NIV).

(thirdmill.org)

PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

Son of Man: The term Jesus preferred to use in referring to Himself. This term is also unique to Mark’s gospel.

Twelve Disciples: the twelve men Jesus chose to partner with Him and be trained to carry on the work of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON

Covenant (Mark 14:24)—Greek: diathéke (death-ay’-kay): “testament” (KJV); will; covenant.

Cup (Mark 14:23)—Greek: potérion (pot-ay’ree-on): a drinking cup; the contents of the cup; fig: the portion which God allots.

Man (Mark 14:21)—Greek: anthrópos (anth’ro-pos): a man; one of the human race.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Parting Thoughts and Actions

Ministry (Hebrews 8:6)—Greek: leitourgia (litoorg-ee’-ah): a service; a ministry; a charitable gift. Saddened (Mark 14:19)—Greek: lupeó (loopeh’-o): pained; grieved; vexed; “sorrowful” (KJV). Said (Mark 14:18)—Greek: legó (leg’-o): (a) say; spoken; I meant, mentioned, told; (b) I called, named, especially in the pass.; (c) I told, commanded.

Take (Mark 14:22)—Greek: lambanó (lamb-an’-o): to receive, get, take, lay hold of.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON

I. Introduction

A. Parting Thoughts and Actions

B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

A. Betrayal Prediction (Mark 14:17-21)

B. The Last Supper (Mark 14:22-24)

C. A Superior Covenant (Hebrews 8:6-7)

D. Forgiveness and Removal of Sin (Hebrews 8:10-12)
III. Concluding Reflection

concerning the one who would betray Him (see 14:18). As the night gradually unfolded, the disciples were worried about Jesus’ words.

Mark 14 opens with preparation for the meal of the evening and the plot to arrest Jesus (see 14:1). The description of this meal and the imagery presented deeply illustrates the deliverance of the Israelites from captivity (see Exodus 12:21-28). This meal also signifies a new life—based on Christ’s death and resurrection—which would be available to all who would believe in Him. The preparation and setting for this meal are detailed in Mark 4:12-16, where the disciples had gone out to locate and prepare the venue for the meal as instructed by Jesus. The evening had come, and Jesus arrived with His disciples to the venue (see 14:17). This was immediately followed by the feast proper and Jesus’ mysterious words (see 14:19). Jesus then gave clues as to the identity of the betrayer: “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me” (see 14:20).

Written around AD 30, chapter 14 is the longest chapter in Mark’s gospel, with seventy-two verses. It contains the plot to kill Jesus, Jesus’ anointing by a woman, the Last Supper, His predictions of His betrayal, and Peter’s denials of Him.

B. Biblical Background

During the course of the meal, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples (see 14:22). He also took the cup (which had also been blessed) and gave it to His disciples. Receiving the blessed bread and wine, the instructions and words that came with them possibly could have left the disciples wondering what might happen next, because Jesus said, “I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (see 14:23-25). Here, Jesus instituted Holy Communion, which is still widely practiced in Christianity today.

God’s Redemption and Atonement

Hebrews can be described as a connector of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament covenant is quite different from that of the New, yet many Christians understand God in terms of Old Testament Law rather than through the fuller revelation of New Testament grace. The book of Hebrews explains how Jesus became the mediator and guarantor of a new and better covenant.

In verse 6 of our text, we see a warning against walking away from the truth of God’s Word and becoming reprobate. When there is a falling away, it becomes almost impossible to come to faith, and this subjects Christ to shame. Verse 7 compares Jesus and the priest Melchizedek. Abraham paid honor to Melchizedek, paying tithes to him and bringing the Levitical priesthood blessing upon Abraham. In the same way, Jesus was also a priest like Melchizedek—as neither of them was from the tribe of Levi. A change in lineage also brought about a change in law. Jesus had proven His priesthood through
showing the world His indestructible life through His death and resurrection.

The first covenant was a good beginning but was ultimately inadequate. The new covenant is based on God’s power and not on man’s ability. The new covenant is also based on better promises and is guaranteed by a better high priest, Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 8:6). When a covenant was made, it was sealed by the blood of many bulls (see Exodus 24:38). In the same fashion, blood was a necessity to solidify and seal the new covenant that God had made with humanity. Jesus did it by shedding His blood on the Cross, thus establishing the promise. Here, Jesus once more fulfills His promise made to the disciples in Mark 14. Jesus is the guarantor of the new covenant, which is far better than anything the children of Israel experienced in the Old Testament. This covenant promise is available to anyone who believes in the saving grace of God through Christ.

EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. Betrayal Prediction
(Mark 14:17-21)

And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

The atmosphere must have been extremely tense in the room when Jesus dropped the bombshell revelation that somebody within their own tightly knit group would be the very one to disloyally betray His leader and Lord. Obviously, Jesus was not seeking to win any popularity contests when He made this startling statement, because He minced no words and figuratively went for the jugular. When we read such a starkly worded statement, two things come to the humanly thinking mind: First, could not Jesus have used a bit more verbal tact in this situation? Surely, He could have at least taken the disciple aside to speak to him privately rather than exposing the brother in front of the whole group. But, Jesus had no time to waste and verbalized the truth so that prophecy might be fulfilled (see Zechariah 11:12-13). A second reaction to Jesus’ bold and troubling words might be, “What a shame! And how could someone supposedly so close to Jesus dare betray Him to the Roman authorities who wanted to kill Him?” Such a deed seems almost too terrible to conceive, until we start to ask ourselves if there have been times when we have betrayed Jesus through choosing money over Jesus by refusing to tithe. Have we ever denied Jesus by being outwardly committed to Jesus but inwardly rebellious and unbelieving? Have we ever stood strong for the things of the world but shrunk back and rejected the love of God? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then we too have in some ways also betrayed the Savior.
When the disciples heard that one of them would betray Jesus, they were visibly disappointed. But instead of investigating each other, they began to quiz Jesus and to ask Him about themselves in an effort to distance themselves from the accusation rather than to make arrangements for Jesus’ safety. It is important for everyone to examine themselves to see what lies within the heart. Psalm 139:23 (NIV) aligns with this concept: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.” Socrates further illuminated this concept when he declared, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”

It takes more than a casual tour of the heart to discover the roots of our unrighteousness. All sin has one root that is based on selfishness. But when we commit one sin, it is easier for others to follow.

Sins are gregarious, as it were; they ‘hunt in couples.’ . . . The roots of all sin are in each. Men may think that they are protected from certain forms of sin by temperament, but identity of nature is deeper than varieties of temperament. The greatest sins are committed by yielding to very common motives. Love of money is not a rare feeling, but it led Judas to betray Jesus. Anger is thought to be scarcely a sin at all, but it often moves an arm to murder. Temptations to each sin are round us all. We walk in a tainted atmosphere. There is progress in evil. No man reaches the extreme of depravity at a bound. Judas’s treachery was of slow growth. So still there is the constant operation and pressure of forces and tendencies drawing us away from Jesus Christ. We, every one of us, know that, if we allowed our nature to have its way, we should leave Him and ‘make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.’ The forms in which we might do it might vary, but do it we should.”

The bowl to which Jesus referred (verse 20) was a common bowl used by everyone at the dinner. The purpose of Jesus’ making the announcement revealing the betrayer was not necessarily to identify one specific person, because many of the disciples had dipped into the dish.

Jesus acknowledged that His own death had been predicted and prophesied hundreds of years prior to His birth. Such is the power of God’s prescribed plan put into place prior to the foundation of the world. Although the actions of Judas were known before he committed them, this does not mean that he had no choice in the matter. Just because a parent knows a child will disobey a rule even before the choice is manifested does not mean that the parent made the child choose to do wrong. Likewise, the action by Judas came from an impure heart and selfish motives. Since this choice was made by Judas independently and without divine coercion, for this reason Judas bears full guilt and is liable for full punishment for his choice.

The gravity of this scenario and the consequences for his actions are driven home by Jesus’ statement that it would be better to have never been born than to play
such a crucial part in bringing the Savior to the Cross. It would be “better not to have lived at all than to have lived and died ill. Existence is no blessing, but a curse, to him who consciously and willfully defeats the purpose of his existence” (*The Gospel of Mark*, John Schultz, p. 161).

B. The Last Supper  
(Mark 14:22-24)

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

These are the words that are typically spoken in churches throughout the world at the sacred moment of Holy Communion. The physical symbol of the broken bread was to be a forever reminder regarding the tortured body of Jesus. When we eat the bread, we are figuratively ingesting the body of Christ. This simple yet powerful act serves to remind us of God’s portable presence that has become a part of us and which we carry everywhere we go. This is an intimate statement of oneness that is in some ways comparable to the act of physical oneness between a husband and a wife. This ceremonial act of Holy Communion took place at the close of the Paschal supper while they were still reclined at the table. Most likely, the bread would have been unleavened bread. The central point of the experience is the spiritual oneness involved along with our remembering Jesus’ supreme sacrifice. Like the bread in verse 22, the cup filled with wine represented the blood of Jesus (verse 23). In today’s times, when we think of someone being a part of our family, we speak of being related to each other by blood. This is a similar family-oriented mindset and spirit of being related by blood that is represented by the presence of the cup. Participation in communion suggests that we and Jesus are blood relatives.

Frequent mention is made of his precious blood as the price of our redemption. How comfortable is this to poor repenting sinners, that the blood of Christ is shed for many! If for many, why not for me? It was a sign of the conveyance of the benefits purchased for us by his death. Apply the doctrine of Christ crucified to yourselves; let it be meat and drink to your souls, strengthening and refreshing your spiritual life. It was to be an earnest and foretaste of the happiness of heaven, and thereby to put us out of taste for the pleasures and delights of sense. (*The Miniature Commentary; Being Short Comments on Every Chapter of The Holy Bible: Matthew to Revelation*, p. 91).

C. A Superior Covenant  
(Hebrews 8:6-7)

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.
Christ is the mediator of the new covenant by virtue of His substitutionary death on the Cross. The bottom line in the message conveyed by verse 6 is that the new covenant is better than the old covenant. The covenant was a solemn agreement between an offended God and the offending sinners. God promised pardon and life to those who fulfilled the conditions of the covenant, and they in turn would receive the benefits of the covenant. These benefits were “more spiritual, clear, comprehensive, and universal than those of the Mosaical covenant” (A Biblical and Theological Dictionary, Richard Watson, p. 832). Some of the benefits of the new covenant include forgiveness, justification by faith, the Holy Spirit, eternal life, and power over the enemy and over our flesh.

The first covenant was created and intended for the time and the people that it served. If the old covenant had been adequate, there would not have been a need for a new one. Since the old covenant was unable to adequately provide the many benefits previously mentioned, there had to be an update, a reboot—a new and improved version. This updated version was not free or cheap but came at a very high cost. The price paid for the new covenant was Christ’s death on a cross. Since such a high price was paid for the new covenant, we dare not take it lightly but should demonstrate our appreciation by obedience to its mandates and adherence to its dictates.

D. Forgiveness and Removal of Sin (Hebrews 8:10-12)

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Some covenants focus on the exterior elements of physical, tangible matter. But the new covenant focused on the inner matters of the heart. “The grand uniqueness of the Christian system is, that it regulates the conscience and the principles of the soul rather than external matters. It prescribes few external rites, and those are exceedingly simple, and are merely the proper expressions of the pious feelings supposed to be in the heart; and all attempts either to increase the number of these rites, or to make them imposing by their gorgeousness, have done just so much to mar the simplicity of the gospel, and to corrupt religion” (Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/hebrews/8.htm). This new living law contained new living power to overcome the external forces of hindrance. This new law was not written on tablets of stone but on the tablet of the heart.

Perhaps the chief benefit of the new covenant is the privilege of knowing God. Following the Crucifixion, the veil of the Temple was torn, symbolically announcing
the end of the stark and mysterious separation between God and humanity. Now we are able to come boldly before the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in times of need (see Hebrews 4:16). To know God is to become acquainted with God. To become acquainted with God is to learn God’s character, tendencies, and will. But, “It does not mean that all persons, in all lands, would then know the Lord—though the time will come when that will be true; but the expression is to be limited by the point under discussion. That point is not that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole world, but that all who are interested in the new dispensation will have a much more full and clear knowledge of God than was possessed under the old. . . . Christians have a much more perfect knowledge of God and of his government than could have been learned merely from the revelations of the Old Testament” (Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/hebrews/8.htm).

Here, we see highlighted another great benefit of the new covenant: forgiveness. There are many different kinds of potential sins that can be committed in this life. All of them are instances of falling short of God’s glory. Some sins are by commission, and others are by omission. But through the new covenant, God has the power to wipe our slate clean of sins of the past, present, and future. This is possible through the mercy of God at work in the lives of God’s people and even with those who are not yet officially God’s people.

Since both covenants could not coexist simultaneously, one of the covenants (the old) had to decrease and the other covenant (the new) had to increase. In Matthew 5:17 (NIV), Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” The abolition of the Law would have been catastrophic because it serves as a foundation of the new covenant. The new covenant is a clarification of the old covenant. Jesus addressed this concept and figuratively illustrated this in Matthew 9:16-17 (NIV) when He declared, “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Jesus is the great initiator of the new covenant. We are called to remember His work to make the new covenant possible every time we partake of the Lord’s Supper. This revelation alone should be enough to help us to approach the Lord’s Supper with a greater sense of respect and appreciation for the sacrifice of Christ. The old covenant was like a tutor

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
(May 27–June 2, 2019)

Jesus Institutes the New Covenant

(May 27–June 2, 2019)

Jesus Institutes the New Covenant
to help get us started and move toward greater things in the life of the Spirit. We stand in confident relationship with God made possible through Christ. May we forever resist the temptation to allow anyone or anything to damage our new covenant with God.

MONDAY, May 27: “The Original Passover Celebration” (Deuteronomy 16:1-8)
TUESDAY, May 28: “Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem” (Mark 11:1-10) WEDNESDAY, May 29: “Preparation for the Passover Meal” (Mark 14:12-16)
THURSDAY, May 30: “The Heart-centered New Covenant” (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
SATURDAY, June 1: “Clean Feet, Clean Hearts” (John 13:2b-7)
SUNDAY, June 2: “Jesus Institutes the New Covenant” (Mark 14:17-24; Hebrews 8:6-7, 10-12)

**PRAYER**

Dear God, thank You that through the new covenant we have greater access to You. Thank You for loving us enough to move us from having a “slave” relationship to the point of calling us “friend.” In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Summer Quarter 2019**

**Unit I: A Fulfilled Covenant**
**Children’s Unit: A Fulfilled Promise**

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1. *MacLaren’s Commentary: Expositions of Holy Scripture*, biblehub.com

**June 9, 2019 Lesson**

**JESUS SEALS THE NEW COVENANT**

**ADULT/YOUTH**
**ADULT/YOUNG ADULT TOPIC:** Restored Relationships
**YOUTH TOPIC:** Restoring Relationships

**CHILDREN**
**GENERAL LESSON TITLE:** Jesus Seals the New Promise
**CHILDREN’S TOPIC:** A Restored Relationship

**DEVOTIONAL READING**
Psalm 22:1-8, 21b-28

6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.  
7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.  
8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.  
9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?  
10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.  
11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.  
12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?  
13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.  
14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why? What evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.  
15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released 15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.  
25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.  
26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, The King Of The Jews. ...  
33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.  
34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?  
35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.  
36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.  
37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.  
38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.
And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.'

Barabbas to them. He had Jesus fl ogged, and handed him over to be crucifi ed.

It was nine in the morning when they crucifi ed him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ (which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’).

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, ‘Listen, he’s calling Elijah.’

Someone ran, fi lled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff , and off ered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two.

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: All personal relationships encounter problems that result in division and strife. Who can heal the breaches and restore harmony? Mark describes how Jesus’ crucifi xion forges a new covenant and reconciles God and humankind.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:

1. Summarize Mark’s account of the crucifi xion of Jesus.
2. Refl ect on the amazing price Jesus paid to establish a new covenant between God and humankind.
3. Pray for a restored relationship with God in light of the reconciliation that Jesus provides.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE

In John 19:1-15, he slyly manipulates the chief Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH priests into confessing that Caesar is their king—Diff erent aspects of Pilate’s character are seen in (see also John 19:21-22). the various Gospels. In Mark, he seems to be a —Barabbas means “son of the father.” Is there a note of irony that this is the name of the man released instead of Jesus, “the Son of God” (Mark 1:1)?

—Jesus’ “cry of dereliction” (Mark 15:34) is a quotation (in Aramaic) of Psalm 22:1. This cry is found only here and in Matthew 27:46. Psalm 22 seems to foreshadow the Crucifixion in several details.

—The crowd misinterpreted Jesus’ cry as a call for Elijah to come to His aid (verses 35-36). Jewish piety expected Elijah to appear at Passover time to herald the coming of God’s kingdom. Even today, a cup of wine is prepared for Elijah at the Passover table.

note of irony that this is the name of the man released instead of Jesus, “the Son of God” (Mark 1:1)?

39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”
—The “curtain of the temple” (verse 38) was a partition separating the holy place from the Holy of Holies. Its tearing suggests that Jesus’ death opens the way for more intimate divinehuman relationship.

—Although God (1:11) and demons (1:24; 5:7) have previously acknowledged Jesus’ divine identity in Mark, the centurion’s confession that Jesus is God’s Son (15:39) is the first time a human character comes to this realization (see 4:41).

**Teachers of CHILDREN**

—According to Mark 15:6, it was a custom during the time of the Feast to release a prisoner that was requested by the people.
—Crucifixion was punishment from the Roman government for rebellion.
—Jesus was not guilty of a crime under Roman law.
—Pilate did not want to execute Jesus, but the religious leaders did.
—Jesus was crucified between two thieves at the third hour.
—After Jesus cried out and breathed His last breath, “the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (verse 38, NIV).

**THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON**

The writing of the gospel of Mark is attributed to John Mark and the apostle Peter. This text is believed to have been written in Rome in AD 50, following the persecutions of the apostles Peter, James, and Paul by Nero, who was against the early church. The gospel of Mark is believed to have been the first of the Gospel books to have been written, giving the narratives about Jesus Christ. The gospel of Mark was originally known as *kata markon*, which means “according to Mark” during the early days of the church (bible.org). Other Gospel books include Matthew, Luke, and the gospel of John.

**THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON**

There is an agreement among the church fathers that Mark wrote his gospel in the city of Rome and that it was originally intended for the church in Rome. Mark is said to have been in Babylon alongside the apostle Peter on his missionary journey. According to Papias, the Hierapolis bishop, in his historical writings he asserts that John Mark was the interpreter of Peter. Peter is therefore the eyewitness of Mark’s accounts, and Mark compiles these memoirs after Peter’s death. The population in the ancient Rome spoke predominantly Latin, as it was the official language, but Greek was also one of the languages spoken by the Gentiles in Rome. The Roman culture is prevalent in this text, as we see frequent use of Latin words such as “Praetorium” (Mark 15:16) and “centurion” (Mark 15:39).

The gospel was written after the Jewish revolt and the fall of the Temple of Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman Empire in AD 70 (see Mark 13). This book gives the accounts of the early church and the persecutions that the Gentile believers were going through at the hands of Roman rulers such as Nero for following Jesus Christ and giving testimonies of His messianic work (see Mark 13:9-13). Mark 15 gives the chronological events of the trial of
Jesus before Pilate, who ruled Palestine as a praetorian representative of the Roman Empire and was responsible for the verdict against and crucifixion of Christ. Mark tells of his up-close personal experience concerning the life of Jesus Christ as illustrated in Mark 14:51-52, where he becomes known as the young man who fled naked at the Garden of Gethsemane after Jesus was arrested.

The gospel also shows the suffering of the early church and the persecution of the apostles under the rule of Nero of Rome. This is clearly depicted in the Anti-Marcionite Prologue by Irenaeus, who gives the accounts of persecutions of Christians for their faith in Christ (bible.org). The cultural setting also depicts the Jewish community through the illustrations of some common elements that are attributed to Jewish worship practices (see Mark 14:12; 15:42).

**PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON**

**Jesus Christ:** Most of the events in the gospel of Mark revolve around the character, life, mission, betrayal, and persecution of Christ.

**Pontius Pilate:** He was a Roman governor of Judea commissioned by the Roman Emperor Tiberius.

Pilate was responsible for the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He declared Christ as innocent, but he bowed to the pressure of the crowd and authorized Jesus to be flogged and crucified.

**KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. A Gateway to Suffering**

As seen in our previous lesson, chapter 14 of the book of Mark highlights events before the death of Christ, beginning from the Lord’s Supper and leading up to the events in Gethsemane. *Gethsemane* means “oil press,” and olive oil symbolizes the Holy...
Spirit. This garden was filled with olive trees and was on a slope referred to as the Mount of Olives. It should be noted that Jesus had frequently visited this spot with His disciples whenever He wanted to get away from the crowds and spend time in prayer (see John 18:1-2; Matthew 26:34).

Mark 15 was written in AD 30 and contains forty-seven verses which continue Jesus’ trials before Pontius Pilate and then His crucifixion and death. In Mark 15, Jesus is brought before the authorities of Rome, where He is sentenced to death by crucifixion. This explanation of Jesus’ final day is structured carefully according to Roman customs of keeping time in three-hour intervals. Here in Mark 15, we see four critical things happen in the life of Jesus. Here, He was brought to Pilate by the Jews; the soldiers mocked Him; He was crucified, died, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. This chapter brings to light the hardest part of Jesus’ life and all the suffering that He was put through and endured.

B. Biblical Background

In Mark 14:32-50, during the Lord’s Supper, we see how Jesus showed a great deal of love to His disciples. The symbolism of the Communion received in the upper room was a reminder of His sacrifice and the restoration and strengthening of the relationship with Christ. All was now accomplished in Him, except dying on the Cross. Through the giving of the cup, Jesus laid the foundation of the new covenant in His blood. When He extended the cup and the disciples received it, they symbolically partook in His death and He announced that this was the seal of the new covenant which was well-known to the Jews according to Jeremiah (in Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The death of Jesus was necessary for this new covenant to be established. The breaking of bread and drinking from the cup also represented the dissolution of the bonds of earthly association between Jesus and His disciples. He no longer would drink of the fruit of the vine until the renewal of this association with them in the kingdom of God, for He would be with them again when the kingdom would be established.

Instead of Jesus’ death’s being the end of His relationship and bond with the disciples, Jesus actually strengthened the relationship. The death of Jesus was a part of God’s plan. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He would go before the disciples to Galilee, where this relationship would move to the next level. Death was just a tool that was used to accomplish God’s perfect will.

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE
The death of Jesus was a very necessary step in God’s plan for humanity to be reconciled to God. The ultimate goal was to restore the relationship between God and people through the sacrificial atonement of Jesus. The relationship between God and humanity was so important that Jesus had to die for reconciliation to occur. Jesus decided to obey God’s will and die a sacrificial death for the benefit of humanity (see Mark 14:34-36). It was not Jesus’ desire to die, as was made evident by Jesus’ prayer to “let this cup pass from me.” It is good that Jesus arrived at the place of “nevertheless, not my will but Thy will be done.” It is at this place of peace and trust that we become most usable by God and most beneficial to God’s kingdom.

A. An Uneven Exchange
(Mark 15:6-11)

Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

The Passover was celebrated by the Jews in memory of their deliverance from Egypt. Part of the tradition was to release a prisoner as a part of the feast. This custom may have originated with the Jews and possibly continued through the Roman governors who were also accustomed to periodically allowing amnesty for convicted criminals. The rules for the prisoner release do not seem to have been hard and fast, with some liberal parameters for personal discretion of governmental leadership.

According to Luke 23:19, Barabbas (verse 7) was a rebel and a robber, but Mark alone records the fact that his fellow insurgents were also imprisoned with him. In addition to insurgency, he seems to have also been charged with murder. Pilate appears to have thought that by offering to release someone so notorious and dangerous as Barabbas as a choice instead of Jesus, they would surely opt for Jesus, if for no other reason than the safety of the community. But Pilate miscalculated the level of distaste and pure hatred that the Pharisees, chief priests, and scribes had toward Jesus. The word Barabbas, better written “Bar-Abbas,” means “son of father.”

The tone and words used by Pilate (verse 9) suggest a serious case of faulty leadership, in that he placed something as serious as the decision of a man’s life or death into the hands of a mob. Surely, Pilate abdicated his responsibility as a decision maker and left it up to the crowd to choose. According to the
“Envy was the low passion that influenced the chief priests. They saw that Jesus was gaining a great and increasing influence over the people by the sublime beauty of his character, by the fame of his miracles, and the constraining power of his words. And hence they concluded that, unless he was arrested in his course, and put out of the way, their own influence would soon be gone. The whole world was going after him. Therefore, he must be destroyed.”

Pilate’s wife had sent him a message about her dream concerning Jesus. Her stark and cryptic warning is recorded in Matthew 27:19b (NIV): “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.” Perhaps this occurrence intensified his focus and feeling, but it did not seem to alter the pronouncement of crucifixion. After the chief priests incited the people with lies and insinuations, they chose Barabbas.

**B. Pilate’s Peer Pressure**

(Mark 15:12-15)

And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

Not only did Pilate relinquish responsibility to choose whom to release (verse 12), but he also allowed the crowd to dictate the sentence for Jesus. This question of what to do with Jesus was not only before the crowd of Jesus’ day, but it is also for the people of today. Jesus can be selected or rejected, but one thing that cannot be done is to ignore Jesus. Many seek to choose what they think is a safe option of ignoring Jesus, but we are compelled in life to make a choice. Revelation 3:15-16 (NIV) records, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” Neutrality is not a viable option. Interestingly, those who are “all the way wrong” are closer to finding the right path than those who are in the middle. Even in church, there are those who are lost in the house. They know how to do church well, but they do not know how to do discipleship well.

Joshua 24:15 reads, “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” It is important to actively choose God, because failing to decide anything effectively decides against God. Of all the forms of capital punishment, crucifixion (verse 13) stands as one of the cruelest forms of death known to man. The Matthew Henry Concise Commentary notes, “The thought that no one ever was so shamefully treated, as the only perfectly wise, holy, and excellent Person that ever appeared on earth, leads the serious mind to strong views of man’s wickedness and enmity to
God.” It is difficult to grasp why someone so holy, so innocent, and so lowly had to be subjected to such a horrible form of death. The pre-Crucifixion scourging of Jesus was in itself horrendous. The tremendous loss of blood, the deeply damaged flesh, and the sheer exhaustion of the process was enough to kill any man. But Jesus endured the pain and the shame because He was committed to fulfill the purpose for which He had come to earth: the salvation and redemption of the world. What an ironic contrast—that we who deserve death are given eternal life through the death and substitutionary atonement of Jesus.

Pilate’s acute lack of leadership was in full bloom when he released Barabbas and handed over Jesus to the murderous mob (verse 15). The trial of Jesus, the sentencing of Jesus, the scourging of Jesus, and the crucifixion of Jesus were all illegal and unwarranted. However, unbeknownst to Pilate and the mob, they were simply cooperating with the powerful plan of God that had been prophesied many years before in Isaiah 53:5—“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

C. The Death of Jesus
(Mark 15:25-26, 33-37)
And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, The King Of The Jews. . . . And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a spunge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

Jesus was twice called the “King of the Jews”: once at birth by the wise men (see Matthew 2:2), and again at His trial in Mark 15:2. All four Gospels acknowledge that Pilate ordered this title to be inscribed on a sign and placed above the head of Jesus on the cross (see Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:9; Luke 23:38; John 19:3). But only non-Jews used this title to refer to Jesus which, highlighting John 1:11 (NKJV), reads, “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” The title “King of the Jews” carries political implications, because He was chosen to lead the people. It also has messianic ramifications, because Jesus was of the lineage of David to serve as the deliverer of the Jewish people.

Jesus was completely divine and completely human. Jesus was the Word that existed from the beginning but became flesh. In His humanity, Jesus questioned God’s location and God’s assistance during this extreme time of need. One possibility for the statement in verse 35 is that the words of Jesus were simply misunderstood and misinterpreted. But considering the jocular atmosphere of mockery that existed at the scene of the Cross, the reference to Elijah could have been a sarcastic gesture of disregard for Jesus’ pain. Jesus called upon
Eli, God, who was alive and could have intervened to rectify the situation, unlike Elias—who was dead and could have done nothing.

Amazingly, despite all the physical, mental, and emotional trauma that Jesus had experienced at the end of His life, He was still able to muster enough strength and energy to utter a loud cry. This isolated incident is a testament to the sheer will of Jesus to press past the pain in order to broadcast the truth.

D. The Veil Is Torn

(Mark 15:38-39)

And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

At the moment of Jesus’ death, a thick cloud of darkness descended from noon until three in the afternoon. Then, as now, this was a very unusual occurrence. Even a total eclipse of the sun does not last nearly that long. Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary records that “the Jews were doing their utmost to extinguish the Sun of Righteousness. The darkness signified the cloud which the human soul of Christ was under, when he was making it an offering for sin. He did not complain that his disciples forsook him, but that his Father forsook him. In this especially he was made sin for us.” Even in death, Jesus was a witness. As we develop a clear understanding of the crucifixion of Christ, our faith will be strengthened, and our witness will be effective.

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

In John 10:10b, Jesus announced one of the reasons for why He came to the earth: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (NIV). This fullness of life was made possible when Jesus served as a mediator between the holy God and sinful humanity, and Jesus emptied Himself in crucifixion. This

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(June 3-9, 2019)

Jesus Seals the New Covenant

sacrificial act of atonement made possible the restoration of the damaged relationship. When we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and we can receive the gift of the new covenant. Once we enter God’s rest, we can then daily live out our faith in practical ways and share God’s love with others in our world of influence.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for Your unselfish sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. Let us give of ourselves to others as You have laid down Your life for us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

MONDAY, June 3: “Turmoil at the Last Supper” (Mark 14:26-31)
TUESDAY, June 4: “Jesus Prays while the Disciples Sleep” (Mark 14:32-42)
WEDNESDAY, June 5: “Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested” (Mark 14:43-50)
SUMMER QUARTER 2019

THURSDAY, June 6: “Jesus Is Crucified Before Friends and Enemies” (Mark 15:16-24)
FRIDAY, June 7: “Two Criminals Are Crucified with Jesus” (Mark 15:27-32)
SATURDAY, June 8: “Faithful Women” (Mark 15:40-47)

June 16, 2019

THE NEW COVENANT’S SACRIFICE

ADULT/OUTH
ADULT/YOUNG ADULT TOPIC: Cleaning Up
GENERAL LESSON TITLE: The Gift of Second Chances
YOUTH TOPIC: The New Promise’s the Mess
OFFERING YOUTH TOPIC: A Special Offering

DEVO TIONAL READING
Psalm 50:1-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 9:11-28
PRINT PASSAGE: Hebrews 9:11-22
KEY VERSE: Hebrews 9:22
CHILDREN

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 9:15a
PRINT PASSAGE: Hebrews 9:11-22
KEY VERSE: Hebrews 9:15a
Hebrews 9:11-22—KJV
11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.
13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:
14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 9:11-22—NIV
11 But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation.
12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.
13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! 15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.
21 In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. 22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: People have devised many methods to deal with the sense of moral uncleanness that their misdeeds incur. How can we be definitively cleansed of guilt? Through shedding His blood and dying, Jesus once and for all fulfilled God’s new covenant to forgive sins and guarantee eternal life.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:

1. Explore the symbolism of blood in the Old Testament in relation to the saving work of Jesus on the Cross.
2. Sense their moral shortcomings and the need for definitive cleansing before the holy God.
3. Rejoice in the purification for sins that Jesus accomplished.

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH

― “Once for all” (Greek: ἐφαπαξ, verse 12) contrasts the various and repeated sacrifices of the Old Testament system with the definitive sacrifice of Christ (see Hebrews 7:27; 10:10).

― The great complexity of the Old Testament sacrificial system is highlighted throughout this passage, with reference to numerous aspects of its sacrificial regulations (see verses 12-13, 19-20).

― The key symbolism in this passage is not strictly “guilt” and “forgiveness” but, rather, “defilement” and “purification.” Christ’s blood cleanses us from the stain or contagion of sin.

― Verses 15-18 feature a play on the Greek word διαθήκη, which can mean either “covenant” or “will.” Paul does something similar in Galatians 3:15-18.

― “The shedding of blood” is a Greek neologism: haimatekchysia. This is more literally killed but rather the moment at which its blood is applied to the cultic vessels to cleanse them from ritual contamination.

― The writer nowhere explains why blood is necessary for purification. It is enough for him to assert that it is.

Teachers of CHILDREN

― Success is identified as accepting Jesus’ sacrifice for our sin, not practicing sinful acts, and allowing the blood of Jesus to cleanse our minds.

― The shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin in the Old Testament was offered through the sacrifice of animals.

― Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, and no other sacrifice is needed for the forgiveness of sin.

― Jesus’ blood sacrifice is a new life and an opportunity to experience living in the will of God.

― In Jesus, spiritual death and our separation from God have been removed.
Christ’s death and resurrection offer all who would believe victory over sin and death.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The authorship of the book of Hebrews has not been clearly proven. Some scholars argue that it was written by the apostle Paul, while others claim it was written by Barnabas, who was a close associate of Paul’s while on their evangelistic missionary journey. Although there is no absolute certainty as to its authorship, most likely Paul wrote it—as illustrated through the style of writing which depicts Paul’s customary use of the closing phrase, “Grace be with you all.” However, some argue that the author was a disciple of Paul’s (bible.org).

The book of Hebrews is regarded as one of the General Epistles alongside the books of James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Jude. All these letters have one thing in common: they encourage the early Christians to emulate the teachings of Christ despite persecution. They also share the themes of love, hope, and faith (see Hebrews 5:11-14; 10:19-39).

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The book of Hebrews is believed to have been written between AD 60 and AD 65. This was before the destruction of the Temple and the City of Jerusalem in AD 70, as illustrated in Scripture by use of present tense while speaking of the Temple and the activities of the priests (see Hebrews 9:6-13; 10:1; 13:10-11). Hebrews also asserts that Jesus Christ is the High Priest who fulfills prophecies of the Old Testament prophets concerning the Son of God. The letter was originally addressed to Jewish Christians who were tempted to revert to Judaism.

The phrase that is used to introduce the book “to the Hebrews” shows that the original recipients of the letter were the Christian Jews as depicted through continuous arguments and justifications that Jesus Christ is superior to the Jewish institutions and the Old Testament prophets. The author also quotes heavily from Old Testament Hebrew Scripture, and this implies that the recipients of this letter were Jewish and not Gentile converts. The author of this letter is also passing on greetings from Italy, and he informs the recipients that he may come to visit them along with Timothy (bible.org). The book of Hebrews gives the accounts of persecutions and imprisonment of Christians, and the author encourages the recipients to persevere (see Hebrews 10:32-34; 13:3).

PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

Jesus Christ: He is the revealer of God’s will and salvation of the Christians. The letter focuses on Jesus as the mediator between God and the Israelites, and on Jesus as the creator of the new covenant. Melchizedek: He is the priest forever, predating the tribe of Levi. Originating the priesthood before God, he is also the king of Salem (traditionally believed to be the original name of Jerusalem) and was the one who blessed Abram in the Old Testament.

KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON

Blood (verse 14)—Greek: haima (hah’-ee-mah): blood; refers to the seat of life; of those things that resemble blood, grape juice; bloodshed; to be shed by violence; slay; murder.

Eternal (verse 12)—Greek: aióntos (ahee-o’-neeos): eternal; unending.
Greater (verse 11)—Greek: *megas* (meg'-as): large, great (in the widest sense).

C. Christ’s Blood of the Covenant (Hebrews 9:19-22)

III. Concluding Reflection

Hebrews 9 tells how worship in the Old Testament could not make worshippers perfect through adherence to drink, food, various washings, and regulations for the body. When Christ came, He entered the heavenly tabernacle and shed His own blood on the mercy seat. His blood was the only acceptable sacrifice, as the blood of bulls and goats would never be able to cleanse the conscience of the worshipper. The blood of Christ is able to completely save and cleanse us thoroughly from every mess of sin and guilt, making us whole and without blemish or accusation before God our Father. Christ’s appearance at the consummation of the ages had put away sin by His sacrifice and made the one who trusts in Him blameless.

In verse 1, the old covenant ritual is described, and the author does not make mention of the covenants made with Noah or Abraham in the Old Testament, even though these covenants came first. By “first,” the author referred to the covenant made at Sinai (see Exodus 19–24), because this is the covenant that Jesus had replaced with the new covenant. Laws of how people could approach God were contained in the Sinai covenant, which was fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Christ.

B. Biblical Background

The coming of Christ as a high priest brought spiritual advantages and blessings, and now we have forgiveness and direct access to God. When Jesus became flesh in order to fulfill the covenant, He did it better, not by imitation. He became the sacrificial lamb and shed His blood for the remission of sin. There is an important difference

### I. INTRODUCTION

A. An Acceptable Sacrifice

Mediator (verse 15)—Greek: *mesitès* (mes-e’-tace): a mediator; intermediary; a go-between; arbiter; agent of something good.

Redemption (verse 12)—Greek: *lutrósis* (loo’-tro-sis): liberation; deliverance; release.

Sanctify (verse 13)—Greek: *hagiazó* (hag-ee-ad’-zo): to make; to create, shape, form; “sanctify eth” (KJV).

Tabernacle (verse 11)—Greek: *skéné* (skay-nay’): a tent; booth; tabernacle; abode; dwelling; mansion; habitation.

### II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

A. Christ the High Priest (Hebrews 9:11-14)

B. Christ the Mediator (Hebrews 9:15-18)
between the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament and Jesus, who is the New Testament sacrifice. Whereas the Old Testament sacrifice required sacrifices to be performed continually and yet could not wash away the sins of the people, the New Testament sacrifice needed only to be performed once and for all by Jesus (see Numbers 19:1-22). Christ had willingly offered a perfect and better sacrifice, which cleanses us inwardly from every sin and enables us to worship God with total confidence. The blood of Jesus has washed and purified us, making Christ the mediator of the new covenant—thus our sins are all gone! And our relationship with God is renewed.

In the Old Testament, the Law required that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, without which there is no forgiveness. In the rituals to be performed according to the Law of Moses, blood is a prerequisite for cleansing. Unfortunately, these droplets of blood eventually did not make anything physically clean. To eliminate defilement, imperfection, guilt, sin, and anything that could hinder them from God’s presence, the Israelites needed forgiveness—which only the blood of Jesus could provide.

Animal blood had no power to effect spiritual changes, as animal sacrifices could not eliminate sin. Nevertheless, the old covenant still required animal sacrifices for forgiveness. The author further tells us how the earthly tabernacle needed to be ritually purified by animal sacrifices, but the heavenly holy place required a much different and greater sacrifice. For the spiritual relationship between God and people to be restored, there was a need for a perfect sacrifice without guilt and sin.

Christ Jesus did not enter the sanctuary made with human hands, as it was only a copy of the true tabernacle. He entered heaven to appear before God’s presence on our behalf. He was dealing with the real spiritual problem, and He did do it in heaven. It is a better place, and a better sacrifice!

Christ’s work was both physical and spiritual. He had to become human in order to redeem humans. Jesus’ redemption had to be on the spiritual level as well. He was untainted by sin and gave His life willingly for others. Christ is now in heaven, interceding on our behalf. By becoming the sacrificial Lamb, He has eliminated the distance between God and humanity, and this sacrifice is still fully effective for all time.

EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. Christ the High Priest

(Hebrews 9:11-14)

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
Everything from the past, present, or future that is good is founded on the office of Christ and is accessible through Christ. Through entering heaven, Christ has obtained eternal redemption. The function of the sacrifices in the Old Testament was to make people ceremonially clean according to the Levitical laws of the time. However, that cleansing process was only on the exterior or surface level.

The power of the blood of Christ is rooted in the reality of Christ’s sinlessness (verse 12). Since the blood of Christ was sinless, that same blood can cleanse the guilty conscience, and it can cleanse from sinful works.

The ashes of the heifer (verse 13) were to be mixed with water in order to purify those who had been ceremonially defiled by contact with dead bodies (see Numbers 19). The ashes of the sacrifice were for recurring cases of known defilement, and the sin offerings (“goats and bulls”) were for situations of unknown defilement (Pulpit Commentary). This remedy for sin was in the same class with general sin offerings for the congregation. The Old Testament Levitical system of laws was a complex and sometimes confusing set of rules and regulations that intimidated people and was a burden to many who felt inadequate to completely obey all the laws. Consequently, when Jesus came to be the ultimate sacrifice, He effectively fulfilled the Law and made it unnecessary to continue many of the strict rituals of the Old Testament. The reality of this did not sit well with the religious aristocracy, but it was good news to the ears of the Gentiles who felt that they had access to the only true God for the first time in their lives.

The substitutionary blood of Christ is unquestionably more valuable than and greatly superior to the natural blood of animals. There is no power or promise in the blood of animals, but there is healing and purpose in the blood of Christ. Verse 14 acknowledges several reasons for this reality. The first reason is the source of the blood which comes through the Spirit. Second, the condition of the sacrifice is that it (Christ) is without blemish or fault. No other human or animal qualifies to serve as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (see 1 Peter 1:19).

B. Christ the Mediator

(Hebrews 9:15-18)
And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

Verse 15 reflects Hebrews 9:11-12. The predominant idea in Hebrews 9 is the establishment of a new covenant, and the old covenant has already been referred to three times in this very chapter (see verses 1, 4, and 15).

The death of Christ was a payment to God for the debt created by our sin. “The covenant and the promise relate to the
establishment of the better future. Death was necessary alike for both. The offering of Christ’s life (Matt. xx. 28) was a ransom or an offering for sin; it was also a sacrifice inaugurating a new covenant, which contained the promise of the eternal inheritance. See [Hebrews 9:16-18]; also [Galatians 3:13-14], where the thought is very similar” (The Commentary for Schools, edited by C. J. Ellicott, p. 156).

The binding spiritual agreements between God and humanity are sometimes called covenants. A covenant is different from a contract in that a covenant is based on trust, and a contract is based on distrust. Verses 16 and 17 compare the activation of a spiritual covenant to that of an earthly will. Earthly wills only go into effect when someone dies. (That is one reason it was so disrespectful in the parable of the Prodigal Son for the younger son to ask for his inheritance while the father was still alive.) From a spiritual perspective, Christ had to die in order for salvation to become available to all.

As Matthew Henry’s Commentary states, all, by sin, had become guilty before God, had forfeited everything that is good; but God, willing to show the greatness of His mercy, proclaimed a covenant of grace.

The shedding of Christ’s blood presented a powerful picture of His willingly losing His own life in order to give life to others. Sin made the sacrifice necessary, and God’s grace made the covenant possible. First Peter 3:21-22 (NIV) highlights the figurative death through baptism that occurs in the life of everyone who embraces the new covenant through God’s grace: “And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who! has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.” Galatians 2:20 (NIV) further expresses a sense of figurative voluntary death to self on a regular basis in order to live to Christ: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

C. Christ’s Blood of the Covenant (Hebrews 9:19-22)

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

As the hand-picked communicator of God’s laws, Moses demonstrated his obedience to God by ensuring that all of God’s commands were securely delivered to all the people (verse 19). One incorrect addition or one small omission could have proven disastrous for generations who were to follow God’s commands in the future.
The Old Testament rendering of this event is found in Exodus 24: “When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, ‘Everything the Lord has said we will do’” (verse 3b, NIV). Matthew 5:18 (NIV) further reflects this concept: “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.”

The reference to the blood of calves refers to those sacrificed by the young men in Exodus 24:5. The peace offerings were of oxen, and the burnt offerings were possibly goats which were also used on the Day of Atonement. The reference to water here and in many other places in Scripture is related to spiritual cleansing. Also used for ritual purification were scarlet wool and hyssop. Hyssop is an herb in the mint family and is useful—having cleansing, medicinal, and flavoring properties. It was commonly used in the Middle East in a wide variety of ways, including for spicing, healing, and cleaning.

The blood of Christ is the immovable foundation of this testament (verse 20), which is reflected in Exodus 24:8. Another Scripture which can be used for comparison and is related to this concept is the Scripture commonly used as a part of Holy Communion: “In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me’” (1 Corinthians 11:25, NIV).

The tabernacle was a structure that was at the center of the worship for the people of Israel (verse 21). This lasted “from shortly after the exodus until it was replaced by Solomon’s temple around 960 b.c. The term ‘tabernacle’ is sometimes used to refer to one part of a larger complex: the tent-like structure that stood within a court enclosed by linen curtains. At other times the term describes the entire complex” (Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/tabernacle.html).

The Pentateuch does not mention sprinkling of blood on the tabernacle or its furniture. It does, however, acknowledge anointing with oil in Leviticus 8:10. “But the garments of Aaron and his sons are said to have been sprinkled with the blood as well as with the anointing oil (Hebrews 8:30) . . . . [The writer may be following the more] traditional account, with which there is still nothing in the Pentateuch inconsistent. Be it observed again that the force of the argument does not depend on these added details, but on the general principle, abundantly expressed in the original record, which is assorted in the following verse” (Pulpit Commentary, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/hebrews/9-21.htm).

The central act during the sacrifice was the pouring out of the blood on the altar (verse 22), as found in Leviticus 17:11. Of course, this pouring of the blood was preceded by the initial slaying of the sacrificial animal. Luke 22:20 connects to this concept: “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” Another favorite phrase the apostle Paul used is
“remission of sins.” This has a connection with repaying a debt (see Matthew 6:12; 18:27, 32). The imagery is of our sins’ being the debts that were paid in full by the death of Christ on the Cross. This idea is captured in the lyrics of the song by Ellis J. Crum entitled, “He Paid a Debt He Did Not Owe.” The lyrics are as follows:

He paid a debt He did not owe, I owed a debt I could not pay,
I needed someone to wash my sins away.
And now I sing a brand new song: Amazing Grace,
Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.
My debt He paid upon the cross,
He cleansed my soul from all its dross,
I tho’t that no one could all my sins erase, But now I sing a brand new song: Amazing Grace.

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

The well-known song written by Robert Lowery poses this question: “What can wash away my sin?” The answer is this: nothing but the blood of Jesus. No matter how much moral dirt we may accumulate, no case is beyond the ability of Jesus to reach and to wash. We do not have to live lives burdened by the guilt of sin. The forgiveness and cleansing power offered by the sacrificial Lamb of God is extended to all who believe and receive God’s forgiveness.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for the precious gift of Jesus, who offers us not only second chances but also multiple opportunities to get it right. Let us never be guilty of taking advantage of that costly grace that was purchased on Calvary’s cross. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(June 10-16, 2019)

The New Covenant’s Sacrifice

MONDAY, June 10: “The People Promise to Obey” (Exodus 24:3-8)
TUESDAY, June 11: “Aaron Performs the Atoning Sin Sacrifice” (Leviticus 16:11-19)
WEDNESDAY, June 12: “Redeemed and Purified” (Titus 2:11-15)
THURSDAY, June 13: “Entering the Sanctuary by Jesus’ Blood” (Hebrews 10:19-25)
FRIDAY, June 14: “The Time Has Come” (Hebrews 9:1-10)
SATURDAY, June 15: “Christ, the Final Sacrifice for Sin” (Hebrews 9:23-28)
SUNDAY, June 16: “Christ, Mediator of the New Covenant” (Hebrews 9:11-22)
HEARTS UNITED IN LOVE

ADULT/YOUTH
ADULT/Young ADULT TOPIC: Stronger Together
YOUTH TOPIC: Stronger Together

CHILDREN
GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Hearts United in Love
CHILDREN’S TOPIC: Team Strong!

DEVOOTIONAL READING
1 Corinthians 3:10-17

ADULT/YOUTH
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:1-15
PRINT PASSAGE: Colossians 2:1-15
KEY VERSES: Colossians 2:6-7

Colossians 2:1-15—KJV
FOR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;
2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;
3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

CHILDREN
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Colossians 2:1-15
PRINT PASSAGE: Colossians 2:1-15 KEY VERSES: Colossians 2:6-7

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.
6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy.
Colossians 2:1-15—NIV
I WANT you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.
2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.
5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.
6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.
8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:
11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,
15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.
9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,
10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.
11 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ,
12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,
14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

**UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE:** People bind themselves together by mutual bonds of love and commitment. How can communities avoid losing their identities while under attack? Paul urged the Colossians to be united in love in order to fully understand the rich treasures offered to them by faith so that they could resist false teachings and come to appreciate their new spiritual standing in Christ.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

*Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:*  
1. Contrast the deceptive philosophies of false teachers with the true faith in which the Colossians had been established.  
2. Long to be rooted and built up in Christ and more firmly established in the faith we have received.  
3. Embrace what Paul teaches about our new standing in Christ as a guard against false teaching.

**AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED** was refuting heresy that emphasized knowledge as the means of salvation. (Colossians 2:3) 

**Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH** —Paul was counteracting the Colossian heresy —Paul stressed, in this letter, knowledge of God’s which, in part, taught that for salvation one mystery hidden in Christ Himself because He needed to combine faith in Christ with secret
knowledge and with man-made regulations concerning such practices as circumcision, eating and drinking, and observance of religious festivals. (Colossians 2:8)

—The declaration that the very essence of deity was present in totality in Jesus’ human body was a direct refutation of gnostic teaching. (Colossians 2:9)

—Paul was declaring that the Christian is complete in Christ rather than being deficient, as the Gnostics claimed. (Colossians 2:10-15)

—Paul uses the term record as a designation for the Mosaic Law with all its regulations, under which everyone is a debtor to God. (Colossians 2:14)

—Not only did God cancel out the accusations of the Law against the Christian, but God also conquered and disarmed the evil angels who entice people to follow asceticism and false teachings about Christ. The metaphor used here recalls a Roman general leading his captives through the streets, so the citizens could see and celebrate victory. (Colossians 2:15)

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The letter to the Colossians was written by the apostle Paul to the church in Colossae around AD 61-62. He wrote the book while in prison in Rome to counter false teaching of the Scriptures and those concerning the person of Christ and His work (see Colossians 2:3, 9, 14-15). Paul warned the church against believing in human philosophies that were based on empty human traditions instead of on the true and divine revelation of Christ. Other letters authored by Paul while in prison include Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians. (bible.org)

—This passage expresses a “Christus Victor” approach to the atonement: through the Cross, Christ vanquishes the spiritual powers arrayed against humanity and sets us free to live for God.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The city of Colossae was a Graeco-Phrygian town in Asia Minor while under Roman rule. This cosmopolitan city was located a hundred miles to the east of Ephesus in the Lycus Valley. Other cities within this valley were Laodicea and Hierapolis (see Colossians 2:1; 4:13). The city of Colossae had different cultural and religious interactions, and this was the basis of Paul’s message to the small church of believers in this city concerning the teachings of Christ. Paul had not visited the church in Colossae at this period, but he trains a young man named Epaphras who
went back and established a church in his hometown of Colossae (see Colossians 1:7; 4:12).

(bible.org)

**TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON**

I. Introduction
   A. Warning: Danger Ahead
      Love (verse 2)—Greek: *agapé* (ag-ah’-pay): love; benevolence; goodwill; esteem; plur: love-feasts.
      Treasures (verse 3)—Greek: *thésauros* (thaysow-ros’): treasures; stores.
      Wisdom (verse 3)—Greek: *sophia* (sof-ee’-ah): skill; wisdom.

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture
   A. Encouragement, Enlightenment, and Knowledge
      In Colossians 2, there is an expression of concern by the apostle Paul regarding the people of Colossae. Although Paul had not met some of the people to whom he was writing, he still expressed his desire that their hearts would be knit together in love, and that they would have the assurance that comes from an understanding of God’s mystery revealed through Christ Jesus. He also rejoiced in their orderly conduct and steadfastness, and further encouraged them to be established in Christ firmly, abounding in thanksgiving (verses 1-7).

   The apostle’s warning in verse 8 summarizes the rest of the chapter as he began to warn the people of the dangers of what he called the deceitful messages being preached. These dangers included being taught vain philosophy and being deprived of their reward by those who show false humility. He expressed concern regarding those who believe in

   **Heart(s) (verse 2)—Greek: *kardia* (kar-dee’-ah):** the heart; inner life; intention.
   **Knowledge (verse 3)—Greek: *gnósis* (gno'-sis):** a knowing; knowledge.

   (Colossians 2:1-4)
   B. Stand Strong on a Firm Foundation (Colossians 2:5-10)
   C. Spiritual Circumcision (Colossians 2:11-15)

III. Concluding Reflection
the worship of angels, who tell false visions, and who follow strict regulations according to human commandments and doctrines which really have no value against the indulgence of the flesh. He reminded them that in Christ they are complete, having passed through a circumcision which is not made with human hands. This circumcision is one in which God had made them alive together with Christ. No one could judge them regarding religious observances which were only a shadow that pointed toward the true substance of Christ (verses 8-23).

B. Biblical Background

In Colossians 2:1-3, we see evidence that the sufferings of Paul were not just for himself, but also for the benefit of others. Paul had a true understanding of the wisdom of God’s mysteries. Other religions might seem to have part of the truth, but in Christ is contained all truth. There is no need for speculations about intermediate levels of spiritual power. What is needed is a better and deeper understanding of Christ and all that this involves. The essence and purpose of Paul’s letter was to focus and direct his readers to Christ and having faith in Him. We are united through faith in Christ, and through His effective work on the Cross. Christ died for us that our sins would no longer be counted against us, and He paid the price for our sin in full.

Through Christ’s death, we have also received new life. God’s work through Jesus Christ was not only for Jesus alone, but also for those who have faith in Christ.

In verse 13, Paul described how we were far apart from Christ. In our sinful nature, as we followed the flesh, we were spiritually dead (uncircumcised) and consequently separated from Christ. However, when we accept and yield to Christ, this sin is forgiven and cleansed.

In verse 14, Paul described this forgiveness which has been granted to us. Christ has forgiven us and given us a life without debts, because He cancelled the bill of sin and paid it in full.
In Colossians 2:15, Paul again further illustrated how strategic is the victory we have in Christ, when Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public show of them. Christ conquered them all. When we have Christ, no power or authority has power over our lives.

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. Encouragement, Enlightenment, and Knowledge (Colossians 2:1-4)

FOR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

we have all the details and firsthand experience in a given situation.

Paul imparted a heart-full in verse 2 as he exhibited great emotional transparency and put on full display his spiritual fervor for the faithful. Paul’s purpose was not selfish in its focus but is rightly focused on the spiritual growth and development of the congregation. Paul’s goal was spiritual progress and development for God’s people, and he could not be satisfied with anything less than their reaching a state of spiritual maturity.

Part of the process of spiritual maturity involves the body of Christ’s being united in love. We cannot attain spiritual maturity and sustain it through operating independently. The type and quality of this unity is bolstered by the use of the phrase “in love” (verse 2). The sense of being unified in Christ is also supported in Colossians 2:19 and Ephesians 4:16.

This Colossians 2:2 passage mirrors Philippians 1:9—“I pray that your love may abound (or, overflow) more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment (or, perception).” As he does in Ephesians 3:18-19 (NIV), Paul here encourages the church to “grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” All too often, individuals join a church but fail to join Jesus. Furthermore, sometimes after being Christians for several years we find ourselves drifting into a state of neutrality and lulled into the ineffective sleep state of comfortable satisfaction. As Christians, we cannot lose
our state of urgency for our own spiritual growth, our drive to disciple other Christians, and our calling to share the Good News with those who have never tuned into station G-O-D.

Theologian Charles Ellicott suggests that the word hidden (verse 3) is a technical word for a secret kind of teaching which is only available to the initiated. Some aspects of the things of God may be temporarily hidden, and others may require deeper searching and even sacrifice in order to discover. First Corinthians 13:12 further underscores this: “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

The “fine-sounding arguments” mentioned in verse 4 refers to the tendency of blending Judaism with Oriental philosophy and then mixing this combination with Christianity. The result is a hodgepodge of spiritual-sounding elements that are not purely anything. The effect of this mixing is to create a semi-authentic appeal for a wider audience and to draw in those who are easily convinced by partial truths. Sometimes, people use enticing words that sound plausible when disguised in pseudo wisdom and false humility (see 2:18, 23).

B. Stand Strong on a Firm Foundation
(Colossians 2:5-10)

For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

Like a proud father whose children are off in college or away at church camp, Paul expressed his joy in their discipline and confirmed his confidence in their faith despite the miles that separate them. His absence in the flesh did not hamper his presence in the Spirit. Although Paul was imprisoned in Rome, those bars could not incarcerate his spirit (see 1 Corinthians 5:3). A central thing that gives Paul the most joy as a spiritual father is that his mentees walk and grow in discipline (see 1 Thessalonians 4:1 and 5:14). The definition of the word disciple is “a disciplined learner.” As Christians, our primary responsibility is to be disciples and to make disciples.

The way that we initially receive God is by faith. Likewise, the way that we grow and progress as Christians is also by faith (verses 6 and 7).

Anything that is of significant value also has potential counterfeits. This phenomenon also extends into the realm of discipleship (verse 8). Counterfeit spirituality looks like true faith and may sound like the real thing but, in actuality, only has pieces of truth mixed in with humanistic teaching or worldly rituals.

The theology reflected in verses 9-10 is significant to understand and essential to
include in any comprehensive conversation about Christ. This one central point of the deity of Christ is a line of demarcation between truth and untruth. Many people are willing to recognize Christ as a nice, human moral teacher but not as God in bodily form. There are several problems with this approach. One problem is that human moral teachers can be flawed and can be found in error. However, we dare not disagree with God. Another issue is that if Jesus had just been a nice, moral teacher, He would not have been crucified. The charge against Jesus was not teaching or even preaching. The charge against Jesus was blasphemy, as is reflected in John 10:33. “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” Blasphemy is defined as “the act or offense of using profane talk and speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things.” A denial of deity is a denial of Christ.

C. Spiritual Circumcision
(Colossians 2:11-15)

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Here in verse 11, the reference to circumcision points to the difference between self-control and Spirit-control. Although circumcision is a physical ritual associated with a spiritual practice of separation, this ritual is only externally effective for the flesh rather than internally effective for the spiritual part of humanity. (Read Romans 2:25-29 for a further clarification of this point.)

The central metaphor employed in verses 13 and 14 is one of a death sentence being commuted by Christ. In this case, being dead means being void of spiritual and eternal life from a Christian perspective (see Ephesians 2:1, 5; 5:14; John 5:24; 1 John 3:14; 5:12; compare John 3:3; 6:53; Genesis 2:17).

God used Jesus to take what seemed to be a devastating defeat and transform it into a resounding victory (verse 15). In combat or conflict, one of the most demoralizing occurrences is to be disarmed. Disarmament immediately transfers one from being in control to being controlled.

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Without constantly sharpening our walk with God through Bible study, prayer, preaching, and teaching, we may likely fall prey to the
Hearts United in Love
world’s distractions that seem like truth but are thinly veiled half-truths. Jesus is supreme over every spiritual “ruler and authority,” and that is why we must reject false teachings and the inadequate focus on Christ and His Cross. With consistency, we must refuse to be swayed by teachings that run counter to the Gospel. Then we can walk in the light of God’s Word in order to fulfill God’s will and delight in God’s ways.

PRAYER
Lord, let us be steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in Your work so that our labor will not be in vain. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

MONDAY, June 17: “Christ, the Source of Life” (1 John 5:6-12)
TUESDAY, June 18: “Pursue Unity in the Church” (1 Peter 3:8-12)
WEDNESDAY, June 19: “All Peoples United in Unity” (Ephesians 2:11-22)
THURSDAY, June 20: “Christ, the Image of God” (Colossians 1:15-20)
FRIDAY, June 21: “Paul’s Ministry in the Congregation” (Colossians 1:24-29)
SATURDAY, June 22: “Maintain Your Union with Christ” (Colossians 2:16-23)
SUNDAY, June 23: “United with Christ and One Another” (Colossians 2:14-15)
Matthew 5:1-12—KJV
AND SEEING the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:
2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they
5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: Our attitudes determine how we view circumstances in our lives. How can our attitudes bring long-term benefits? Jesus’ Beatitudes taught the crowd and His disciples those heartfelt values and attitudes required of anyone who seeks to be in a covenant relationship with Him.

LESSON OBJECTIVES
Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:
1. Explain the irony in the Beatitudes.
2. Marvel at the values taught by Jesus and their complete reversal of the world’s values.
3. Pursue the value system taught by Jesus and claim the blessings in belonging to Christ’s kingdom.

Matthew 5:1-12—NIV
NOW WHEN Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them. He said: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they
5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH
—Th is passage marks the beginning of the “Sermon on the Mount,” the fIrst of Jesus’ five major discourses in the book of Matthew

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(the others are found in chapters 10, 13, 18, and 24–25).
—Matthew 5:2-12 is commonly referred to as the “Beatitudes” due to the fact that each statement begins in Latin with beati, meaning “blessed” or “happy.”
—Contrary to modern usage, Jesus used the word blessed to indicate not a receiving of material gifts or a temporary feeling of happiness but, rather, a wholeness and health of one’s relationship with God.
—By framing the Beatitudes with the promise of “the kingdom of heaven” (verses 3, 10), Jesus was establishing these statements as a way of life for those who would follow Him and was including each of the promises in verses 3-10 as benefits of doing so.
—The exact location of the giving of the Beatitudes was uncertain, though it is thought to be at the Tabgha near Capernaum. The “old law” was also given from a mountain (Matthew 5:1; see Exodus 19:3).
—Blessed means more than happy or any similar adjective based on outward circumstances. In this context, blessed refers to the ultimate wellbeing and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. (Matthew 5:3)
—This beatitude is taken from Psalm 37:11 and refers not so much to an attitude toward people as to a disposition before God—namely, humility. (Matthew 5:5)
—“Heart” is referring to the center of one’s being, including mind, will, and emotions. (Matthew 5:8)
—Those who promote peace, as far as it depends on them, are peacemakers (see Romans 12:18). In so doing, they reflect the character of their heavenly father. (Matthew 5:9)
—The “kingdom of heaven” is a present reality and a future hope. (Matthew 5:10)

**Teachers of CHILDREN**
—The word blessed means more than happiness and connotes eternal, joyous rewards.
—Believers who live out God’s desires for loving and caring for others are blessed.
—“The Beatitudes” is the longest recorded sermon given by Jesus.
—God’s kingdom is organized differently than the world’s order of happiness, wealth, and various life pursuits.
—Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount on a hillside near Capernaum over a period of a few days.
—The Sermon on the Mount or the Beatitudes challenged the religious leaders who were opposed to Jesus.

**THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON**
The book of Matthew was written during Roman rule in the land of Israel as a narrative that recounts the events in the life of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Matthew is among the four canonical books that show the fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic prophecies which reaffirm the life, ministry, death, and miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 3:13–4:11). The other Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament are Mark and Luke. The gospel of John stands alone, as it contains much unique information. A substantial portion of the gospel of Matthew is dependent on the gospel of Mark as a point of reference.

**THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND**
CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The early church fathers argued that the gospel of Matthew was written in AD 70 after the fall and destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Roman Empire. The gospel was written by the apostle Matthew for a Jewish Christian congregation. Matthew also went by the name “Levi the son of Alphaeus” and was a tax collector in Capernaum (see Matthew 9:9-13). This gospel was originally written in Greek, the predominant language of the Roman Empire. However, the original audience was Jewish. Most Christian scholars argue that Matthew wrote this gospel in Antioch of Syria or in Palestine (due to the heavy use of Greek dialect). The earliest reference to the gospel of Matthew is by Ignatius the Bishop of Antioch (bible.org).

The main focus of this gospel is the Old Testament prophetic revelations, and this implies that the recipients’ background was entirely Jewish, and that they would have had knowledge about Old Testament teachings. Matthew purposely wrote this gospel to remind the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah (bible.org).

The Lesson Scripture from the book of Matthew focuses on the Beatitudes, which forms the central message of the Sermon on the Mount. The apostle Matthew places this chronology of events at the beginning of the ministry of Christ and forms the basis of the grand proclamation of the message concerning the kingdom of God. The theme in this section is on righteousness, which is a key feature for the kingdom of Christ. This also forms the narrative framework of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus ascended the mountain and began His authoritative proclamation to the disciples and the crowd. The audience for this message was Jesus’ disciples and the people. The Sermon on the Mount also alluded to the Mosaic Law in the Old Testament.

PROFICIENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

Jesus Christ: He was/is the main evangelist, giving assurance to His followers concerning true virtues of discipleship and the kingdom of heaven. The Disciples: These were the twelve followers of Christ to whom the message concerning the Beatitudes were given. However, the message on Beatitudes was also meant for everyone, including the crowd that followed Christ to the Mount (bible.org).

KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON

Blessed (verse 3)—Greek: makarios (mak-ar’ee-os): happy; blessed; to be envied.
Heaven (verse 3)—Greek: ouranos (oo-ran-os'): heaven; the visible heavens: the atmosphere, the sky; the starry heavens.
Meek (verse 5)—Greek: praus (prah-ooce'): mild; gentle.
Mourn (verse 4)—Greek: pentheó (pen-theh'-o): to mourn, lament.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. It’s What’s on the Inside that Counts

Poor (verse 3)—Greek: ptóchos (pto-khos'): poor; destitute.
Righteousness (verse 6)—Greek: dikaiosuné (dikah-yos-oo'-nay): justice; justness; righteousness.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON
I. Introduction
   A. It’s What’s on the Inside that Counts
   B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture
   A. The Leading Spiritual Gift of Jesus (Matthew 5:1-2)
   B. Attitudes Reflecting Humility (Matthew 5:3-5)
   C. Attitudes Reflecting Love (Matthew 5:6-9)
   D. Attitudes Reflecting Perseverance (Matthew 5:10-12)

III. Concluding Reflection

The opening verses of our text, which many refer to as the Beatitudes, show how this message deals with the person’s inner heart, attitude, and behaviors, which is the core of true Christian discipleship. This text describes the outward displays of the character and conduct of true believers and genuine disciples of Christ Jesus. This life, as described by Jesus, is a life of glory and grace which only God can give.

This kind of life cannot be achieved by human effort alone, as it would amount to an overestimation of people’s ability to achieve a high-quality moral life. This message (the longest recorded message of Jesus) in turn cannot be left or assigned to the Jewish lifestyle alone, as this would amount to robbing the church of her greatest statement of true Christian living. As we will explore further, we shall see how important this text is in serving as a guide to check our attitude as children and disciples of God. Matthew 5 contains the first most discussed passages in the Bible.

B. Biblical Background

The Beatitudes is one of the most loved texts of the Gospels. It is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, which is seen in Matthew 5–7. This sermon as it appears in Matthew seems to have taken place sometime later in the chronology of the life of Christ. Matthew chose to place it at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, as it magnificently frames the proclamation of the kingdom of God and its lifestyle.

Matthew originally intended his text for the nation of Israel and especially the crowds that flocked to Jesus. However, this message was preached directly to Jesus’ disciples. While speaking to His disciples and the crowd that followed Him, Jesus focused on the true will of God and righteousness which they all must manifest in order to enter God’s kingdom. This message is directed to everyone, both young and old, Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised, saved and unsaved. Its dominant theme is righteousness as the standard for the kingdom of God.

The Sermon on the Mount, as stated earlier, is the first and longest message of Jesus ever recorded in the Gospels. As a matter of fact, this sermon tells people the level of righteousness that characterizes the kingdom,
and also what that righteous life would look like for the kingdom citizen.

This sermon begins with the Beatitudes, revealing the qualities and character of the true people of God. This sermon gives a perfect picture to Christ’s disciples, who are the heirs of the promises of God’s kingdom.

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. The Leading Spiritual Gift of Jesus (Matthew 5:1-2)

AND SEEING the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying.

In reading the Sermon on the Mount, there is a distinct similarity to a lesser-known passage which might be called the Sermon on the Plain found in Luke 6:20-49. In both passages, the word choice and phrase pattern are similar. There are many other portions of this passage that can be found in various places throughout the New Testament. The term Rabbi and its derivatives are defined as “a Jewish scholar or teacher, especially one who studies or teaches Jewish Law.” In eighteen other instances, Jesus is referred to as a teacher or as teaching others. One may wonder why so much emphasis is placed on teaching. Hosea 4:6a affirms that “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Jesus was a master teacher, and He employed several tactics that we can learn from and utilize today in order to become effective teachers. Below are some of the reasons why Jesus was such an effective teacher: 1) Jesus modeled what He taught. 2) Jesus knew and understood the people He taught. 3) Jesus adapted His approach to teaching different kinds of people in different kinds of settings. 4) Jesus used word pictures in the form of parables and sometimes even used objects to help His point to stick with the listener (see Mark 4:34). 5) Jesus spoke in simple, understandable words so that anyone at any level could understand. 6) Jesus spoke the truth with authority (textsource.com).

Verse 2 presents Jesus as doing what He does better than any other—teaching. Jesus is referred to as “Rabbi” in more than fifteen places throughout the New Testament. The Beatitudes tend to be a little different in content than other passages in the Scriptures. The sermon is proverb-like, precise, and full of interpretation and deep thought. Each one of these verses includes a topic which forms a major biblical theme.
B. Attitudes Reflecting Humility (Matthew 5:3-5)

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

As we delve into the Beatitudes, it is important to understand that its focus is on our inner attitude because that is what makes a difference in our outer life. It is also important to understand the meaning of the word blessed. Contemporary concepts of being blessed often relate to financial or material acquisition. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance defines this concept translated from the Greek term makarios as meaning “extremely blessed, fortunate, endowed, happy, and joyful.” This type of felicity comes not from an exterior source, but from an inner resource.

The term poor in spirit (verse 3) need not necessarily refer to spiritual or financial poverty. Rather, it is an indication of inner peacefulness and a willingness to receive whatever may occur in life. Paul refers to this state in Philippians 4:11: “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”

The reward of the “poor in spirit” is the kingdom of heaven. The word kingdom is a compound word which indicates the domain of a king. The kingdom of heaven, then, is the rule, will, and reign of God. This word is applied twice in the Disciples’ Prayer (better known as The Lord’s Prayer) as seen in Matthew 6.

Usage of the word mourn within the context of being blessed (verse 4) may at first glance seem antithetical. The word mourn is usually related to weeping (see Mark 16:10; Luke 6:25; James 4:9; Revelation 18:15-19). Here, however, there is an implied, though not an expressed, limitation. This kind of mourning is not like the sorrow of the world that produces death (see 2 Corinthians 7:10) because of failure, suffering, and the consequences of sin. This kind of sorrow flows out in the tears that cleanse us. This mourning is over sin and the stain it leaves on the soul (Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers). The reward of those who mourn is comfort from a supernatural source. Psalm 126:5 (NIV) proclaims that “Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.” The promise of those who trust God is God’s provision of mercy, peace, and consolation.

There can be no true spiritual ability without personal humility (verse 5). This does not mean false humility but true humility that flows from a connection with God and a healthy fear of God. Meekness is reflected in an attitude that is mild, gentle, longsuffering, forgiving, slow to anger, not easily provoked, not resentful, and not vengeful. Instead, the humble Christian is sweet, affable, courteous, and kind. Humble people seek to reconcile offenses and to win people over to peace and love. It is these individuals who will inherit the earth. What a prize! This does not guarantee a life without problems, but it is a promise of peace even in the presence of problems.
C. Attitudes Reflecting Love
(Matthew 5:6-9)

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Jesus employed simple yet powerful imagery to describe the quest to be righteous. As human beings, we are most successful at doing the things that we are passionate about and most internally driven to accomplish. Few things in life are as motivating as the basic need to eat and drink. Since most people can identify with this, Jesus linked this need to the need for righteousness. A similar concept was expressed by the psalmist who declared, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” (Psalm 42:1-2, NIV).

“Mercy” (verse 7) is compassion or forgiveness shown to someone whom is within one’s power to punish or harm. Jesus took this opportunity to affirm the principle of sowing and reaping, which is also noted in Galatians 6:7 (NIV): “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” At some points in life, everyone will need mercy. Those who are so affected by the sufferings of others as to be disposed to alleviate them will be the very ones who will receive mercy when the need arises. Matthew 10:42 further expresses this idea: “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (see also Matthew 25:34-40).

Verse 8 of the Beatitudes echoes Psalm 86:11 (NIV): “Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.” When our hearts are purified by faith, the Spirit of God cleans up our “vain thoughts, unprofitable reasonings, earthly and sensual desires, and corrupt passions; [we] are purified from pride, self-will, discontent, impatience, anger, malice, envy, covetousness, ambition; [our] hearts are circumcised to love the Lord [our] God with all [our] hearts, and [our] neighbors as [ourselves], and who, therefore, are not only upright before him, but possess and maintain purity of intention and of affection in all [our] designs, works, and enjoyments; serving him continually with a single eye and an undivided heart” (The New Testament of Our
The term *peacemakers* (verse 9) suggests that it is possible to create peace even when there is no peace currently in existence. A strong resolve, honorable character, and reliance on the Holy Spirit are all important components in becoming a peacemaker. Peacemakers not only possess an inner sense of personal peace, but they also endeavor to sow seeds of understanding, harmony, and unity among others where there is discord. Peacemakers seek to help “heal the differences of brethren and neighbours, to reconcile contending parties, and to restore peace wherever it is broken, as well as to preserve it where it is” (*The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, Joseph Benson, p. 59).

Whenever people are called the “children of God” it carries with it a certain sense of responsibility to reflect the attitude, image, and actions of the Father. Children of God are called to reflect God’s love, peace, and mercy.

**D. Attitudes Reflecting Perseverance**  
*(Matthew 5:10-12)*

_Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you._

When this text was written, religious persecution was a common occurrence. Although widespread persecution still exists in some countries, most of those who live in the United States have never experienced real persecution on the level experienced by those in the first century.

To be righteous is to be free from guilt or sin. It is to be morally right, justifiable, or godly. During the time this was written, people were being persecuted for the cause of Christ and the Gospel. If they professed Christ, showed concern for His interests, or engaged in preaching or worship, they became targets for rage and persecution.

Jesus was particularly sensitive to persecution. But no matter how much persecution one may experience, no amount of persecution can compare to the reward received from enduring hardship for the cause of Christ. The Jesus kind of response to persecution is the exact opposite of what would be expected. The normal response might be resistance, revenge, or remorse. Jesus recommended rejoicing. It is a great privilege to be persecuted and to suffer. “To those who suffer most, God imparts the highest rewards. Hence the crown of martyrdom has been thought to be the brightest that any of the redeemed shall wear; and hence many of the early Christians sought to become martyrs, and threw themselves in the way of their persecutors, that they might be put to death. They literally rejoiced, and leaped for joy, at the prospect of death for the sake of Jesus. Though God does not require us to seek persecution, yet all this shows that there is something in (faith) to sustain the soul, which the world does not possess” (*Notes, Explanatory and*
III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave clear and detailed instructions on how to think, act, and respond as a Christian. The Beatitudes can serve as a template for the kind of attitudes that are possible and expected of one who claims to be one of the children of God. As we grow in our relationship with God, we will experience various challenges. Problems and hardships in life are inescapable. The question we must ask and answer as Christians is this:

**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

(June 24-30, 2019)

**MONDAY, June 24:** “Living among Wrongdoers” (Psalm 57)

**TUESDAY, June 25:** “Perfect God’s Love among You” (1 John 4:7-21)

**WEDNESDAY, June 26:** “Great Rewards to Come” (Luke 6:17-23)

**THURSDAY, June 27:** “Apostles Chosen for Ministry” (Mark 3:7-12)

**FRIDAY, June 28:** “Do Not Judge” (Luke 6:37-45)

**SATURDAY, June 29:** “A Life Pleasing to God” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)

**SUNDAY, June 30:** “Right Attitudes for Blessed Living” (Matthew 5:1-12)

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**Jesus Teaches about Right Attitudes**

“How will I respond when my faith is tested?” As we reject the values of the world, we can embrace the values of the Spirit of God. Although some of the Beatitudes may seem difficult to embody, God gives us the power to fulfill those requirements and expectations of us. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV).

**PRAYER**

Dear God, help us not to depend on the things of this earth to supply our needs. Let us allow the mind which was in Christ Jesus also to be in us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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**JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FULFILLING THE LAW**

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Matthew 5:13-20—KJV

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.
14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.
15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.
16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy,

but to fulfil l. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth

Matthew 5:13-20—NIV

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.
14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.
15 “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light
to everyone in the house.
“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

18 “For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

19 “Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 “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.”

People express their beliefs through their actions. How do we express what we believe? Jesus teaches us that we are to do good for others and follow God’s law.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:

1. Contrast the kind of righteousness Jesus taught with that of the scribes and Pharisees’.

2. Appreciate the “salty,” “light-shining” quality of true righteousness.

3. Make an effort to bring salt and light to their community.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH

—Salt adds flavor to food and preserves it. Thus, Jesus’ disciples are to improve the condition of the world as well as preserve it from being corrupted by sin. In the book of Colossians, Paul talks about how Christians’ words are to be seasoned with salt and beneficial to hearers (see Colossians 4:6).

—Metaphors for “light” and “darkness” abound in the Scriptures, and Matthew 5:14-16 speaks of the importance of a Christian’s actions’ brightening a world that is enshrouded in the darkness of sin. When this takes place, those living in darkness will take notice and will give God glory.

—Most of the salt in Israel came from the Dead Sea and was full of impurities that caused the salt to lose some of its flavor. (Matthew 5:13)

—“Light of the World” refers to Jesus’ disciples having the kingdom life within them as a living testimony to those who do not yet have the light. (Matthew 5:14)

—The typical lamp in a Jewish home was small, was made of clay, burned olive oil, and was placed on a stand in the center of the room to maximize its effectiveness. (Matthew 5:15)
—The “Law” or “Torah” refers to the first five books of the Old Testament. (Matthew 5:17)
—Jesus is confirming the full authority of the Old Testament and demands a commitment to both. (Matthew 5:18-19)

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The book of Matthew is conventionally believed to have been written by the apostle Matthew during the Roman Empire’s occupation of Israel as a narrative recounting the events in the life of Christ. This Gospel is among the four canonical books that show the fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic prophecies which reaffirm the life, ministry, death, and the miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 3:13-4). The other Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament include Mark and Luke. A substantial amount of the gospel of Matthew is dependent on the gospel of Mark as a point of reference and original sourcing. This implies that the book of Matthew was written after the gospel of Mark had already been written and distributed.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

Jesus Christ used the analogy of “salt” and “light” in the introductory part of this chapter to refer to His disciples and all His followers to describe what they were supposed to do and the kind of influence they had as His disciples in the world (see Matthew 5:13-16). In ancient Roman society, salt formed a basic part of livelihood. This alongside oil and wine were signs of prosperity and survival necessities. Salt was a valuable commodity due to its proximity to the Dead Sea in Palestine; it was mined along the rocky shores and the marshes and used for seasoning food and preserving meat. This was commonly done during the night to prevent the salt from vaporizing during the day due to high temperatures (bible.org).

Salt also serves as the basis for some religious principles and interpretations in the New Testament. For instance, there was scarce vegetation where salt was found, and as a result most of the Old Testament Scriptures allude to salt as a symbol of barrenness and dissolution (see Deuteronomy 29:23; Psalm 107:34, Jeremiah 17:6) (bible.org).

Salt was also a symbol of hospitality, fidelity, and friendship in ancient times in the East. As such, it formed a very significant emblem in the Old Testament Scriptures where it solidified the covenant between God and the Israelites (see Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5).
Disciples of Christ are the salt of the earth; Christ has chosen them to add value to the human experience as they live according to God’s Word, purifying the sinful nature of the human beings through the blood of Jesus. Disciples are also seen as the light of the world that shines before people. A deeper study of the Scriptures suggests that ancient Galilee had a small city on a hill known as Safed (pronounced “sah FEHD”), and this might be the same city to which Jesus referred. This small town was set on the part of the hills where it is believed the Sermon of the Mount was given by Christ. This could just be a succinct illustration of light. The Christians are therefore mandated by Christ to shine His glory to the world (bible.org).

**PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON**

**Jesus Christ:** The teachings and the Sermon on the Mount center on Him as the main masterpiece in Matthew’s text. Jesus was teaching His disciples about the righteous life that He desired them to lead in the world, and the need to obey its laws. **The Crowd:** The audience forms a significant part of the ministry of Christ. Th ese are the disciples that Christ talks to in a broader sense apart from His twelve chosen disciples. They are the people who follow Him up the mountain to listen to His teachings (bible.org).

**KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON**

**Fulfi l(l) (verse 17)**—Greek: pléroó (play-ro’-o): fi ll; fulfi ll; complete.

**Good (verse 16)**—Greek: kalos (kal-os’): beautiful; good; worthy.

**Lamp (verse 15)**—Greek: luchnos (lookh’-nos): source of light; “candle” (KJV).

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. Mission Impossible: Keeping the Law**

**Light (verse 14)**—Greek: phós (foce): a source of light; radiance.

**Salt (verse 13)**—Greek: halas and hala (hal’-as): a substance used for seasoning and preserving.

**Works (verse 16)**—Greek: ergon (er’-gon): works; labor; actions; “deeds” (NIV).

**TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON**

**I. Introduction**

A. Mission Impossible: Keeping the Law
B. Biblical Background

**II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture**

A. You Are Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13-16)
B. Fulfi llment of the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)
III. Concluding Reflection

again person that is the salt and can help meet the needs of other people and the entire world. By so doing, we make a difference in our environment and society at-large. The Beatitudes are followed by a statement which summarizes the basic character of the Christian’s life as salt and light: “You are the salt of the earth.”

Describing the believer as the salt of the earth is very appropriate with regards to the relationship we ought to have with the world. Salt always makes a difference when added to any substance. In the same way, we always ought to make a difference wherever we are found. Just as salt is a preservative, so the Christian is a preservative to the earth.

In verse 14, we see Jesus explaining that if we are His, then we ought to have His Light dwelling richly in us. This light which we have in Christ should shine so brightly that no one needs to ask whether or not we are saved, but others should at a glance see the glow of this light within us. The light of Christ should go with us and should illuminate wherever we are found.

In verses 17-18, we see Jesus neither giving a new law nor modifying the old, but rather He explains the significance and truth of the Law, showing how its demands were not just important but necessary as well. The Law does not provide any possible avenue of merit for humans and leaves sinners totally dependent on nothing but God’s divine grace for salvation (see Romans 3:19-20; Galatians 3:23-24).

Christ fulfilled the Law, showing that its true demands were beyond the surface meaning of the words (see 5:28, 39, 44), and He has set a standard that is higher (see 5:20). The events in Matthew 5 are believed to have taken place around AD 27 and contains the first portion of the Sermon on the Mount. It has forty-eight verses and is said to be one of the most discussed passages of the Bible.

B. Biblical Background

Being the “salt of the earth” as described in our text indicates that it is the genuinely born-large. The Beatitudes are followed by a statement which summarizes the basic character of the Christian’s life as salt and light: “You are the salt of the earth.”

Describing the believer as the salt of the earth is very appropriate with regards to the relationship we ought to have with the world. Salt always makes a difference when added to any substance. In the same way, we always ought to make a difference wherever we are found. Just as salt is a preservative, so the Christian is a preservative to the earth.

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overriding, or dissolving the Old Testament, but, rather, that it is a fulfillment of it (see Colossians 2:16-17). The Old Testament prophesied constantly about Jesus’ coming to fulfill prophecy. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law, and this is not because the Law was incorrect; it was just incomplete. By fulfilling the Law, Jesus reconciled us to God the Father.

Determining rank in God’s kingdom is entirely God’s prerogative (see Matthew 20:23), and God would hold in low esteem those who hold His Word in lowest esteem (see Matthew 5:19). In communicating the depth of His message, Jesus used a series of contrasts as seen in the outward behavior which the Law demands and the inner attitude of the heart which God desires. We also discover here the practical application of true Christian character to spiritual living.

God does not want us just to have a form of godliness or religion. God wants our hearts and wants us to be the difference. Though the scribes and Pharisees kept the Law, God was still not pleased with them. They had only a surface belief, which had no significant impact on their hearts or on the lives of people around them. It was a mere religion, devoid of a true spiritual belief and worship. God, through His salvation, has called us to make a difference in a world that often seems to be filled with sin and darkness.

EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. You Are Salt and Light

(Matthew 5:13-16)

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

During New Testament times, salt was a necessity of life and had been used since ancient times in many cultures for seasoning, as a preservative, as a disinfectant, for ceremonial offerings, and as a unit of exchange. With eloquence and elegance, Jesus addressed His followers with regards to their spiritual capacity, their potential, and their deficiency. He was keenly aware of what they could do as well as their limitations. In this passage, Jesus called out the best in His disciples and essentially told them that they were as important, valuable, and necessary to the world as salt is to the people of the earth.

Jesus made it clear that disciples were called to a prophetic work of preserving the earth from moral decay. The restorative and antiseptic action of salt is similar to what they were called to do and expected to accomplish, because a thing is not a thing if it ceases to fulfill the purpose of the thing. Consequently, if the salt loses its saltiness it essentially forfeits its purpose.
The metaphorical imagery of light (verse 14) has a long history of being associated with all things divine. One of the values or functions of light is to provide illumination and thus direction for those who are working or moving. Ephesians 5:13 (NIV) observes this: “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.” Consequently, the purpose of light is dual in nature: it exists both to be seen, as well as to assist others with their sight. A city that sits on a hill has the advantage of being easily visible to those in search of it, especially if that search happens at night while travelling along unlit roadways.

The lighting of a lamp (verse 15) within a household provided the illumination necessary for effectively navigating and performing common domestic functions after dark. The higher the light is placed, the wider the light will shine. The opposite is also true. When we cover our light, we forfeit our function. In the natural sense, placing a burning lamp under a basket would not only be impractical, but it would also be quite dangerous in terms of possibly starting a fire. The reason for any disciple of Christ to be enlightened is to walk in the light himself/herself and also to become a light for someone else.

The admonition to “let” one’s light shine (verse 16) suggests an inner ability to allow the glow to shine forth or to disallow that glow. This word choice of “let” suggests a choice and a measure of potential control in the matter. If the light of Jesus Christ resides within us, the only thing we must do is not to block or hinder that brilliance. This light shines through our thought life, our spiritual fruit, our pure conversation, our godly treatment of others, our faithfulness, and our obedience to God. The reason that we do good works is not to be seen by others; we do good works as a natural overflow from the abundance of our hearts.

We can declare with confidence that whenever light is introduced to darkness, the light makes a definite difference and more so than when darkness is introduced to light.

Visible good works give praise to God as well as provide a holy, human example of what it means to be moved and motivated by the mighty power of God.

B. Fulfillment of the Law
(Matthew 5:17-20)

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Besides being a perfect example to be imitated by all of humanity, another purpose for the first coming of Christ was to “fulfill that which was shadowed by the figures of the Law, by delivering men through grace from the curse of the Law: and moreover to
teach the true use of obedience which the Law appointed, and to engrave in our hearts the power for obedience” (Geneva Study Bible, http://biblehub.com/kjv/matthew/5-17.htm). The Pharisees must have erroneously imagined that Jesus intended to dismantle the Law and the Prophets. Perhaps this can partially explain their volatile and malicious response to His ministry. The problem with laws without a matching life is that laws alone have no real power. But application engenders an internal combustion of spiritual power and progress. The pathway toward the city of holiness is along the highway of obedience. The more we are obedient to the will of God, the more we will reflect the ways of God.

Some African-American elders might have summed up verse 18 by simply saying, “Chile, God will do what He says He will do!” This sense of confidence and even bravado regarding fulfillment of the promises of God are built on years of personal experience with God’s faithfulness. When God does a work, it is not half done but well done. Reference to the “jot” is “the Greek iota . . . , the smallest of all the letters of the alphabet. The ‘tittle’ was one of the smaller strokes, or twists of other letters . . . . Jewish Rabbis used to caution their scholars against so writing as to cause one letter to be mistaken for another, and to give examples of passages from the Law in which such a mistake would turn a divine truth into nonsense or blasphemy” (Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, http://biblehub.com/matthew/5-18.htm).

Verse 19 stresses the importance of perpetual unity between one’s teachings and one’s actions. One of the biggest problems with the Pharisees is that they often taught one thing and did another. But God’s commandments are so important that there is no room for mistakes and misunderstandings surrounding their clarity or accuracy. This is especially so when it comes to teachers of the Law.

The scribes (verse 20) were like secretaries of state, who prepared and disseminated decrees on behalf of the king (see 2 Samuel 8:17; 20:25; 1 Chronicles 18:16). They performed other important public duties and were regarded as men of high authority and influence.

The Pharisees (a Jewish group) are mentioned, either collectively or as individuals, ninety-eight times in the New Testament. “In contrast to the Sadducees, the Pharisees were mostly middle-class businessmen, and therefore were in contact with the common man. The Pharisees were held in much higher esteem by the common man than the Sadducees. Though they were a minority in the Sanhedrin and held a minority number of positions as priests, they seemed to control the decision making of the Sanhedrin far more than the Sadducees did, again because they had the support of the people” (https://www.gotquestions.org/Sadducees-Pharisees.html).

The kingdom of heaven was the bottom line in the life and priority system of Jesus and therefore should also be the central concern of any true disciple. Any kingdom other than God’s kingdom is a renegade
kingdom. That includes the kingdom of culture and the kingdom of self.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
(July 1-7, 2019)

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Jesus taught us to love God and to love others as we love ourselves. We can accomplish this through deciding on radical obedience to God, even when it hurts or when it may be inconvenient. Our radical obedience to God spills over into genuine love and service to others as we love ourselves. We are called not just to live for

Jesus Teaches about Fulfilling the Law

MONDAY, July 1: “LivingWisely” (Colossians 4:1-6)
TUESDAY, July 2: “A Light to the Nations” (Isaiah 42:1-9)
WEDNESDAY, July 3: “Christ’s Sacrifice for All” (Hebrews 10:1-10)
THURSDAY, July 4: “Living Humbly” (Matthew 23:1-12)
SATURDAY, July 6: “Deliverance from the Law” (Romans 7:24–8:4)
SUNDAY, July 7: “Interplay of Salt, Light, and Righteousness” (Matthew 5:13-20)

July 14, 2019

Summer Quarter 2019

Unit 1: A Heartfelt Covenant
Children’s Unit: A Heartfelt Promise

JESUS TEACHES US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

ADULT/YOUTH

ADULT/YOUNG ADULT TOPIC: Love from the Heart
TOPIC: Love Changes Everything Love One Another

CHILDREN

GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Jesus Teaches Us to Youth

CHILDREN’S TOPIC: Forgiving Others
Matthew 5:21—KJV

21 Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:
22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.
23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.
25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Matthew 5:21—NIV

21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’
And if thy right hand off end thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

And you may be thrown into prison.

“Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: Love transforms how we relate to one another. In what form does this transformation come? Jesus taught us how to reflect His light through controlling our anger, being reconciled with others, immediately dealing with sin, and being faithful.

LESSON OBJECTIVES
Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:
1. Contrast outward conformity to moral rules with the inner purity that Jesus commands.
2. Repent of times when they have obeyed God superficially or hypocritically.
3. Respond to Jesus’ call to take practical steps to live righteously.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH
—Matthew 5:17-20 details how God values interpersonal anger toward a brother or sister, He was not talking only about a literal family member; instead, He was referring to all members of the on the spirit of the Mosaic Law in regard to its family of God.

But I say unto you, Th at whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

and you may be thrown into prison.

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“Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’

“But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

5:21-32.

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The word *hell* in the text comes from the Greek word *gehenna*. The word appears often in Matthew to refer to the eternal destination of the wicked (see Matthew 5:29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33). Hell is not to be confused with Hades (see Luke 16:23), which was the underworld for the dead (known as Sheol in the Old Testament).

— The contrast Jesus set up was not between the Old and New Testaments but, rather, between externalistic interpretation of the rabbinic tradition and His interpretation. (Matthew 5:21)

— The dangerous and destructive effect of human anger, which typically entails a desire to damage or destroy the other person, is stressed throughout Scripture (see Proverbs 20:2; 22:3; 29:22; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20; James 1:20; etc.). (Matthew 5:22)

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The gospel of Matthew is one of the Gospel letters of the New Testament that is believed to have been written between AD 65 and AD 70. This book was written by the apostle Matthew. The gospel of Matthew traces and recounts the life and ministry of Jesus Christ during the ancient times of the Roman Empire’s rule over Israel. These observations are partly based on the gospel of Mark, which was written earlier than Matthew’s gospel. The book of Matthew was written one generation after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and seeks to reaffirm the ministry of Christ as illustrated in Matthew 3 (which took place about AD 30). Mark, Luke, John, and the gospel of Matthew form the four canonical Gospel books of the New Testament that detail the chronological events that shape the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ. All these books approach the narrative of Christ using different styles of writing and different points of emphasis (bible.org).

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The apostle Matthew wrote using Greek or the Aramaic language, and this writing was initially meant for a Greek-speaking Jewish audience. Matthew stresses the point that Jesus is a Jewish Messiah, and to some this indicates that the intended audience was the Jews. This text was possibly written outside of the region of Palestine, and many biblical scholars have argued that it may have been written in the city of Antioch in Syria (see Acts 11:26). The author brings out the growing body of what would become New Testament teachings and contrasts
it with the Old Testament; this was common among the religious teachers during the time of Matthew (see Leviticus 19:17; Matthew 5:21-26).

The notion of law and authority is clearly brought out in this chapter with relation to the civil court in Israel as well as God’s heavenly court that was the only one competent to deal with the internal issues that cause people to hate and kill one another. It is in this vein that this chapter seeks to correct the ideologies that were common among the scribes and Pharisees and their external observation of sinful acts.

PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

Jesus Christ: He is the main character teaching on observing the laws of the Old Testament, using illustrations about internal anger and hatred that consequently lead people to commit external heinous acts such as murder (see Matthew 5:21). He teaches concerning divine and eternal judgment that is beyond the understanding of the human courts (bible.org).

Pharisees and Scribes: These were the teachers of the people and the interpreters of the Law. In the Jewish community, these individuals were widely respected because they had knowledge of the Scriptures and were dedicated to observing the Law of the Old Testament teachings. They were the main group that Jesus Christ criticized in His teachings (see Matthew 5:20; 12:38).

KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON


I. INTRODUCTION

A. Consider the Source

Heart (verse 28)—Greek: kardia (kar-dee'-ah): the heart, mind, character, inner self, will; intention; center.

Judge (verse 25)—Greek: kritēs (kree-tace’): a judge.

Judgment (verse 21)—Greek: krisis (kree'-sis): judging; divine judgment.

Reconciled (verse 24)—Greek: diallassō (deenal-las'-so): changed; exchanged; “I reconciled”; changed enmity for friendship.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON

I. Introduction

A. Consider the Source

B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

A. Murder, He Wrote (Matthew 5:21-22)

B. Heavenly Harmony (Matthew 5:23-26)

C. Avoiding Adultery (Matthew 5:27-30)

D. Divorce Directives (Matthew 5:31-32)

III. Concluding Reflection

In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave an interpretation of the Law and acknowledged how the Law was taught. We see Jesus make a visible distinction between what the Law taught and what He declared by His authority when He says, “but I say unto you.” Consider the Source! While speaking, Jesus did not condemn in an outright manner the explanation of the Law. However, He expanded its meaning and also showed how God
desires a pure heart filled with love for God. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill the true purpose of the Law.

Jesus began by addressing the action of murder. He, however, does not stop at the common meaning of murder but extends it to include slander of anyone (see Psalm 101:5; James 4:11). Murder is a sin, but so is slander (which is using the tongue to murder someone). This truly does not proceed from the heart of a Christian who is filled with love. Rather than kill with both hand and tongue, Christians are expected to make peace with those who offend them.

B. Biblical Background

As Christians and ambassadors of Christ on earth, our work must always portray and reflect the love of God. When we are able to show love, then we can truly show remorse and express our regrets to those we might have hurt and equally forgive them of any offense they might also have done to us, just as God has forgiven us (see Colossians 3:14; 1 John 4:7).

Jesus in this passage touched on the subject of adultery, in which lust is included. Lust is a sin and must not be found in the life of any Christian or in the marriage relationship of Christians. Christian marriage is a symbol of the union of Christ and the church. As Christ’s union with the church is pure, so also are we expected to show purity in marriage.

From verses 21-22 of our text, Jesus Christ began a contrast when He quoted the Law: “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). As clearly seen and understood in the Old and New Testaments, killing refers to murder. Jesus, however, went beyond this literal, legalistic meaning to bring about an extended view to include anger as an inner intention which could lead to such a sin (see 2 Samuel 6:20; Exodus 10:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). Consequently, Jesus here suggested that verbal abuse proceeds from a heart of sinful motives and anger and hatred, which could lead to murder. Jesus here tried to show that insults and abuses that proceed from the mouth carry the same guilt as murder.

In verses 23-24, after illustrating the similarities between murder and the inner intentions of hatred which produce abusive words, Jesus went on to show an example of one who intended to buy a clear conscience through gifts to God without first clearing his conscience by reconciling with his brother. The latter is actually paramount, since reconciliation is the tool through which forgiveness can be shown and love expressed. Christians, we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ just the way we love ourselves. Any offering made from a bitter heart cannot be accepted by God. We must learn to forgive everyone, including the “opponent at law” (one who is in legal dispute with us). Jesus always wants us to reconcile with our brothers, sisters, or just anyone.

From verses 27-28, we see that Jesus began to discuss the problem of adultery, which also was found in the Law (see Exodus 20:14). And like murder, Jesus once again revealed how adultery was first carried out inwardly (lust) before the physical act
took place. Here, we are also brought to the consciousness that glancing or looking could cause adultery even without the physical action. In the Old Testament era, people who indulged in adultery were stoned to death. On Judgment Day, our hearts will first be judged before our deeds and actions. A desire to sin is worse than when the action of sin is committed. Our hearts are intended to produce love and grace (see Romans 10:9-10).

As discussed in verses 29-30, Jesus made an illustration which should not be taken literally. This was the statement of cutting off one’s hand or plucking out one’s eye. The intent of the illustration was that we ought to recognize that lust comes from within the mind and heart of a man and not the actual physical organ. Consequently, we can separate ourselves from people or places that contribute to our sin as a beginning to cease our sinful behavior. Thus, Jesus was teaching that it would be much better for one to lose his/her body here on earth in order to gain eternity. We must deal with sin in our bodies so that we may gain eternity.

Anger (verse 22) is a natural human emotion that is usually triggered by an inner or outer sense of deep hurt, fear, or frustration. Today’s text is a good example of the fact that the purpose of the Bible was not only to address super-spiritual theological topics, but also to provide practical insight on how to successfully navigate the nuances of everyday life. The text does not address all anger, but it targets being angry for no good reason. The danger of this kind of blind anger is that it could soon turn into harsh actions that one will later regret.

The word *raca* means “vain fellows,” as is seen in Judges 9:4; 11:3; and Proverbs 12:11. This term was commonly used to express insolent contempt, a sense of being despised, and basic anger. When we are no longer able to recognize the mere humanity of a person regardless of his or her offense, we sink to “raca” level. The term *council* referred to the great Sanhedrin court, which consisted of seventy to seventy-two members, a president,
and a vice president. In addition, there were also priests, elders, and scribes who were part of the Sanhedrin.

Have you ever called someone a fool, or have you ever been called a fool by someone else? The Greek word translated “fool” in today’s text is similar to the instance used in Psalm 14:1 and is an expression of utter contempt. Here, the choice of words is not as important as the condition of the heart, and the same word can be acceptably used with a righteously indignant heart, as is seen by the fact that Jesus Himself used this term in Matthew 23:17, 19 (see Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/5-22.htm).

B. Heavenly Harmony (Matthew 5:23-26)

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Interestingly, Jesus connected harmony of the heart to the question of inner healing. A prompt offering given while living with a splintered relationship is not as important as a unified relationship and a gift that is brought later (verses 23-24). The emphasis here is beyond personal recognition of internal conflict with a brother or sister. Even if our hearts and consciences are clear, we as Christians also are called to consider and work toward eradicating any negative dispositions that others may have against us. Throughout Scripture, the importance of oneness, unity, and harmony are elevated to top importance. Jesus insisted in Mark 3:25 that a house divided against itself cannot stand. In the high priestly prayer before His betrayal, Jesus prayed that the disciples might be one in heart and spirit.

Jesus realized that harmony was paramount in the work of discipleship to ensure the success of God’s kingdom. Distractions caused by common conflict can easily hinder and even immobilize the progress of a local church.

Not only was Jesus concerned about the presence of conflict, but He was also sensitive to the timing of the settlement of disagreements (verses 25-26).

C. Avoiding Adultery (Matthew 5:27-30)

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.
Here in verse 27, Jesus turned His attention to the seventh commandment: “Thou shall not commit adultery.”

There are at least three well-known instances in which Jesus encountered a woman with a questionable sexual history. One of these encounters is chronicled in John 4, featuring the Samaritan woman that Jesus addressed concerning her living arrangement: “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true” (verses 17b-18, NIV). Here, the purpose was not only to expose the sin, but also to propose a remedy. A second instance occurred in John 8 when a crowd brought to Jesus a woman who was caught in the act of adultery, and they asked Jesus what should be done to her. It was a trick to try to trap Him. Jesus’ classic response to their question was, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (verse 7, NIV). After her accusers left, Jesus addressed the woman: “Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin’” (verse 11, NIV). It is almost as important to acknowledge what Jesus did not do as it is to acknowledge what Jesus did do. Jesus did not condemn her. Jesus did not excuse her. Perhaps most significant, Jesus did not ignore her. The third instance concerns the sinful woman who anointed Jesus’ feet in Luke 7. Jesus’ response to her in verse 47 (NIV) was, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” In this third setting, Jesus acknowledged her sins and forgave her based on her extravagant and emotional expression of love and repentance, as exhibited by her tears and her acts and attitude of sacrificial love and humility.

Jesus went beyond the scope of the Old Testament definition of “adultery” to include not only the physical act of adultery, but also the attitude of the adulterous heart (verse 28). Most people would acknowledge that pollution of the body is problematic. But what about pollution of the mind?

These graphic descriptions in verses 29 and 30 succeed in capturing the attention of the reader. Jesus used as an example two of the most prominent and useful exterior body parts (the eye and hand) to effectively illustrate the overriding importance of sacrificing the freedom, usage, and pleasure of one body part in order to ensure the salvation of the whole body. Just as with a situation of necessary amputation, as radical as removal may seem, it is the preferable option when it may determine life or death.

D. Divorce Directives
(Matthew 5:31-32)

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Great abuses had arisen in Jesus’ time with regards to divorce, which was permitted on very trivial grounds (verse 31). One rabbinical saying was, “If any man hate his wife, let him put her away” (Cambridge Bible
for Schools and Colleges). The reference to this divorce law (see Deuteronomy 24:1) was probably directed toward the scribes who busied themselves solely about getting the bill of separation into due legal form. They did nothing to restrain the unjust caprice of husbands; they rather opened a wider door to license.

Some of the rabbis allowed divorce to be granted on the grounds that the wife was displeasing to her husband or that the husband was attracted to a more beautiful woman. As we discuss the topic of divorce, it is important to understand that “Christ did not come to be a new legislator making laws for social life. He came to set up a high ethical ideal, and leave that to work on men’s minds. The tendency of His teaching is to create deep aversion to the rupture of married relations. That aversion might even go the length of shrinking from severance of the tie even in the case of one who had forfeited all claims” (The Expositor’s Greek Testament, Volume 1, edited by Sir William Robertson Nicoll, p. 110).

But Jesus casted heavenly light on what Moses allowed in verse 32. According to the Law of Moses, if the husband left his wife, there were certain necessary steps in the process: “If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man” (Deuteronomy 24:1-2, NIV). Of course, civil laws and financial responsibilities have significantly changed since the time this ordinance was written. According to Malachi 2:16 (NIV), “The man who hates and divorces his wife, says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘does violence to the one he should protect,’ says the Lord Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.”

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Love is the transformative factor that informs and impacts the way that we relate to each other in everyday life. We reflect the light of Jesus as we manage our anger, unify from conflicts, become reconciled with others, and eradicate patterns of sin. Outward conformity to spiritual and moral rules is made possible through inward purity that Jesus commands. God calls us to righteous living through controlling our behavior through disciplining our minds, our tongues, our time, and our money. Marriage is a microcosm of life, and it calls us to live in close proximity to another human being. This requires that we become transparent as well as vulnerable and truthful. Not everyone is able to endure the weight and pressure that comes with the territory of a healthy marriage. But those who are considering marriage should submit to a rigorous, spiritual, and competent course of examination, coaching, and counseling in order to help them make the right decisions about the institution of marriage.
Dear God, thank You for giving us the power to fulfill the purpose for which we have been created. Help us to see Your face and to live in harmony with those who walk beside us along the pathway of life. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Jesus Teaches Us to Love One Another

MONDAY, July 8: “Obey Judicial Rulings at Once” (Deuteronomy 17:8-11)
TUESDAY, July 9: “Handling Temptations” (Mark 9:42-48)
WEDNESDAY, July 10: “Living with Neighbors” (Leviticus 19:11-18)
THURSDAY, July 11: “Living with Believers” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-18)
FRIDAY, July 12: “The Unbreakable Marital Bond” (Mark 10:3-9)
SATURDAY, July 13: “Let Yes Be Yes—No, No” (Matthew 5:33-37)
SUNDAY, July 14: “Commit to Love Each Other” (Matthew 5:21-32)

July 21, 2019

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT TRANSFORMING LOVE

ADULT/YOUTH

ADULT/YOUTH TOPIC: All You Need Is Love
ADULT/YOUTH TOPIC: A Love that Transforms

ADULT/YOUNG ADULT TOPIC: All You Need Is Love
ADULT/YOUNG ADULT TOPIC: A Love that Transforms

GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Jesus Teaches Us to Love One Another
CHILDREN’S TOPIC: Loving Our Enemies

DEVOotional READING
Romans 12:9-21

ADULT/YOUTH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:38-48
PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 5:38-48
ADULT KEY VERSES: Matthew 5:43-44
YOUTH KEY VERSE: Matthew 5:44

CHILDREN

Matthew 5:38-48—KJV

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak.
also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But from you. 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’”
44 “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
45 “that you may be children of your Father in heaven. 45 Thou may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? 48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.
He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 “And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: Many people believe that retribution is justified when they are mistreated. What is the appropriate response when people are mistreated? Jesus taught His disciples to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:
1. Tell what it means for one to love his or her enemy.
2. Desire that those who act contrary to Christ’s ethic of love would come to experience Christ’s love.
3. Pray that God would work through them to touch and transform the lives of unloving people.

Matthew 5:38-48—NIV
38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’
39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.
40 “And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.
41 “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.
42 “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH
—This passage echoes a theme found throughout the Beatitudes in which Jesus called His followers to exhibit behavior that exceeds the common wisdom of unbelievers.
—The command to “be perfect” (verse 48) was a call to be more complete rather than be sinless. It was not intended to discourage disciples who make mistakes but, rather, to be
an encouragement to adopt God’s standards of radical love as our own.
—This is referencing Leviticus 24:19-20, which says to do the opposite of what Jesus is now saying. (Matthew 5:38)
—Jesus’ teaching here is very radical and would have been very countercultural to His listeners; being called to love your enemy was rare. (Matthew 5:39-43)
—Love here means agape and is a sacrificial love that is unique in its character. (Matthew 5:43)
—Leviticus 19:18 speaks of not doing wrong to your own people, and Jesus is clearly expanding this to not doing wrong to anyone, including enemies. (Matthew 5:43-44)
—Tax collectors and pagans were seen as sinners; so, if we too only love those who love us, then we are not doing that differently. (Matthew 5:46)
—“Perfect” in the Greek means “teleioi,” which means to mature and be full grown. (Matthew 5:48)

Teachers of CHILDREN
—Jesus spoke hard words about not retaliating when we are hurt.
—Jesus held up the ideal of returning good for evil.
—Jesus practiced what He preached about loving our enemies.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON
The gospel of Matthew was written during the rule of the Roman Empire between AD 65 and AD 70. Matthew was a tax collector and one of the twelve apostles of Christ. This gospel contains the genealogy and the historical events surrounding the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one of the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament, which are written collections of sayings and teachings of Jesus Christ in the Greek and Aramaic languages. This gospel was partially based on the earlier gospel of Mark, which is believed to have been written around AD 40 in the form of a narrative recounting the history of Jesus of Nazareth. The other canonical Gospels of the New Testament also recount the life and ministry of Christ, using somewhat varied content and their own forms and style of writing. They include the gospels of Mark, Luke, and John (bible.org).

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON
The gospel of Matthew was written after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in the city of Jerusalem in AD 70. Matthew, also known as Levi, was a tax collector and one of the twelve disciples committed to the ministry of Christ. Early church fathers suggested that the book of Matthew was first written in Hebrew, and this —Jesus pointed to tax collectors and Gentiles as people who failed to love their enemies.
—Jesus wanted His followers to strive for the perfect love of God, the heavenly Father.
—Nations that claim to follow Jesus forget the ideal of love when they are threatened.

may be because the initial audience of this gospel were the Jews who were despaired and shocked after the fall of Jerusalem. However, other biblical scholars have argued that the original composition language remains unresolved (bible.org).
Matthew portrays a nonviolent Savior in his writing of the gospel through his portrayal of the character and the teachings of Christ, who advocates for passivism for the sword-bearing rule of the Roman Empire (see Matthew 5:38-42). Jesus urged His followers to turn the other cheek and give up the garment, which simply implies that Christians were not to engage in physical force for justice in the society but, instead, show counterintuitive strategies that will effect peaceful social transformations (see Matthew 5:38-42).

Jesus taught His disciples and followers that civil retribution has no place in the kingdom of heaven; He, instead, encouraged them to show the ethical virtues of mercy and forgiveness. This provides a framework for appreciation of exegetical conclusion of reformed Christianity rather than retributive justice. The apostle also presents the six antitheses that show how Jesus compared the newness of the Gospel to the Mosaic Law, and how Christ fulfills these laws through His sacrificial death (see Matthew 5:17-20).

**PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON**

**Jesus Christ:** He is the main masterpiece in Matthew’s gospel. Jesus is teaching His disciples concerning the interpretation of the Law and authority of the state. He criticizes how the scribes, Pharisees, and the Sadducees interpret the Law and urges His followers to show mercy and forgiveness instead of judgmental retribution.

**The Disciples:** Jesus is directing this message to His followers and disciples on the nature of true discipleship, and how they should passively endure their humiliation under Roman rule and show forgiveness. (bible.org)

**KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Greek Description</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheek (verse 39)</td>
<td>Greek: <em>siagón</em> (see-ag-one’)</td>
<td>the jawbone, cheek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye (verse 38)</td>
<td>Greek: <em>ophthalmos</em> (of-thalmos’)</td>
<td>the eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give (verse 42)</td>
<td>Greek: <em>didómi</em> (did’-o-mee)</td>
<td>offer; give; put; place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resist (verse 39)</td>
<td>Greek: <em>anthistémi</em> (anth-is’tay-mee)</td>
<td>take a stand against; oppose; resist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue (verse 40)</td>
<td>Greek: <em>krinó</em> (kree’-no)</td>
<td>to judge, decide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. Seeing Beyond the Law**

**Tooth (verse 38)** Greek: *odus* (od-ooce): a tooth.

**TOPOCAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON**

I. **Introduction**

A. Seeing beyond the Law

B. Biblical Background

II. **Exposition and Application of the Scripture**

A. Revised Revenge (Matthew 5:38-42)

B. The Hardest Kind of Love (Matthew 5:43-45)

C. The Easiest Kind of Love (Matthew 5:46-48)
III. Concluding Reflection

Our text opens with the Old Testament saying of “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” which expresses the intent for equalization of justice. Jesus, in quoting this law, intended for us to resist and not to retaliate when someone has wronged us. Jesus here was not focusing on revenge, nor did He in any way mean for us to be weak or passive. Rather, He wanted us to look beyond revenge and being vindictive. Jesus here encourages us to respond to evil with good, as this is the standard of God and His kingdom.

In verses 39-42, Jesus provided us with four different examples of what it actually means not to take revenge. In His first example, Jesus illustrated the act of being hit (slapped) on the right cheek and suggested that we offer the other side also to be hit. The whole essence of His illustration is to encourage us (at all times) to never seek revenge and to avoid retaliation. This cannot take place except we learn to love like God,

Our Lesson Scripture is Matthew 5:38-48, which is part of the larger section of the Sermon on the Mount that we examined in the previous lessons. This passage provides us with six illustrations of what Jesus meant by fulfilling the Law. These illustrations begin with the Jewish laws: 1) forbidding murder; 2) forbidding adultery; 3) the need for a certificate of divorce; 4) forbidding false swearing; 5) forbidding revenge; 6) loving our neighbors.

In this text, Jesus showed us how to see beyond the observance of the Law to seeing the spirit behind the Law. He showed us how to be children of God who reflect God’s love and God’s will in our everyday actions and relationships. These verses are strictly about living according to God’s standard and that of His kingdom. The difficulty of living up to these standards reminds us that the grace of God has been and still is our only hope. God’s grace is sufficient, as is seen in Romans 3:23 and 2 Corinthians 12:9.

B. Biblical Background

Our focal passage begins in Matthew 5:38, which marks the beginning of a review of the law “an eye for an eye.” The events in Matthew 5–7 are said to have occurred in AD 27.

In the second illustration in verse 40, Jesus said, “If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also” (NASB). The cloak, as it was known, is an outer robe which is an indispensable part of a clothing that the poor also used in sleeping. The cloak was very important, so much that even if an opponent had won it in court, he had to return it every evening for the one to sleep in. This was the law of the time. In essence, Jesus was speaking to the poor among His followers who, in their persecution, were denied their most basic need and taught that instead of defending themselves or retaliating, they should
ultimately let go for the sake of the kingdom and the One in whom they believe.

In the third example in verse 41, Jesus said that if a person forces you to go one mile, go with him two. This illustration demonstrates and encourages us to go the extra mile—put in that extra time, effort, care, and so forth. God’s standard requires us to give our best even if it means going an extra length to achieve it. We are to be a blessing continually.

In His fourth and final illustration in verse 42, Jesus said that we are to give to those who ask, and do not turn away those who want to borrow from you. This illustration is linked to the law about lending in Deuteronomy 15:7-11. Jesus here is talking about people with legitimate needs. It is our responsibility to be generous and to discern whether a person has legitimate needs.

Finally, in verses 43-48, Jesus began to speak on unconditional love. He reminded listeners of the Old Testament law when He said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy’” (verse 43 [NIV]; see Leviticus 19:18)—but He took it to a whole new level far beyond their expectations when, in verse 44, He said, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (NASB). Love in this context is commanded. This truly requires spiritual strength and dexterity to fulfill. Jesus is not calling us to like our enemies or like whatever they do; rather, the command is to love! And the only love that could satisfy this is agape love—the God kind of love.

The sole purpose of exhibiting this kind of love, according to Jesus, is so that we may as our heavenly Father is perfect (verse 48). This is the goal of Christianity. Until we begin to be sons of our Father who is in heaven. He sends sun and rain to everyone equally, whether they be His child or not. We are encouraged to show and share the characteristics of our

**EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE**

A. Revised Revenge

(Matthew 5:38-42)

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

In verse 38, Jesus discussed the very natural and human subject of revenge. To exact revenge upon someone means to retaliate or to get even by means of verbal, emotional, psychological, or physical injury to the offending party. By using the phrase “you have heard that it was said,” Jesus again made an oblique reference to the tendencies
of the scribes who usually held strictly to the letter of the Law without much care for the spirit of the Law.

Upon initially reading or hearing this perspective (verse 39), it almost seems unthinkable that any rational person would actually offer his or her face to be slapped a second time. In this passage, Jesus was addressing and explaining the letter of the Law versus the intent of the Law. In this very sentence, Jesus issued a directive that was intended to express a particular attitude, disposition, and response rather than serve as an eternal template for universal replication. Support for this perspective is seen in Jesus’ own response when confronted with a similar situation in John 18:22-23 (NIV): “When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. ‘Is this the way you answer the high priest?’ he demanded. ‘If I said something wrong,’ Jesus replied, ‘testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?’” Jesus responded to this rude, brute gesture in a humble, nonviolent, and nonretaliatory manner while still maintaining His dignity and His spirituality. We are called to emulate the behavior of Jesus when in similar situations.

This issue of legal revenge (verse 40) is similar to the previously discussed issue of physical revenge. Both are presented as a distraction and a waste of valuable time and energy for the disciple. Paul maintained a similar perspective in 1 Corinthians 6:1-4 (NIV): “If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord’s people? Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?”

After Paul initially identified the problem, he then explained to his readers why suing a brother or sister in Christ may not be the best decision and appealed to the reader’s sense of decency and self-respect in 1 Corinthians 6:5-7 (NIV): “I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?”

Some governments utilized a system of forced service (verse 41) in which they used certain citizens as couriers or messengers. The message conveyed in the text is to gladly go beyond the expected call of duty in order to be a good representative of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God (Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers). The inference here is to allow reasonable personal discomfort and inconvenience if such actions bring greater glory to God. Those who act upon the right kinds of principles and values will have the greatest amount of personal peace and comfort.
The spotlight here in verse 42 is on a sense of generosity and hospitality. When it is within one’s power to give, one should strive to give to those who ask. However, such principles should always be balanced by the all-purpose principles of wisdom and discernment. Scriptures such as 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NIV) assist with latitude in this matter: “For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.’”

B. The Hardest Kind of Love
(Matthew 5:43-45)

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Some teachers of the Law adopted the approach and perspective that only those who were from their own country, their own race, and their own religion were to be deemed as neighbors and friends (verse 43). Jesus had a different perspective and insisted that God, who is Father of all, has a much wider concept regarding kinship, relationship, and responsibility. This is an age-old lesson that was first taught in the Genesis 4:9 Creation narrative: “Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ ‘I don’t know,’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’” (NIV). Although there is no recorded response to this question, the implicit answer is a resounding yes. In Mark 3:35 (NIV), after Jesus was informed that His blood relatives were waiting for Him outside the house where He was ministering, His response was, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus taught that our extending kindness must not be limited to those who are kind to us (verse 44). The hardest kind of love is to love those who are unlovable. However, it is often the unlovely who are most in need of love. “Others salute their brethren, and embrace those of their own party, and way, and opinion, but we must not so confine our respect. It is the duty of Christians to desire, and aim at, and press towards perfection in grace and holiness. And therein we must study to conform ourselves to the example of our heavenly Father, [1 Peter 1:15, 16]. Surely more is to be expected from the followers of Christ than from others; surely more will be found in them than in others. Let us beg of God to enable us to prove ourselves his children” (Matthew Henry Commentary, http://biblehub.com/matthew/5-45.htm).

C. The Easiest Kind of Love
(Matthew 5:46-48)

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The easiest kind of love is love that is equally and automatically reciprocated. Such love makes few laborious demands, and this
does not always provide the length and breadth of experiences and conditions necessary to adequately test and prove the reality and durability of love.

Jesus noted that our loving those who love us is so easy that even tax collectors are capable. Tax collectors in New Testament times were much more loathed than our modern-day Internal Revenue Service. The Roman system of taxation was demoralizing to all engaged in it.

People usually reserved greetings and salutations for those who were of the same nation or family, or who were friends (verse 47). The same is often still true today. We have an innate and instinctive tendency to acknowledge and gravitate to those with whom we naturally connect and relate. “By saluting is meant common [offerings] of kindness, such as inquiring of our neighbours’ health, wishing them well, etc. The publicans were civil officers appointed by the Romans to gather up public taxes and revenues. The chief commissioners were knights and gentlemen of Rome, who either [assigned] these revenues to others, or employed others under them in the collecting of them” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/5-47.htm). Since these individuals were so hated, they were usually not even greeted in the marketplace. Jesus was preaching and teaching how to let love make a difference in the often-overlooked, everyday matters of life.

The word translated “perfect” (verse 48) comes from the Greek word teleios, which means “complete” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance). Another word that is helpful in our ability to process the concept presented here is the word mature. Spiritual maturity is an ongoing process rather than a one-time event. Many Christians love to excuse their less-than-stellar behavior by remarking, “Nobody’s perfect.” This is true, but we are never to give up the quest for spiritual maturity—for that, not flawlessness, is our goal. The text leaves no doubt that attainment to maturity—to perfection according to creaturely limits—is eventually possible.

But when this attainment can be made is not stated. Many will, indeed, affirm that, as our Lord is giving directions to his disciples concerning things in this life, the attainment also is affirmed to be possible in this life. But this by no means follows. Christ gives the command, and by the form of it implies that it shall be carried out to the full. But this is quite consistent with the conception of a gradually increasing development of love which, in fact will attain maturity, a state in which God’s love has ever been; but not immediately and not before the final completion of all Christ’s work in us. (The Complete Pulpit Commentary, Volume 7: Matthew to John, Henry D. M. Spence)

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Jesus desired to have an influence and an impact on the way we interact with our
friends as well as our perceived enemies. Although it is often difficult for us to love the unlovable, through Christ it is indeed possible. Nowhere in the Old Testament are the covenant people instructed to hate their enemies. In the current social and political climate, we can learn much through travelling the pathway of spiritual maturity. Through commitment to a life of spiritual discipline, we will eventually be able to accept Jesus’ call to a higher standard than the world’s, hate evil but not evildoers, and imitate God by showing unconditional love.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
(July 15-21, 2019)

from the life lessons of Jesus regarding loving the unlovable. God’s expectation is perfection. This state is ultimately possible

Jesus Teaches about Transforming Love
MONDAY, July 15: “Restrain Your Anger” (Leviticus 24:16-22)
TUESDAY, July 16: “Filled with Grace” (Acts 6:8-15)
WEDNESDAY, July 17: “Transformed Giving and Praying” (Matthew 6:1-6)
THURSDAY, July 18: “The Lord Honors Patience” (Lamentations 3:25-33)
FRIDAY, July 19: “Love Your Neighbors” (Romans 13:1-10)
SATURDAY, July 20: “The Greatest Commandments” (Matthew 22:34-40)
SUNDAY, July 21: “Practice Love toward All” (Matthew 5:38-48)

PRAYER
Lord, thank You for calling us to a higher calling and for equipping us with the power to reach spiritual maturity. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

ADULT/ADULT/ADULT TOPIC: The Pursuit of Truth
ADULT/ADULT/ADULT TOPIC: Resist Judgment
ADULT/ADULT/ADULT TOPIC: Think about Others

CHILDREN
GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Jesus Teaches How to Think about Others
CHILDREN’S TOPIC: Judging and Being Judged
Matthew 7:1-6, 15-23—KJV

JUDGE NOT, that ye be not judged.
2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?
4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?
5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.
6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Matthew 7:1-6, 15-23—NIV

“DO NOT judge, or you too will be judged. 2 “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.
3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?
4 “How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?
5 “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.
6 “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”
15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

**UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE:** In a complex world, many become confused in trying to cope with the diversity in beliefs and lifestyles. How can one maintain a sense of stability given such complexity? Jesus taught His disciples the spiritual disciplines of resisting the use of judgment and using discernment.

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**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

*Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:*

1. Understand judgment and discernment and distinguish between the two.
2. Reflect on the consequences of practicing discernment rather than judgment.
3. Model discernment rather than judging.

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**AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED**

**Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH**

—Given the immediate context and other scriptural statements about judgment, verses 1-2 are clearly not condemning divine, civil, or even all forms of interpersonal judgment; rather, the verses specifically condemn rash and overly harsh judgment between individuals that is generated from pride and a spirit of harsh criticism. —The exhortation to “first take the log out of your own eye” (verse 5) emphasizes the...
importance of regularly evaluating our own actions and motives so that we can be in a better position to help our Christian brothers and sisters identify their own shortcomings without hypocrisy.

—in both the balance of verses 1-5 with verse 6 and the teaching of verses 15-20, Jesus emphasized the importance of using discernment in evaluating the behaviors and motivations of others.

—Verses 21-23 extend the use of discernment not only to help identify false disciples, but also, even more importantly, to encourage selfexamination to make sure that one is not a false disciple.

—Judging someone refers to hypocritical judging. (Matthew 7:1)

—Hypocrite literally means “a stage player; a dissembler, or pretender.” (Matthew 7:5)

—“Dogs” is an insult, and “swine” is considered very unclean. (Matthew 7:6)

—“Lord” hints at Jesus’ divinity and is used in Scripture as a respectful and worshipful address for God. (Matthew 7:21)

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The early church fathers argued that the gospel of Matthew was written around AD 65 and AD 70 after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem during the Roman Empire reign. It is conventionally agreed by the church fathers that this gospel was written by the apostle Matthew, who also went by the name Levi the son of Alphaeus. Matthew was one of the twelve disciples and a tax collector in Capernaum. The other canonical gospels of the New Testament include Mark, Luke, and John. All these canonical gospels share one thing in common: they all give a narrative concerning the ministry, death, and resurrection of the Messiah. However, the gospel of Matthew uses the gospel of Mark as a point of reference (bible.org).

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

It is generally accepted that the book of Matthew was written after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 using the gospel of Mark as the source, as suggested by Ignatius and Didache. The apostle Matthew criticized the Pharisaic traditions (which were common after the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem) and sought to separate the church community from these individuals. The gospel of Matthew is believed to have been written in Palestine or in the city of Antioch in Syria, where a significant number of Jews were living. This
also suggests that the primary audience of the Gospel were Jewish Christians, as suggested by the wide use of Old Testament references and Jewish-specific messages. The references to synagogues and the Jewish religious authorities are framed negatively in the Gospel. It refers to the synagogues as “their synagogues,” which implies that the Jewish Christians were no longer active in the synagogue worship (bible.org).

Matthew 7:15 warns concerning false prophets, as Christ compared them to wolves disguised in sheep’s clothing. The images of wolves and sheep are used in the Old and New Testaments. Wolves represent the worst aspects of people and depict callousness and insatiable hunger (see Matthew 7:15; 10:16). The Gospel also warns Christians concerning judging their brothers and the tendency of the Jews to judge other nations. Jesus Christ addressed this idea of retribution through the approach of the messianic law (see Matthew 5:1-12, 19).

I. INTRODUCTION
A. The Message in the Message
Give (verse 6)—Greek: didómi (did’-o-mee): to offer, give; to put, place.
Hypocrite (verse 5)—Greek: hupokrités (hoopok-ree-tace’): a hypocrite, dissembler, pretender.
Kingdom (verse 21)—Greek: basileia (basil-i’-ah): kingship; sovereignty; authority; rule; kingdom.
Measure (verse 2)—Greek: metron (met’-ron): a measure; measuring rod.
Speck (verse 3)—Greek: karphos (kar’-fos): a small, dry stalk; a chip of wood; “mote” (KJV).

TOPICAL OUTLINE
OF THE LESSON
I. Introduction
   A. The Message in the Message
   B. Biblical Background
II. Exposition and Application
    of the Scripture
   A. Judge Not
      (Matthew 7:1-6)
   B. True and False Prophets
      (Matthew 7:15-20)
   C. True and False Disciples
      (Matthew 7:21-23)

PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN
THE LESSON
Jesus Christ: He is the central focus of the Gospel. Jesus taught concerning the need for His followers to avoid judging others. He criticized the Pharisees for being culpable of being unjust and lacking the spirit of love and tenderness in their judgment.

KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON
Bear (verse 18)—Greek: pheró (fer’-o): to bear, carry, “bring forth” (KJV).
Fruit (verse 17)—Greek: karpos (kar-pos’): fruit; deed; action; result.
III. Concluding Reflection

Matthew 7:7-11 talks about Jesus’ promise concerning prayer, expanding the discourse on personal prayer. In Matthew 7:15-23, he brought up Jesus’ caution about not trusting all religious claims and about observing a person’s behavior (which ultimately tells one’s character).

As we continue to study the various themes in the Sermon on the Mount, we thus have a reminder of the importance of Jesus’ teaching as portrayed by Matthew. Matthew wants us to know all the teachings of Jesus Christ even when he cannot fit these teachings into a defined structured series. As can be seen, the Sermon on the Mount does not really fit as a structured text—as each paragraph seemed to be independent, having its own message.

Notwithstanding, Matthew arranged these teachings in a relevant way for his readers. In Matthew 7:1-5, he talked about avoiding all religious claims and about observing a person’s behavior (which ultimately tells one’s character).

Matthew 7 is the last of the three chapters that make up the Sermon on the Mount. As stated in previous lessons, the events of Matthew 5–7 are said to have taken place in AD 27. Matthew 7 has twenty-nine verses.

B. Biblical Background

Matthew 7:1-12 contains some of the very vital and delicate duties of the Christian life. In the elaborate presentation of these texts, great principles are produced, which are necessities of the Christian race. In Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus talked about judgment. It is worth noting that this judgment does not exactly translate into condemning or judging a person, whether favorably or not. In this context, judgment simply points toward looking unfavorably toward a person’s disposition, character, and actions—which consequently results in the pronouncement of unjust, unloving, and rash comments or judgments on them. What our Lord Jesus tried to make noticeable when He said, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” is the spirit out of which these comments and judgments come.

Jesus further expressed the truth when He said in verse 2, “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” This expression is also used by Jesus in other contexts (see Mark 4:24, Luke 6:38), and it represents a great principle of divine administration. When we make unkind and unloving judgments about others, it will also be returned to us. Another issue brought to the fore by Jesus is the issue of “mote.” The mote could represent small faults that we tend to notice and focus on rather than look inward to discover the bigger faults which we harbor in our lives. In light of this, Jesus here referred to such a person as a “hypocrite.” The hypocrite pretends to be overzealous and compassionate but, in reality, these services are not without faults; but the hypocrite tends to fit himself as a reproof of the faults of others without judging himself first.

Matthew 7:13-29 begins the final conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount.
The righteousness of the kingdom is aptly described in detail and principle. It involves one’s self-sacrifice at every step. This consequently would bring about the division of all into two classes of truths: those who will follow self-indulgence and the easy path; and those few who are bent on following the path of eternal safety at whatever cost.

From verse 15, we see Jesus issuing a warning about false prophets. These prophets are those teachers and preachers who come in the guise of expounding on the mind of God and claim to show the right path to heaven and eternal life while inwardly they are ravaging wolves whose actual intentions are to mislead and deceive their followers (see Acts 20:29-30; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, 13-15). These false teachers and preachers can only be known by their fruits (verses 16-19). The heart is a true interpreter and determines the actions of life.

At this point, the hypocrisy of teachers leads Jesus to issue a solemn warning against religious hypocrisy in general.

In conclusion, we are always to seek for the truth and abide in it (see Proverbs 23:23). In the last days shall arise various teachings, beliefs, and ways of life. The Bible remains our standard of truth and living. When we continually look into this perfect law of liberty, we shall continually find truth to help us live in this ever-changing world of darkness (see James 1:25).

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

who come in the guise of expounding on the mind of God and claim to show the right path to heaven and eternal life while inwardly they are ravaging wolves whose actual intentions are to mislead and deceive their followers (see Acts 20:29-30; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, 13-15). These false teachers and preachers can only be known by their fruits (verses 16-19). The heart is a true interpreter and determines the actions of life.

A. Judge Not

(Matthew 7:1-6)

JUDGE NOT, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Here in verse 1, the word judge comes from the Greek word krino, which indicates a kind of judging that presumes to self-

determine the salvation or lack thereof in others. This same term can also be found in other passages, such as John 12:48; Acts 17:31; and 2 Timothy 4:1. Even Jesus Himself did not adopt this presumptive stance as noted in John 12:47 (NIV): “If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.”

The lure to judge others seems for some people to be too strong to resist. “Some insist on their right to judge others and defend it on the basis of Jesus’ words, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them’ (Matthew 7:20). Discerning and judging, however, are two different things. The Greek term for “accounting,” or thinking, with reference to another is begeomai. Making a private,
personal, and tentative appraisal of others is not forbidden; but ‘judging’ is prohibited. One must deplore the conduct of self-appointed ‘fruit inspectors’ whose flagrant violations of this commandment have worked untold damage in the church” (Coffman’s Commentaries on the Bible, Matthew 7, https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/matthew-7.html24).

Verse 2 is reminiscent of the well-known proverb that advises, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (see also Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31). The judging and measuring listed in verse 2 are parallel expressions which are repeated for the sake of emphasis and effect. “The thought of these parallel expressions is identical, the repetition being for the sake of emphasis. A censorious, presumptuous preoccupation with other people’s destiny encourages a reciprocal judgment from them, resulting in all kinds of bitterness, recriminations, and vindictive hatreds” (Coffman’s Commentaries on the Bible, Matthew 7, https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/matthew-7.html17?print=yes).

Jesus ingeniously utilized another set of parallel images to communicate the ageless principle of minding one’s own business (verses 3-4). The effect of this construction of words is to present a kind of literary cartoon. In order to see this kind of humor, one need only to imagine a plank sticking out of the eye of a person who is also busy trying to remove a speck of dust from another person’s eye. It is sad that someone could be in a sinful and spiritually disadvantaged condition without even realizing it. Sometimes, we can be so close to ourselves that we are unable to see our faults and failures even though they may be glaringly apparent to others who observe us.

The remedy for false pride is acknowledgment of our faults and personal shortcomings (verse 5). “The Pharisees were great at censuring, but slow at amending. Our Lord will not have his kingdom made up of hypocritical theorists, he calls for practical obedience to the rules of holiness. After we are ourselves sanctified, we are bound to be eyes to the blind, and correctors of unholy living; but not till then” (Commentary on the New Testament, Charles Spurgeon).

There are many examples throughout the Gospels of where Jesus judged the Pharisees. However, Jesus judged people who were proud, pretentious, and cruel. He also defended those who were the last, the lost, and the least. When it comes to judging, we must make sure to avoid selfish motives and focus on kingdom objectives with love as our leading priority (Expositor’s Greek New Testament).

The base metaphor using dogs and swine (verse 6) focuses on the idea that things which have been offered sacrificially were no longer to be treated commonly. The reference to dogs in verse 6 described a species that was a far cry from the kinds of dogs commonly seen in the United States. These dogs were ruthless, ravenous scavengers who were avoided and disdained (see Exodus 22:31). To “cast one’s pearls before swine” means to intentionally place
something valuable in the presence or pathway of something worthless. One example might be publicly arguing with a foolish person regarding the precious truths and promises of almighty God. At the end of the day, it is just not worth it and such activity often does more harm than good.

B. True and False Prophets

(Matthew 7:15-20)

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Jesus continued with the graphic metaphors and this time likened false prophets to destructive wolves (verse 15). No doubt many of His listeners could identify with the responsibilities of the shepherd who cares for the sheep and must be on constant watch for predators. Luke 6:43-45 (NIV) enlarged on this metaphor of fruit in verse 16 in relationship to spiritual character: “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briers. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

Jesus was consistent in utilizing common imagery that could easily be understood by those who encountered His teaching (verses 17-18). Not only were these analogies understood, but also, they were more than likely remembered due to the fact that the hearers probably encountered these examples every day. “The two verses state nearly the same fact, but each presents a different aspect. First it is stated as a matter of practical experience, then the general fact is referred to a necessary law. If the tree is corrupt, i.e., rotten or decayed at the core, it cannot bring forth good fruit. If there is falseness in the teaching, or in the man, it will sooner or later show itself in his life, and then, even though we judge of the doctrine on other ground, we should cease to feel confidence in the guidance of the teacher” (Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/7-17.htm).

Verses 19 and 20 provide a picture of a wasteful and unproductive life that once had potential but never truly fulfilled its function. Any life that is disconnected from God is operating below full capacity. Whenever a person fails to bear fruit there is a disconnect in the operation of the Holy Spirit in that life. A lack of self-control yields misplaced priorities, distraction from purpose, and distance from God. Spirit control provides peace, progress, and accomplishment of purpose.

C. True and False Disciples

(Matthew 7:21-23)

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but
he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

It is easy to articulate right-sounding religious rhetoric in order to project the impression of personal piety. However, right living always outweighs right speaking. Life service supersedes lip service (verse 21). This same concept is also seen in Luke 6:46 (NIV): “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” This rhetorical question utilizes the principle of stating a known fact and function. He then applies the known information to the subject matter about which he is speaking. The best-case scenario is for us to address God correctly as well as to live lives of obedience to God. Anyone who has ever watched a film that has a spoken soundtrack that does not match the video movements knows that such an occurrence can be extremely irritating. A similar phenomenon occurs when our verbal “audio” does not coincide with our life action’s “video.”

There is a short phrase at the beginning of verse 21 that is easily overlooked but is extremely important and critical to a thorough understanding of the identity and authority of Jesus. The phrase is “Many will say to me.” Some people only view Jesus as a good, moral teacher who is bereft of divinity. To dismiss the divinity of Jesus would make His sacrificial death in vain and would nullify all that He affirmed regarding His being the Messiah.

Jesus attested to the fact that three highly regarded religious activities are possible to accomplish detached from the power and authorization of Jesus (verse 22). These three activities are prophesying, demonic deliverance, and miracle working. Here, as everywhere in the New Testament, “prophesying” is more than mere prediction of the future. It also includes delivering a message to people as if it were coming directly from God. Demonic deliverance is the freeing from bondage for one who is demonically possessed. Miracle working may take a wide variety of different forms, from physical healing to supernatural provision. Jesus said that all this is quite possible even while operating outside the parameters of a relationship with God.

In verse 23, Jesus continued to articulate and activate the mantle of divinity when He identified Himself as being the one to whom all will answer on the Day of Judgment. On that day, He declared that He would speak plainly, publicly, and revealingly to the ones who have spoken secretively, covertly, and with duplicity. He would reveal whatever has been hidden and will officially separate Himself from those who operated in opposition to obedience. All sin is basically separation from God and from the will and ways of God.

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

It is important to understand what it means to judge, as well as what it means to operate in...
Jesus Teaches about Spiritual Discernment

MONDAY, July 22: “Walk by the Word and Prosper” (Psalm 1)
TUESDAY, July 23: “Godly Trust Leads to Fruitful Life” (Jeremiah 17:5-8)
WEDNESDAY, July 24: “Settle Differences Face-to-face” (Matthew 18:15-20)
THURSDAY, July 25: “How Believers Judge Grievances” (1 Corinthians 6:1-6)
FRIDAY, July 26: “Asking and Receiving Fairly” (Matthew 7:7-14)
SATURDAY, July 27: “Hearing and Doing” (Matthew 7:24-29)
SUNDAY, July 28: “Discerning Faith and Action Together” (Matthew 7:1-6, 15-23)
Is a Friend Indeed

DEVIATIONAL READING

John 15:12-17

ADULT/YOUTH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 18–20
PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 18:1-5; 19:1-7
KEY VERSE: 1 Samuel 18:1

CHILDREN

1 Samuel 18:1-5; 19:1-7—KJV

AND IT came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.
4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. 5 And David went whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

.....

AND SAUL spake to Jonathan his son, and to all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David
2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:
3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. 4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to theeward very good:
5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORd wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?
6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORd liveth, he shall not be slain. 7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

......

SAUL TOLD his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David
2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:
3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. 4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to theeward very good:
5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORd wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?
6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORd liveth, he shall not be slain. 7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

2 and warned him, “My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there.
3 “I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out.”
Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, “Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly.

“He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?”

Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: “As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death.” 7 So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.

**UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE:** Sometimes we are challenged to compromise our loyalty to a beloved authority figure to keep a promise made to a trusted friend. Whom does one choose? Jonathan chose to keep his promise to love and protect David, his intimate friend, despite his father’s insane hatred of David.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

*Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:*

1. Summarize Jonathan’s plan to protect David from Saul.
2. Appreciate how the demands of honesty and friendship can surpass family bonds and civil obedience.
3. Examine their relationships and recommit to pure and honest loyalty in the sight of God.

**AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE**

—Jonathan struggled to balance his loyalties (see EMPHASIZED —Jonathan’s removal of his robe and putting it 1 Samuel 19:1-7). Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH on David (18:4) is symbolic of transferring the

—in 1 Samuel 18:1-5, Saul approved of David. Later, he tried to kill David. monarchy from the house of Saul to the house of David.
The friendship between Jonathan and David was rare. They could have been rivals, but Jonathan seemed to understand that David was destined to become king.

The traditional, mainstream view of the relationship between David and Jonathan is that it was platonic, brotherly love.

Jonathan’s being bound to David’s soul denotes an inseparable devotion. (1 Samuel 18:1)

The covenant made here was a formal agreement based on friendship and mutual loyalty. (1 Samuel 18:3)

Some say that by Jonathan giving David his robe and other gear, Jonathan was transferring his claim of the throne to David. (1 Samuel 18:4)

Jonathan showed that his loyalty was to his friend David by telling David of this plan and helping him hide from his father. (1 Samuel 19:2)

Jonathan took a risk and spoke with his father, King Saul, concerning David. (1 Samuel 19:4)

Throughout this story of love, honesty, and commitment, God was faithful to both Jonathan and David.

**Teachers of CHILDREN**

King Saul developed a deep resentment toward David because of David’s success as a warrior and popularity among Saul’s subjects. —Saul’s resentment led him to desire to kill David.

Jonathan, Saul’s son, saw David as Israel’s future and so was willing to invest in him wholeheartedly.

True friendship like the friendship between Jonathan and David takes risks out of love for the other.

Jonathan intervened by telling his father that David posed no threat to King Saul.

Jonathan’s intervention resulted in a temporary pause in Saul’s wrath against David.

**THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON**

The book of 1 Samuel is named after Samuel, whom God used to anoint and establish the monarchy in Israel. This representative of God’s is significant in the history of Israel because he plays a very critical role in ensuring continuity of the covenant and transition from the rule of judges to the rule of a monarchy in Israel. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one volume and were referred to as “The First and Second Books of Kingdoms” (Septuagint translators); “First and Second Kings” (Latin Vulgate in AD 400); and finally, “First and Second Samuel” (Hebrew and modern versions).

**CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON**

The authorship of 1 Samuel cannot be absolutely confirmed. The Talmud and the Hebrew cannon argue that the book was written by the prophet Samuel himself because of the role he played in the history of Israel covered in the first twenty-four chapters. This, however, is subject to criticism because of his death in chapter 25.

There is a possibility that the book of 1 Samuel might have been compiled by the prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (see 1 Chronicles 29:29; 1 Samuel 10:25). The book of 1 Samuel warned the kings of Israel through revelations that the prophets received from God. This happened when Israel and Judah were a
divided monarchy (931 BC) and before the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Samaria (722 BC). This is clearly illustrated by the fact that Ziklag, the city of Philistia, was still under the kingdom of Judah (see 1 Samuel 27:6).

First Samuel 18:1-6 narrates the covenant of friendship made between David and Jonathan, the son of King Saul. This is after David had killed Goliath and his fame was renown all over Israel. Jonathan took off his robe and tunic and gave them to David as a sign of their covenant. Their friendship shows real love and commitment to the Lord, which, in itself, is a covenant. However, King Saul became jealous of David's achievements and fame and sought to kill him. He told his son Jonathan and his house to kill David, but Jonathan warned David of the plan and told him to go into hiding (see 1 Samuel 19:1-7). He even took the dangerous step and spoke well of David to his father. (bible.org)

**KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON**

Bow (18:4)—Hebrew: qesheth (keh’-sheth): weaponry for shooting arrows.

Covenant (18:3)—Hebrew: ’berith (ber-ee’th): covenant; agreement.

Gave (18:4)—Hebrew: nathan (naw-than’): to give, put, set.

Knit (18:1)—Hebrew: qashar (kaw-shar’): to bind; league together; conspire; “became one” (NIV).

Spoke (19:4)—Hebrew: dabar (daw-bar’): to have spoken; “spake” (KJV).

Stand (19:3)—Hebrew: amad (aw-mad’): to take one’s stand; stand.

**TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON**

I. Introduction
   A. A Profile of True Friendship
   B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture
   A. Saul Is Intimidated by David
      (1 Samuel 18:1-4)
   B. Saul Tries to Kill David
      (1 Samuel 19:1-7)

III. Concluding Reflection
I. INTRODUCTION

A. A Profile of True Friendship

In 1 Samuel 18, we see that jealousy translates to anger, murder, delusion, and evil meditations. This is expressly exemplified by King Saul. It also shows the trials which young David faced. We see David move from being Saul’s most favorite assistant to being his most sought after and worst enemy. This truly is something many of us have faced in the course of friendships. Many friendships are made, and some just make themselves. In life, there is no such thing as waiting for special friendships because they might never happen, and if they do we must be especially thankful and appreciative for such friendships.

After David’s interview by Saul before David’s battle with Goliath in chapter 17 of 1 Samuel, Jonathan the king’s son came to love David like himself, and they became best friends. The phrase “loved him as himself” speaks to the true state of their love for each other and the depth of their friendship. Their friendship was devoid of false motives. This kind of friendship is still very much possible today, although it is rare. It was a joy for Jonathan to discover that his father, the king, has also permitted David to come live at the royal palace.

B. Biblical Background

The events of 1 Samuel 18–20 were said to have occurred between 1018 BC and 1013 BC, and David would have been between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two. He spent approximately seven years living with King Saul before Saul began trying to kill him. Jonathan was born in 1067 BC, when Saul was fifteen years old. David had not been born when Jonathan single-handedly defeated the Philistines at Geba and Michmash, which was shortly after Saul became king in 1046 BC. This twenty-five-year age gap between David and Jonathan did not impede their friendship or love for each other because it was built on faith.

After the defeat of Goliath, Saul decided to keep David full time in his service, and David became very close to Jonathan. They become so close that Scripture records that they became one spirit (see 18:1). In their friendship, three people were involved: David, Jonathan, and God. This combination is still a recipe for successful relationships today. They loved each other and both loved and respected God. Such friendships centered on love for God will always be strong and last long. Jonathan not only loved David but also went on to make a covenant with him. In the covenant, Jonathan removed his robe and
gave it to David as well as his military clothes—his sword and belt (see 1 Samuel 18:3-4). These gifts could indicate Jonathan’s willingness to give his authority to David and, consequently, submitting his right to the throne. The covenant between Jonathan and David is a true display of friendship based on trust and obedience to God.

After the battle with the Philistines, the Israelites returned home, and their wives and sons came rejoicing. They became so excited that they began to sing David’s praises, and this was the beginning of Saul’s hatred for David. This song planted a root of jealousy and anger in Saul (see 1 Samuel 18:8-9). From this point on, Saul began to seek to kill David as an evil spirit possessed him (see 1 Samuel 18:12).

As Saul’s anger and jealousy deepened, he began to seek every available means to kill David. Saul told Jonathan his son and all other attendants to kill David, but Jonathan loved David and had made a covenant with him, so he warned David of his father’s intentions. Jonathan pleaded with his father on David’s behalf, after which Saul promised his son Jonathan that he would not harm David (see 1 Samuel 19:1-5).

In serving Saul once more and defeating the Philistines, David went to calm Saul from the spirit that oppressed him by playing his music. Saul once more attempted to kill David with a spear, but David escaped. First Samuel 19:11-12 tells of how Michal, David’s wife and Saul’s daughter, helped David escape a second time from Saul.

Once again in chapter 20, Jonathan helped rescue David from Saul’s grasp. True friendship is not deterred by mistakes, background, age, or social status. In David and Jonathan, we see the definition of true friendship, which is an exhibition of trust, loyalty, and love. As Christians, we should always strive to be exemplary in our relationships, friendships, and lifestyles.

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

In serving Saul once more and defeating

A. Saul Is Intimidated by David (1 Samuel 18:1-5)

AND IT came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight
of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.

When the text mentions that the soul or spirit of Jonathan became one with David, the Hebrew phrase means “to be knit together, or to be bound up.” This strong term is also used in Genesis 44:30 to describe Jacob’s love for his son Benjamin. Some contemporary writers have incorrectly assumed that this bond of unity between David and Jonathan was in some way less than honorable or semi-sexual, but neither the text nor the broad context offer any indication of truth regarding such a wild speculation. A cursory look at David’s life will reveal that he was definitely and exclusively attracted to women.

David was somewhat of a man’s man, meaning David possessed many character traits that other men would like to see in themselves. Jonathan was also a man of outstanding character. Ellicott’s Bible Commentary, Volume 1: Genesis–Esther describes Jonathan as “a true warrior of those wild, half-barbarous times—among brave men seemingly the bravest—a perfect soldier, whether fighting as a simple man-at-arms or as the general of an army—chivalrous and generous—utterly free from jealousy—a fervid believer in the God of Israel—a devoted and loyal son—a true patriot in the highest sense of the word, who sealed a devoted life by a noble death, dying as he did fighting for his king and his people.” Likewise, the attributes of David went beyond his personal bravery and world-renowned skills on the battlefield. He was also kind, thoughtful, and a man of honor who was quick to acknowledge his wrong and willing to forgive even someone like Saul, who openly demonstrated his extreme malice toward David by attempting to take his life on many occasions. It is safe to say that in the relationship between Jonathan and David, greatness recognized greatness. The mutual attraction was real and unshakable, even after the death of Jonathan.

With a mindset that was primarily focused on war, Saul gladly took on the promising young soldier David to be one of his bodyguards (see 1 Samuel 14:52). From that time forward, David constantly rendered excellent service to Saul (verse 2)—first as a musician, and later as a soldier. The life principle that is evident through David’s actions is to aim for excellence in everything attempted. Consistent excellence in small things leads to eventual excellence in all things.

The great friendship between these two men was built on strong faith in God and the mutual admiration of two stalwart personalities (verse 3).

When Jonathan presented David his own robe, tunic, sword, bow, and belt (verse 4), it was possibly because David (as a shepherd) was poorly clad. Earlier, David had refused Saul’s armor because it did not fit, but David accepts this generous gift from Jonathan. To receive any part of the dress or weaponry which had been worn by a sovereign was deemed the highest honor that could be conferred on a subject.

The articles given were part of the military dress and added an outward air of impressiveness to David’s already-impressive
inner resources. Jonathan’s generous gift aptly demonstrated his great love and respect for David and provides insight into the character of Jonathan, who possibly had a strong desire to help David feel comfortable in his new surroundings.

Without any formal military training, David was successful in every single assignment given to him by Saul (verse 5). Two primary reasons for this are that, first, God was with David and prospered him; second, David walked by faith and whatever he endeavored to do, he did it with all his might. This attitude and disposition is reminiscent of Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NIV), which states, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might . . . .” Another passage emphasizing this same attitude is Colossians 3:23 (NIV): “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” David’s initial expeditions were on a smaller scale, but as he was faithful with smaller tasks, he was elevated in rank and entrusted with greater assignments. As people today, sometimes we are left out of opportunities to do big jobs because of our lackluster track record with smaller jobs. This verse summarizes a long span of time in which many different events took place. As David’s responsibilities increased, his success increased. And when his success increased, his acclaim increased. When his acclaim increased, he increased as a figure to be envied by Saul.

B. Saul Tries to Kill David (1 Samuel 19:1-7)

AND SAUL spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good: For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain. And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

How can one person’s attitude toward another person descend so quickly from love to hate (verse 1)? Human nature permits people to move quickly from one emotion to another, as observed in the 1971 song by the New York City-based R&B vocal group The Persuaders, which declared, “It’s a thin line between love and hate.” Truly, Jesus could identify with this perspective, as on Palm Sunday the people hailed Him and less than a week later they nailed Him. Saul initially
believed that he was unjustified in his anger and hatred against David. But as he continued his pattern, he eventually convinced himself of his right to take David’s life. Saul’s insecurity was also prompted by a powerful spirit, as seen in 1 Samuel 16:14 (NIV): “Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.” One might ask the question, “If God is all good, how can an evil spirit come from God or be sent by God?” Saul’s “evil spirit” is comparable to what happened when Satan came upon Judas to betray the Lord’s Anointed (see John 13:2, 27). “God’s Spirit did not leave Saul, nor did the evil spirit enter him until after Saul had rebelled against God and God had announced to him that his kingdom was to go to another (1 Samuel 15:28)” (https://bible.org/question/1-sam-19-9-lord-sent-evil-spirits-saul-if-god-good-why-did-he-send-evil-spirit-to-people). This evil spirit is something that God permitted due to Saul’s decision to rebel. This is somewhat like disobedient children who open the door to hardship when choosing to disobey their parents.

Saul quite likely had a custom of taking a morning walk, and Jonathan devised a plan to discern the level of danger or safety for David in the heart of his father. When Jonathan spoke well of David (verses 3-4), he took a chance with his own life and performed the duty of a true friend by seeking to keep David safe from harm. As Saul’s son and a prince, Jonathan served as the voice of reason—speaking sensibly to his father, the king.

Jonathan reminded his father, Saul, of David’s unselfish bravery when David took on the Philistine (verse 5). But when David’s success against the Philistines brought David popularity among the people, Saul’s jealousy was ignited. Meanwhile, because of his pure heart, David continued to be loyal and respectful to Saul.

Most likely at the time of Saul’s words in verse 6, Saul intended to keep his promise of not seeking to harm David. But his change of heart was based on fleeting feelings and thus was temporary. Choices and decisions that are only motivated by the emotion of the moment cannot be trusted.

Verse 7 shows the power and importance of right words’ being spoken at the right time to the right person. Proverbs 25:11 (NIV) reads, “Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a ruling rightly given.” Jonathan could have easily deferred to his father’s decision regarding David, but through tapping into godly courage and discernment, he did not allow his age and lower position to silence his truth. First Timothy 4:12 (NIV) supports this: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.”

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

One of life’s most valuable possessions is a genuine friend. In the age of reality shows and Facebook friends, it is rare to have someone...
A Covenant between Friends

who will walk with you in good times and in bad times. James Harris and Terry Lewis raised this question in the lyrics of a song: “Sunny days . . . everybody loves them. Can you stand the rain?” Times of sun are associated with times of fun, and times of rain are associated with times of pain. Since life cannot be perpetually sunny, it is a blessing to have a rain-worthy friend. The older one gets, the greater the appreciation for true friendship. The demands of honesty and friendship can surpass family bonds and civil obedience. Jonathan and David could have been rivals, but Jonathan, whether by intuition or revelation, understood that David was destined to become king.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for giving us true friends to help us navigate the sometimes-weary waters of life. Also, thank You for giving us a friend who sticks closer than a brother—Jesus Christ, Your Son. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

MONDAY, July 29: “Saul Fears David” (1 Samuel 18:10-16)

TUESDAY, July 30: “David Marries Saul’s Daughter” (1 Samuel 18:20-24, 28-30)

WEDNESDAY, July 31: “Michal Helps David Escape” (1 Samuel 19:8-12)

THURSDAY, August 1: “David and Jonathan Enter into Covenant” (1 Samuel 20:12-17)

FRIDAY, August 2: “Jonathan and David Plan a Rendezvous” (1 Samuel 20:18-23)

SUNDAY, August 4: “A Covenant between Two Friends” (1 Samuel 18:1-5; 19:1-7)
**Devotion**

**Promise** Youth Topic: A Mother-Daughter Devotion in Action

**Children’s Topic: Love**

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**ADULT/YOUTH**

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** Ruth 1:1-18

**PRINT PASSAGE:** Ruth 1:6-11, 14-18

**KEY VERSE:** Ruth 1:16

**CHILDREN**

Ruth 1:6-11, 14-18—KJV

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. 7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. 8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. 9 The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. 10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. 11 But Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

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Ruth 1:6-11, 14-18—NIV

6 When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. 8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. 9 “May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.” Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud 10 and said to her, “We will go back with you to your people.” 11 But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands?” 14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. 15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

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16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: 17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. 18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.
At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. 15 “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” 16 But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 “Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: When bonded by a strong love and commitment to one another, people who are unrelated by birth may enter into a covenant relationship. What drives and sustains this relationship? Although Naomi begged Ruth to return to her people, Ruth clung to her mother-in-law and vowed her loyalty until death.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:
1. Identify Ruth and Naomi and tell why they were devoted to one another.
2. Feel compassion for someone in a vulnerable situation.
3. Demonstrate their loyalty and devotion to a spouse or other family member.

Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will go with her, she stopped urging her.
- Naomi’s question in verse 11 relates to the custom of Levirate marriage. (See Deuteronomy 25:5-10.)
- In many other places in Scripture, Moab has negative connotations, but not here. Ethnic prejudices existed between Jews and Moabites. (Ruth 1:6)
- The idea of Ruth, a Moabite, extending such kindness to Naomi likely would have puzzled the ancient hearers. Ruth was not legally obligated to remain with Naomi. Doing so was an act of loyalty, devotion, and love.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH
—Naomi urged her daughters-in-law to find new husbands for economic security. Repetition of “return” and “turn back” denotes the real struggle here.
—Because Naomi was a widow whose children had died, she had no one to support her. Therefore, she chose to return to Judah, where the extended family of her late husband would be required by tradition to take her in.
—Naomi urged Ruth and Orpah to remain in Moab because their chances of finding husbands among Moabite men would be greater than among Jewish men (who would likely want nothing to do with Moabite women; see Deuteronomy 23:3).

Teachers of CHILDREN
—Naomi, an Ephrathite widow in a foreign land (Moab), was vulnerable as a woman with no means of supporting herself.
—The widowed Naomi was left with only two daughters-in-law, who were also widows.
—Naomi, who had decided to return to Judah, urged her daughters-in-law to return to their
own people—as she had no other sons for them to marry.
—Orpah, one of the daughters-in-law, left to return to her people, as Naomi had urged.

Ruth, the other daughter-in-law, was constrained by her love for Naomi to remain with her.
—Ruth’s devotion to Naomi is notable, since Ruth would be going to a land foreign to her and without any means of support with her sons, who ended up marrying two Moabite women: Ruth and Orpah.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The book of Ruth is conventionally believed to have been written during the rule of judges in Israel (see Ruth 1:1). The timing of the events in the book may have been during the later rule of judges, because the genealogy is three generations before the birth of David. This brevity in genealogy may suggest that the book was written during the later days of the judges, because the book of Ruth employs the use of Hebrew idioms that align with the period of the prophet Samuel. This book is also considered to be one of the most beautiful narrations of a short story ever written. Other books that the Jewish tradition maintain were written by Samuel are 1 Samuel and Judges.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

Although there is not total consensus as to authorship, there is a strong leaning in the Talmud that Ruth was written by the prophet Samuel. The events of the book occurred between 1160 BC and 1100 BC. The setting of this book takes place in two venues: Moab and Bethlehem. The events took place during a great famine in Israel, and the story revolves around three women: Ruth, Orpah, and Naomi. The famine had forced Naomi to relocate to Moab

Moab was a pagan nation located near the Dead Sea and east of Judah, and was the neighboring country where Naomi, Elimelech, and their two sons had fled after a famine struck Judah. Elimelech and their two sons died in Moab. The additional setting of this book is in Bethlehem after Naomi and Ruth returned to Israel, where she encouraged Ruth to seek out her relative Boaz for possible marriage (see Ruth 3:9).

PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

Boaz: He was a wealthy landowner and kinsman to Elimelech in Bethlehem in Judah. He married the widowed Moabite Ruth in order to continue the lineage of Elimelech, hence becoming the direct ancestor to King David and Jesus Christ.

Elimelech: He was an Israelite and husband to Naomi. He succumbed to death in Moab after he had fled the famine in Judah together with his family.

Naomi: She was married to Elimelech. They had relocated to Moab with their two sons from Judah during the great famine. However, she is
widowed, and her sons also die, and she decides to return to Bethlehem (bible.org).

**Ruth**: Ruth was a Moabite woman married to one of Naomi’s sons. She followed her mother-in-law back to Bethlehem after they both were widowed. Ruth accepted Yahweh as her God and bound herself to her mother-in-law. She is an example of how God will always reward His faithful servants (see Ruth 2:14-17; Hebrews 11:6).

The account of Ruth begins during the closing days of Judges. It was a four-hundredyear timeline of anarchy and oppression during which the Israelites were not ruled by kings but rather had judges who were deliverers whom God periodically raised up to deliver Israel whenever the nation of Israel sought Him. Among those who presided over Israel as judges were Gideon, Samson, and Deborah (see Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25).

Ruth is a narrative of a love story which also contains some important genealogical information. The timeline of Ruth as stated earlier is intertwined with the era of the judges. Though the author is anonymous, it is believed that the book of Ruth was written by the prophet Samuel. The book of Ruth was written approximately 1046–1035 BC, and its purpose was mainly to show the kind of love, loyalty, and faithfulness that God desires to see us practice.

11:6).

**TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON**

I. Introduction

A. A Special Kind of Love

B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

A. Decisions at the Crossroads
   (Ruth 1:6-11)

B. The Tie that Binds
   (Ruth 1:14-18)

III. Concluding Reflection

B. Biblical Background

The first part of our text, verses 1-5, firstly associates the book with the time of judges and goes on to describe the problems of famine which caused a family to move from Bethlehem to Moab. The family included Elimelech, his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, and their mother Naomi. The
narrative gradually turns to Naomi and her plight after she loses her husband and two sons to death.

After it is reported that there is food in Israel once more, Naomi is set to return to her people, as a widow and childless. It is important at this point to note the importance of patience and longsuffering as necessary godly virtues. Partakers of God’s deliverance learn and abide in the trust and faith that patience and longsuffering teach. It is important to learn to wait and understand God’s timing and purpose for every season (see Romans 12:12; Psalm 37:7-9; Isaiah 40:31).

As Naomi got set to return to Jerusalem after the unpleasant tragedy that had befallen her over the years, she instructed her daughters-in-law to go back to their homes, kissed them goodbye, and hoped that God would deal kindly with them and perhaps give them husbands to replace their loss (verses 8-9). She no longer saw the need to care for them as was common at the time (see Deuteronomy 26:12-13; 27:19).

However, Naomi was met with an initial protest and refusal from both daughters-in-law. Naomi was determined and convinced that there was no more reason for them to continue with her. She reminded them of her inability to bear more children or even have someone who could marry them and give them children. As was the custom of ancient Israel, a widow without a son could be taken by her deceased husband’s brother who would serve as a kind of surrogate father, providing her with a son in the name of the deceased brother/husband. Naomi expressed her heartfelt grief as she talked of her calamity and her belief that these calamities had befallen her as a result of disobedience, leaving the Promised Land, and also intermarrying with the Moabites. In going back to Israel, Naomi, though not bitter with God, is rather returning in repentance, trust, and submission to the will and purpose of God. Perhaps if Naomi had been bitter, she would have gone a different route rather than return to Israel. When we submit to God in humility, repentance, total reverence, and acceptance of His will, we position ourselves for the many great blessings God would release upon us in the shortest possible time.

After Ruth and Orpah had listened to Naomi, they both wept bitterly: they loved Naomi but were, however, anxious about their future. Orpah decided to leave and kissed Naomi goodbye, but Ruth decided to stay, despite the gloomy situation and unknown future (verse 14).

In our walk with God, sometimes we must move beyond our feelings to actually do and show what we claim to feel or express. Ruth went beyond her feelings to actually show the love she felt for Naomi by her actions and was not deterred even by Naomi’s pleading.

In verses 15-18, Ruth expressed one of the most powerful statements of faith and devotion. We see Ruth (as a Gentile woman) go beyond relocation from one city to another to
changing her belief system to which she had way of life as well. It was worth noting that
been accustomed. She did not just want to go Ruth could not have come to a conclusion of
with Naomi—she was ready to identify with, this magnitude if she had not been in any way
accept, and subject herself to an entirely new impacted by the godly life of Naomi.

EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. Decisions at the
Crossroads  (Ruth 1:6-11)

Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of
Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his
people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where
she was, and her two daughters in law; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the
Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Throughout history, God has proven His love to His people by coming to their aid in
their greatest times of trouble (verse 6). Psalm 46:1 (NIV) helps us to understand that “God is our refuge and strength, an
ever-present help in trouble.” The relationship between Naomi and her two
dughters-in-law presents a picture of a tranquil, peaceful, supportive, loving
functional family. There are not many things worse than a dysfunctional family. The
sincere love, support, and loyalty demonstrated by this trio (verse 7) is a breath
of fresh air, especially in a culture of so-called reality shows where family dysfunction
is often celebrated and glorified. Quite possibly it was Naomi, the godly matriarch,
who anchored the family and exhibited characteristics and tendencies of respect
which were in turn reflected within the rest of the family. Love begets love. It has been
suggested that if there were more Naomis, then there might be more Orpahs and Ruths.
We as people and as Christians are not only living for ourselves, but we are also
influencing our family members, our church members, our schoolmates, our work
associates, and the community at-large.

In the culture of that time period, whenever a woman married, she would
conform and adapt to her husband’s faith
tradition. But when she returned to her own
people as a widow, she returned to her family’s religion (verse 8; see also Ruth 1:15).
God’s influence extended beyond the land of
Israel, and Naomi wanted her daughters-in-

law to be under the protection of God when they were back in their own land (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges). Naomi demonstrated a sublime sense of unselfishness and holy human character. Naomi was consistently more concerned about the future welfare of her two daughters-in-law than she was for her own fate. Naomi had lived her life, and she wanted to see Orpah and Ruth live their lives.

Once again, love is on billboard-sized display in verses 9-10. The raw emotion of the moment takes its toll on all three women at this point of possible departure and the dismantling of the safe and familiar past. The two younger widows had good reason to be concerned about their uncertain future.

Naomi’s insistent and consistent advice and directions were for both young women to return and seek a better life without her (verse 11). She pleaded for them to abandon her, even in the face of the fact that an elderly widow travelling alone could prove dangerous and lifethreatening. Naomi’s resolved insistence for her widowed daughters-in-law was motivated by the perils of a single or widowed woman in the extremely male-dominated culture of the time.

**B. The Tie that Binds**  
(Ruth 1:14-18)

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary raises an interesting question regarding Naomi’s insistence that Ruth and Orpah go back to Moab:

Did Naomi do well, to discourage her daughters from going with her, when she might save them from the idolatry of Moab, and bring them to the faith and worship of the God of Israel? Naomi, no doubt, desired to do that; but if they went with her, she would not have them to go upon her account.  
(http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ruth/1-8.html)

This perspective has a parallel in the New Testament passage of Luke 14:27-33 (NIV), when Jesus provides criteria to measure the authenticity of one’s faith:

“And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and...
wasn’t able to finish.’ Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.”

It is difficult to determine why Orpah decided to leave. Clearly, it was a difficult and emotionally draining decision. On the other hand, Ruth never wavered but continued to cling to Naomi (verse 14). She was singularly focused and resolutely resigned to stake her future with Naomi, even if that meant forsaking her own people, her native country, and her familiar god.

The emotionally charged exchange between Ruth and Naomi (verses 15-16) is among the most sensitive and compassionate dialogues in all of Scripture. Both are sincere, both are unselfish, and both are determined to prevail in the desire to do what is best for the other. Who shall decide which was the more noble and truly womanly in her selfforgetfulness—the elder, sadder heart, which strove to secure for the other some joy and fellowship at the price of its own deepened solitude; or the younger, which steeled itself against entreaties, and cast away friends and country for love’s sweet sake? We rightly praise Ruth’s vow, but we should not forget Naomi’s unselfish pleading to be left to tread her weary path alone. Ruth’s passionate burst of tenderness is immortal. It has put into fitting words for all generations the deepest thoughts of loving hearts, and comes to us over all the centuries between, as warm and living as when it welled up from that gentle, heroic soul. The two strongest emotions of our nature are blended in it, and each gives a portion of its fervor—love and religion. So closely are they interwoven that it is difficult to allot to each its share in the united stream; but, without trying to determine to which of them the greater part of its volume and force is due, and while conscious of the danger of spoiling such words by comments weaker than themselves, we may seek to put into distinct form the impressions which they make.¹

Ruth’s impassioned words reflect a sense of self-sacrifice and forsaking of personal gain in order to love, protect, befriend, and support her mother-in-law. The reason why Ruth chose Jehovah God was because Naomi chose Jehovah God. Naomi’s spiritual influence upon Ruth was undeniable. This encounter is a prime example of how God can use everyday relationships as a bridge to allow Him to become leader in someone else’s life.

Ruth spoke in ultimate life-and-death terms (verse 17) that exhibit the tremendous depth and seriousness of her commitment to Naomi. She elevated her intentions beyond the human level and appealed to Yahweh God in the form of an oath backed by a self-imposed severe penalty for reneging on her promise. “It was thus that the Hebrews made their most awful appeals to Yahveh. They...
signified their willingness to suffer some dire calamity if they should either do the evil deed repudiated or fail to do the good deed promised” (Pulpit Commentary, http://biblehub.com/ruth/1-17.htm).

One might say that in this beautiful battle of who could out-love the other and who could unselfishly out-care for the other, it was Ruth who won (verse 18). Although this beautiful battle was extremely close, Ruth wore Naomi down with commitment and overwhelmed her with love. Commitment and demonstration consistently overcome pious platitudes and empty emotions. “Those that are but half resolved, and go on in the ways of religion without a steadfast mind, stand like a door ajar, which invites a thief. But resolution shuts and bolts the door, and then the devil flees from us” (Benson Commentary, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ruth/1-18.htm).

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

The household of Elimelech emigrated to Moab during a famine in their homeland and were there as Jehovah worshippers in a nation of idol worshippers. Whenever believers are surrounded by unbelievers, that automatically qualifies them to actively serve as missionaries. Through the consistent and powerful influence of Naomi, Ruth became a kind of first-fruits of the Gentiles. One purpose of the book of Ruth that seems not to directly emphasize God is to “show how the believing Gentile was to be incorporated into Israel. Boaz rejoices over her, and especially over her conversion, and prays, ‘A full reward be given thee of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.’ She is married to him, and becomes

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
(August 5-11, 2019)

A Mother-Daughter Covenant
the ancestress of David, and, through him, of the Messiah” (MacLaren Expositions of Holy Scripture, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/maclaren/ruth/1.htm). We find in the book of Ruth encouragement to build solid, successful, and functional families. To invest in one’s family is to invest in his/her future and the future of the entire world. Time is never wasted that is spent loving one’s family and encouraging others to do likewise.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the gift of family. Help us never to take this gift for granted but to do all we can to grow it into an entity that can be of aid to others. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

MONDAY, August 5: “Protecting Widows” (Deuteronomy 24:17-22)
TUESDAY, August 6: “Continuing the Family Line” (Deuteronomy 25:5-10)
WEDNESDAY, August 7: “Ruth, Mother of David and Jesus” (Matthew 1:2-6, 16)
THURSDAY, August 8: “Naomi Loses Her Husband and Sons” (Ruth 1:1-5)
FRIDAY, August 9: “Ruth and Naomi Return to Bethlehem” (Ruth 1:19-22)
SATURDAY, August 10: “Boaz Welcomes Ruth to His Fields” (Ruth 2:5-13)
SUNDAY, August 11: “Intimate Family Ties” (Ruth 1:6-11, 14-18)


Summer Quarter 2019
Unit III: Covenant: A Personal Perspective
Children’s Unit: Loving Others as Christ Loves Us

August 18, 2019

Lesson

A COVENANT TO MARRY

ADULT/YOUTH
ADULT/YOUNG ADULT TOPIC: The Reward of Commitment CHILDREN’S TOPIC: Everything Will WORK OUT
Marry Work Out

DEVOATIONAL READING
Hebrews 13:1-8

ADULT/YOUTH
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Ruth 1:6-18; 3–4; Matthew 19:1-12 PRINT
PASSAGE: Ruth 3:1-6, 8-12, 16-18 KEY VERSE: Ruth 3:10

Ruth 3:1-6, 8-12, 16-18—KJV
THEN NAOMI her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

2     And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshing fl oor.
3     Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the fl oor: but make not thyself known

CHILDREN
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Ruth 1:6-18; 3–4; Matthew 19:1-12 PRINT
PASSAGE: Ruth 3:1-6, 8-12, 16-18 KEY VERSE: Ruth 3:10a

Ruth 3:1-10a—KJV

Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshing fl oor.

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unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

Ruth 3:1-6, 8-12, 16-18—NIV

ONE DAY Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for.

2 “Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.

3 “Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking.

4 “When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.”

5 “I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered. So she went down to the threshing fl oor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9 And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.

10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

16 And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.

17 And she said, Th ese six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.

18 Th en said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have fi nished the thing this day.

8 In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! 9 “Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.”

10 “The L ord bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “Th is kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor.

11 “And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character.

12 “Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I.”

16 When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?” Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”
Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

**AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED**

**UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE:** Obedience and commitment to others may bring unanticipated rewards. How should loyalty be compensated? Ruth’s commitment to Naomi and her efforts to obey were rewarded with favor in Boaz’s eyes, marriage to a kinsman-redeemer, and the assurance of a comfortable life in the future.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

*Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:*

1. Describe the legal procedure by which Boaz claimed the right to marry Ruth and became kinsman-redeemer for both Naomi and Ruth.
2. Sense the urgency by which Boaz acted in order to marry Ruth.
3. Honor marriage in their actions, whether they are married or not.

**EMPHASIZED**

**Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH**

—Ruth needed to marry a kinsman-redeemer (rather than any young man) in order for him to take over the responsibilities of Naomi’s dead husband and inherit his land. (Women had no right of inheritance.)

—Spreading the cloak over someone (verse 9) symbolized protection and the intent to marry.

—Six measures of barley were a generous gift for Naomi (verse 17).

—Marriages were arranged by a woman’s parents (usually the father). Since Ruth’s father was not in the picture, Naomi encouraged a relationship between Boaz and Ruth, and instructed her in what to do (verses 1-5).

—The choice of a husband for Ruth was not hers but driven by the law of Levirate marriage (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

—The book of Ruth lifts up the virtue of kindness that goes beyond what is expected or deserved.

**Teachers of CHILDREN**

—Ruth found a source of food for her and Naomi as a gleaner in the fields of Boaz.

—While Boaz was Naomi’s kinsman, he was not obligated by Levirate law to marry Ruth.

—Naomi instructed Ruth to approach Boaz in intimacy to propose marriage.

—Boaz was responsive to Ruth’s approach and perceived her as an honorable woman because of her commitment to Naomi.

—Boaz’s statement to Ruth in 3:11 (“I will do for you all that you ask”) indicated that Boaz would indeed marry Ruth.

—Ruth was significant to Naomi, and not just as a companion; her marriage to Boaz made him her “redeemer” when she gave birth to the child Obed, an ancestor of David’s.
THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The book of Ruth is a narrative that describes events concerning the genealogy of King David and ultimately Jesus Christ. The narrative is set in two locations: Moab and Bethlehem of Judea. It begins with a painful introduction marred with grief and sorrow and traces the family of Elimelech from a woman’s point of view. This story shows a generation that has gone astray from God, and as a result has been subjected to great suffering, civil war, and starvation as punishment for their sins. The children of Israel had sinned against the Mosaic Covenant by practicing divination, sorcery, and incantations (see Judges 2:11-23; Deuteronomy 4). However, the book of Ruth shows the love that exists between God and the children of Israel even after they had sinned against God. This book shows the love and faithfulness that God has for His people by using three ordinary people: Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz (bible.org).

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The country of Moab is located in modern-day Jordan. Moab was a mountainous region along the Jordan River on the western side of the Dead Sea. Moab was a neighboring country to Bethlehem in Judea. Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, had escaped the famine in Bethlehem and moved to Moab—where her husband and their two sons died—leaving her and her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. These two women were Moabites, and according to the Talmud traditions the Moabites and the Ammonites were the sworn enemies of Israel (see Deuteronomy 23:4-5).

The book of Ruth describes the laws concerning levirate marriage which required a close kinsman to carry out the duties of a relative who had died without having a son as his heir. This individual is seen in the character of Boaz, even though he was not the closest male relative of Elimelech (see Deuteronomy 25:5).

The events in the book of Ruth take place in the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the City of Bethlehem, which is part of present-day Palestine. The city of Bethlehem is considered to be the city of King David, because it was his birthplace. This story takes place during the spring harvest of wheat and barley in Judah, which signifies that it was a plenteous harvest (see Ruth 1:6). This period is very significant because Naomi’s family had initially left Judah for Moab due to the famine, and she returned with Ruth at the time of a great harvest. The harvest provided Ruth the chance to interact with Boaz under Naomi’s instructions while gleaning the grains in his fields (see Leviticus 23:2). This book also portrayed a patriarchal society where the rights of women are below those of men. The notion of levirate marriage and the teachings concerning divorce take the center stage through the character of Boaz, who eventually marries Ruth as a goel or a kinsman-redeemer.

PROFICIENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

Boaz: He was a rich farmer in the City of Bethlehem and a kinsman to Elimelech. He was made the kinsman-redeemer when he agreed to marry Ruth, and he therefore became the great grandfather to King David and direct ancestor of Jesus Christ. Naomi: She was a wife to Elimelech and a widow who went through much torment when she lost everything. Naomi was
sometimes referred to as the female version of Job, because they both lost everything but remained faithful servants of God. **Ruth:** She was a Moabite woman who was initially married to one of Naomi’s sons before she was widowed. She returned with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem and accepted Yahweh as her true God. She got married to Boaz, and they became the direct ancestors of David and Jesus Christ (bible.org).

**KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON**

- **Daughter** (verse 10)—Hebrew: *bath* (*bath*): daughter; maiden.
- **Feet** (verse 4)—Hebrew: *margeloth* (*mar-ghelaw’*): place of the feet; feet.
- **Night** (verse 8)—Hebrew: *layil* or *lel* or *layelah* (*lah’-yil*): night; opposite of day; “midnight” (KJV).
- **Rest** (verse 18)—Hebrew: *shaqat* (*shaw-kat’*): to be quiet or undisturbed.

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. The Process of Developing Love**

Ruth 3 takes us into what could be referred to as the next stage in our Christian lives and walk with God. In the previous chapters, we saw Ruth’s commitment and her determination to follow the true God by sticking with her mother-in-law, Naomi. She grew in her relationship with Boaz, consistently relying upon his favor. Faith is really of little use until it has grown and been tested. This chapter also goes further to the rest and fruit produced when our faith is tried. We can learn from this chapter that God uses processes to bring us closer to Himself.

The events of Ruth are said to have occurred between 1302 and 1250 BC. The book of Ruth features a beautiful love story between Ruth and Boaz, but more than that it is a story about a prodigal nation coming to repentance and God’s bringing them back from destruction to the center of spiritual importance.

**B. Biblical Background**

Chapter 3 begins with Ruth’s drawing near to God (verses 1-2). Ruth had already been graced with the provisions of Boaz as she had sought refuge under the wings of God. We also have seen her work in the field of Boaz and have seen his gracious

**Wash** (verse 3)—Hebrew: *rachats* (*raw-khats’*): to wash, wash off or away, bathe.

**Well** (verse 1)—Hebrew: *yatab* (*yaw-tab’*): to be good, well, glad, or pleasing.

**TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON**

I. Introduction

A. The Process of Developing Love  
B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

A. A Quest for a New Life  
   (Ruth 3:1-6)  
B. Character Counts  
   (Ruth 3:8-11)  
C. Reward for Righteousness  
   (Ruth 3:12, 16-18)

III. Concluding Reflection
commitment to her in return. Naomi had a greater vision. She had foreseen Ruth’s becoming a loved and honored wife but also knew that achieving this would not be easy because it would require Ruth to place herself totally at the feet of Boaz and to rely completely upon his will. In the Christian walk, certain times come when we must be at the threshing floor to be tested and refined. The threshing floor is used to separate the true grain from the chaff. These times purify and strengthen our faith in God.

In verse 3, we see that Ruth received instruction on how to prepare herself for engagement. These three ways also can be found interpreted in the New Testament. They are these: wash yourself (see Ephesians 5:26); anoint yourself (see Ephesians 5:18); and put on new clothes (see Revelation 19:8). Ruth harkened to Naomi and did as she said, going to lay at Boaz’s feet. It so happened that at midnight, Boaz noticed Ruth, and this was an answered prayer—as he was willing to marry, redeem, and honor her. Boaz recognized the commitment, kindness, and faith of Ruth when he referred to her as a “woman of excellence.” Ruth had shown commitment to Naomi and did not stop there, but also extended the same level of commitment to Boaz, which made him promise to do whatever she asked of him (verses 8-12). When we show so much commitment to God and place our will completely on Him, we will be amazed at His response to our needs—just as Boaz not only accepted Ruth but also gave her gifts (verses 14-18).

Many young people today believe that marriage is only an issue of civil law, but marriage to see marriage as a commitment not only to is a commitment involving the couple and our spouse but also to God, we are sure to reap God. It is a commitment and must be kept the rewards of it.

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. A Quest for a New Life

(Ruth 3:1-6)

THEN NAOMI her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshing floor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

Naomi possessed an intense interest in the welfare of her widowed daughter-in-law, and this powerful sense of responsibility propelled Naomi to be assertive enough to seek a husband for Ruth (verse 1). So,
without the benefit of eharmony or matchmaker.com, Naomi activated her trust in God to be able to locate the perfect mate for her daughter-in-law. Perhaps Naomi recognized that time was passing without Ruth’s making any definite connections with potential suitors.

As this dramatic scene begins, Naomi, as a seasoned sister, schooled Ruth in an effective way to get the attention of Boaz (verse 2), who was a wealthy, available gentleman. Boaz’s relationship to Elimelech and his friendly disposition shown toward Ruth led Naomi to think of Boaz as a great mate for Ruth. “He might be willing to do the kinsman’s part; at any rate, she made up her mind to act courageously and in a spirit of faith. In her plan for a next of kin marriage Naomi’s only concern is for Ruth’s future [and] the perpetuation of the name of her dead childless son” (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: The Book of Judges, p. 10).

The mentor-mentee relationship between Ruth and Naomi is on full display in these verses. It was extremely important for Ruth to carefully follow every detail in this delicate plan (verse 3)—because one error could mean the difference between success and failure.

The specific instructions Naomi gave on how to handle Boaz (verse 4) seem somewhat forward and indiscreet upon first reading and viewed from a contemporary perspective. However, viewed from the Old Testament world perspective, what Naomi told Ruth to do was a simple, practical plan for reminding Boaz of his duty as the kinsman of a deceased relative. “Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet—a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master’s bed. Resting, as the Orientals do at night, in the same clothes they wear during the day, there was no indelicacy in a stranger, or even a woman, putting the extremity of this cover over her” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s Commentary on the Whole Bible).

In contemporary culture, mothers-in-law are often presented in a poor light. They are commonly portrayed as being controlling, judgmental, critical, overbearing, toxic persons. However, that description is for persons who are unhealthy themselves and are also operating in a dysfunctional family environment. Before Ruth went to visit the place where Boaz worked, she washed and anointed herself and kept a low profile while the men were awake, and marked the place where Boaz lay down following his evening meal. In verses 5 and 6, Ruth showed her submission to and appreciation for Naomi’s instruction and guidance.

B. Character Counts
(Ruth 3:8-11)

And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman. And he said, Blessed be thou of the LOrd, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more
kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followestst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirlest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

This middle-of-the-night incident (verse 8) that occurred while Boaz was sleeping is a test of Ruth’s character as well as a test of Boaz’s character. The outcome of the incident may have been different for two people with lesser integrity than Boaz and Ruth. The biggest reaction from Boaz was his being startled and earnestly inquiring about the identity of this strange woman he could barely see in the murky shadows of the nighttime.

The symbolic act in verse 9 represented the kinsman’s claiming the widow as his wife (see Ezekiel 16:8). Ruth had already placed part of the blanket over her, but she now asked him to participate so that the act might become his own. “To spread a skirt over one is, in the East, a symbolical action denoting protection. To this day in many parts of the East, to say of anyone that he put his skirt over a woman, is synonymous with saying that he married her; and at all the mar-riages of the modern Jews and Hindus, one part of the ceremony is for the bridegroom to put a silken or cotton cloak around his bride” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ruth/3-9.htm).

After Boaz overcomes the initial shock of this midnight female visitor sleeping at his feet, the revelation of her identity and her pure intentions invoke from him a sense of respect, responsibility, and protection (verse 10). If Ruth had exhibited impure intentions and Boaz had responded in kind, this entire scenario would have been a disaster. The spiritually mature and gallant response of Boaz “is in itself a sufficient proof of the view he took of her conduct, and of the integrity of his own. . . . this blessing follows immediately on the avowal of her name. His own feelings had already been attuned to due honour and respect for Ruth; he is prepared not only to discharge the duty of next of kin, but to do it . . . with a sincere loyal affection” (Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ruth/3-10.htm).

Boaz lauds Ruth for her noble character (verse 11), but the character of Boaz is also showing here because he did not attempt to take advantage of Ruth. Boaz also did not allow their class difference to serve as a barrier to his love and kindness toward her.

Boaz did not disdain her as “a poor, destitute stranger, nor suspect her of any ill intentions. He spoke honourably of her as a virtuous woman, made her a promise, and as soon as the morning arrived, sent her away with a present to her mother-in-law. Boaz made his promise conditional, for there was a kinsman nearer than he, to whom the right of redemption belonged” (Matthew Henry Study Bible—Revised King James Edition).

C. Reward for Righteousness

(Ruth 3:12, 16-18)

And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. . . . And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter?
And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

The character and integrity of Boaz continues to be on display, as he decided to serve as the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth. He could have disregarded protocol and taken her as his wife, but his heart for doing the right thing in the right way at the right time compelled him to show respect for the other individual who had priority in the family line. Maya Angelou once wrote, “If we lose love and self-respect for each other, this is how we finally die.” In a parallel expression regarding respect, Mona Sutphen said that “Most good relationships are built on mutual trust and respect.”

Some versions of the Bible translate Naomi’s question to Ruth (verse 16) as “Who are you?” This question seems strangely inappropriate. Obviously, Naomi knew well the identity of Ruth, as evidenced by her referring to her as “my daughter” in her salutation. Most likely, Naomi’s words beg the question in contemporary vernacular, “What is your status, baby girl? Are you now engaged to Boaz or what?” Surely, Naomi had trouble sleeping that night, wondering how Ruth fared while following her detailed instructions.

The concept of “love language” developed by Dr. Gary Chapman suggests that different people express love in different ways. These ways include 1) Words of Affirmation; 2) Quality Time; 3) Receiving Gifts; 4) Acts of Service; and 5) Physical Touch. Which language relates most to you?

Obviously, Boaz was a man whose love language involved the giving of gifts. The measures of barley that he gave to Ruth (verse 17) weighed about two gallons each and must have been quite a load for one woman to carry by herself. Boaz’s generosity may have further indicated to Naomi that he was indeed honorable, and that he would move on Ruth’s overture swiftly. As a seasoned woman of wisdom, Naomi advised her daughter-in-law to sit still and wait for Boaz to make the next move (verse 18). Ruth wisely followed Naomi’s sage advice.

What great developments might happen today if there was a restoration of wise, spiritually mature women mentoring young women and the young women following their advice? In this day of instant everything, there is strength to be found in learning how to wait. “This narrative may encourage us to lay ourselves by faith at the feet of Christ; He is our near Kinsman; having taken our nature upon him . . . . [He] has the right to redeem. Let us . . . [seek] to receive from him his directions: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (A Commentary upon the Holy Bible, from Henry and Scott: Joshua to Esther, Matthew Henry, p. 121).

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Ruth’s need to marry a kinsman-redeemer (rather than any young man) serves as a directive for others today to seek permanent relationships that reward rather than temporary relationships that only
momentarily satisfy. When Boaz spread his cloak over Ruth, it was an indication that he intended to marry her. Obedience to God and commitment to God are rewarded with blessings beyond anything we can even ask or think. With marriage being under attack and in decline in the African-American community, it is more important than ever to focus time, attention, and financial resources in efforts and

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
(August 12-18, 2019)

A Covenant to Marry
ministries that will help to develop strong and healthy relationships, engagements, and marriage relationships. When we have strong marriages, we have strong families, strong churches, strong schools, and strong cities. A healthy marriage provides a template for future generations to emulate. A healthy marriage is the one entity that can make a positive impact on the widest variety of community variables from economics, to education, health and longevity, crime, home ownership, and mental/ emotional/spiritual well-being.

PRAYER
Lord, please help us to see the need for healthy marriages and strong homes within our community. Then please give us the strength to build those in our own lives and in the lives of others.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

MONDAY, August 12: “God’s Chosen Bride” (Ezekiel 16:8-14)
TUESDAY, August 13: “The Status of Divorced Women in Israel” (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)
WEDNESDAY, August 14: “Sustain Marital Love and Fidelity” (1 Corinthians 7:1-11)
THURSDAY, August 15: “Husbands and Wives—Joint Heirs” (1 Peter 3:1-9)
FRIDAY, August 16: “Boaz Buys Naomi’s Property” (Ruth 4:9-12)
SATURDAY, August 17: “Ruth and Boaz Marry; Obed Is Born” (Ruth 4:13-17)
SUNDAY, August 18: “Support and Protect Marriage” (Ruth 3:1-6, 8-12, 16-18)
# MARRIAGE: A COVENANT OF MUTUAL LOVE

## ADULT/YOUTH

**Topic:** Family Commitment  
**ADULT/CHILDREN:** Family Commitment to Keep  
**GENERAL LESSON TITLE:** Marriage: A Promise  
**TION:** All in the Family

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## DEVOTIONAL READING

Hebrews 12:7–13

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## BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:21–6:4

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### Ephesians 5:21–33—KJV

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.  
22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.  
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.  
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.  
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;  
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,  
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.  
28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.  

### Ephesians 5:21–33—NIV

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.  
22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.  
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.  
24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.  

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**KEY VERSE:** Ephesians 5:21
Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,
27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.
28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.
34 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—
35 for we are members of his body.
36 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”
37 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.
However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: In an ever-changing and increasingly complex society, the focus on self-indulgence has endangered a healthy concept of family. How do we make commitment to God and family central to our well-being? Paul said that a committed relationship must be sought in which husbands, wives, and children love, honor, and respect both God and one another.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:
1. Summarize the relationship Paul described as proper between a husband and wife.
2. Appreciate the holy relationship that exists between a husband and wife, which transcends the physical, emotional, and psychological dimensions, and touches the spiritual.
3. Cultivate a climate within the church where marriages can flourish and display the holiness described in this text.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH

—The passage highlights love rather than control. (verses 28-29). At any event, both marriage —“Subject to one another” indicates a status that partners are commanded to “be subject to one is neither superior nor inferior. It is mutual another” in verse 21.

submission.
—Paul’s instructions for family life are set in the context of reverence for Christ.
—Interpretations vary as to what it means for of the larger theme of the book of Ephesians to wives to be “subject to your husbands as you are build up the body of Christ.

—The oneness of a married couple is a metaphor for the oneness of Christ and the church.
—The text should be understood in the context
“Household codes” such as this one were common in Greek, Roman, and other cultures of the same era. Their function was to maintain order.

The relationships in this text all involved unequal power in the minds of the first hearers. The text is lifting up mutuality in unequal power relationships while attempting to retain hierarchical order, the common wisdom of the day, in society and the home.

Teachers of CHILDREN

— All persons in the Christ-led household are to be reverent to one another.
— The relationship between husband and wife is compared to Christ’s relationship with the church.
— The male role as head of the family is culturally bound and not intended to be the focus of the teaching.
— This text demonstrates the need for responsibility in relationships of unequal power, wherein the person with the greater power has the greater responsibility for the well-being of the family.
— The background Scripture reminds children of the commandment to honor their parents.
— Verse 4 in the Background Scripture instructs fathers to nurture and provide for their children by teaching them in the word and way of God.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The letter to the Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus during his third missionary journey to Antioch (see Acts 18:19-22; 20:31). According to the early church fathers, the epistle to the Ephesians might have been written by Paul during his second Roman arrest. The letter to the Ephesians encourages the Christian Jews and the believing Gentiles to unite as one body in the church. There are also other letters under the authorship of the apostle Paul, including the epistles to the Colossians and Philippians, and the book of Philemon (bible.org).

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The city of Ephesus was a port town located at the mouth of the Cayster River on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea in modern-day Turkey. This was one of the Roman provinces in Asia Minor. This city was home to the temple of the Roman goddess of fertility known to the Greeks as Artemis (see Acts 19:23-28), and this was also a town that practiced sorcery and emperor worship (bible.org). The city of Ephesus was a cosmopolitan town with a population of about 25,000 occupants that included Jews and the Gentiles.

The letter to the Ephesians is believed to have been written by Paul in around AD 60-61. However, prior to this writing, Paul had established the church in Ephesus while on his way to Jerusalem from his ministry in Corinth in AD 53, where he left behind Aquila and Priscilla at the synagogue in Ephesus (see Acts 18:18-22). Paul spent three months in the synagogue, teaching and baptizing both Jews and Gentiles (until he was maligned by the Jews), and he went to lecture at the hall of Tyrannus for two years (bible.org).

PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON
Apostle Paul: He was minister of the Word of Christ to Gentile believers in many parts of the Asian continent during the early development of the church (bible.org).

KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON

Body (verse 23)—Greek: sóma (so’-mah): body, flesh; the body of the church.

Christ (verse 23)—Greek: Christos (khris-tos’): the Anointed One, Messiah, Christ.

Church (verse 27)—Greek: ekklésia (ek-klaysee’-ah): an assembly; congregation; church.

Head (verse 23)—Greek: kephalé (kef-al-ay’): the head.

Husbands (verse 22)—Greek: anér (an’-ayr): male human beings; men.

Reverence (verse 21)—Greek: phobos (fob’-os): panic, flight; “fear” (KJV); the causing of fear; terror.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Work Out Your Salvation

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON

I. Introduction

A. Work Out Your Salvation

B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

A. Guidelines for Family Life (Ephesians 5:21-24)

B. Instructions for Husbands (Ephesians 5:25-28)

C. The Marvel of Marriage (Ephesians 5:29-33)
III. Concluding Reflection

In the beginning of Ephesians, the apostle Paul stated clearly that we are saved by grace, not by works (see Ephesians 2:8). He also helped us to understand that God made us and called us so that we could do good works here on earth (verse 10). In the last chapters of the book, the apostle Paul began to expound on godly behaviors which must be reflected in us as God’s children. By the end of chapter 4, Paul began to exhort the believers to forgive as God forgave us, who is our pattern of good examples (see 4:32).

Chapter 5 of this book begins with one of Paul’s classic principles—which states that all believers follow the example of God as His dear children (see 5:1-2)—and goes on to talk about the ideal relationship between a husband and wife in the home and the necessary factors which must be present for such a union to excel. He encouraged us to show Christ in us in all our endeavors and dealings. We must emulate Christ—not in authority but in humility, love, sacrifice, and forgiveness (see Hebrews 13:16).

B. Biblical Background

In verses 18-23 of Ephesians 5, we see that Paul gave a form of a command when he said, “Be filled with the Spirit.” He went on to say how we ought to act when we are filled with the Spirit when he said, “speaking one to another in hymns, psalms and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord.” From Paul’s words, it certainly means there ought to be a pattern of life and action which should be seen and expressed in the life of a Christian who is filled with the Spirit. Th is goes to show that for there to
be any form or level of commitment between brothers and sisters in the household of faith, the Spirit of God must fill every one of us.

One of the many results of being Spiritfilled is that the Spirit brings so much humility that we are able to “submit to another out of worship and reverence for Christ.” Notice here that the apostle Paul did not recommend that we be half or partially filled. He said, “Be filled with the Spirit,” which simply means that our potential to contain the Holy Spirit in us must be maximized so that we practically no longer exist of our own will and volition but according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit in us. Until this is achieved, we may never come to full commitment and submission to one another and may also not be able to seek to meet the needs of others (see Philippians 2:4).

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. Guidelines for Family Life

(Ephesians 5:21-24)

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

The opening verse in our lesson (verse 21) levels the relationship playing field. Paul moved from addressing our relationship with God to addressing our relationships with each other. This includes natural, civic, and church relationships. We are called to submit ourselves to and give respect to civil magistrates, since they are ordained by God. Respect for human leadership is equated to respect for God. Reverential fear of displeasing God becomes the yardstick for measuring the standard of submission is “the Lord.” Wives should endeavor to submit to their husbands in everything (not to commands contrary to Christ and biblical standards).

The apostle Paul did not stop at the wife alone. He extended directions to the husband when he said, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” In using the word love, the apostle Paul simply was encouraging submission to the needs of the wives just as Christ had submitted to the needs of the church. The purpose of Christ’s love to the church was to make her holy by cleansing her through the Word and to present the church to Himself as a church radiant and without spot, blemish, or any wrinkle (verses 26-27). Paul encouraged husbands to love their wives as their own bodies (verse 28) and make sacrifices for them as Christ had done for the church. Nothing should be done in selfishness but in humility, regarding Paul’s motives are to ensure that husbands and wives are committed and united in one body, as he made reference to
Genesis 2:24 (verse 31). He further made it clear that the mystery of oneness of husbands and wives has been solved in the unity and oneness between Christ and the church. We are one in Christ, and our spouses are part of our body and should be treated as such (verse 32).

motive for properly performing our duties as Christians (see 1 Corinthians 10:22; 2 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Peter 2:13).

One of the most misunderstood words and disciplines in Scripture is the word submission (verse 22). The dictionary definition for submission is “the action or fact of accepting or yielding to a superior force or to the will or authority of another person.” This secular definition leans too far toward qualitative differences between two entities rather than the positional differences and the division of labor assignments of two entities. One of the reasons for why the term submission has been so maligned and rejected by some wives and some women is because the concept has been abused by some men and husbands. One of the ways that this concept has been misunderstood is that some have elevated the male gender as being superior to the female gender, and females as being answerable to men in general. A closer look at verse 22 reveals that submission is only for wives toward their own husbands rather than for women toward men. The reason that submission is only enacted under the marital covering is because of God’s expectation of husbands to live sacrificially with their wives. Any husband who submits to God and regards his wife in a sacrificial manner would be a safe and desirable covering.

Paul uses the relationship between Christ and the church to explain the relationship between a husband and wife (verses 23-24).

The admonition for wives to submit to their husbands “in everything” is a broad stroke which should not be taken in an extremely literal manner. If a husband requires his wife to do something that would bring harm to herself or to someone else, obviously that would not be wise. In this passage, Paul spoke in ideal terms, and the passage should be understood from that perspective.

B. Instructions for Husbands
(Ephesians 5:25-28)

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

The duty, calling, and responsibility of husbands to love their wives (verse 25) is not an ordinary, sentimental kind of love but a practical, sacrificial, spiritual kind of love. Sentimental love is surface and conditional. It lasts only as long as the feelings last. The way to discern what is required of husbands in this spiritual kind of love is to go back to verse 25 and ask how Christ loved the church. The answer is that Jesus sacrificed His very life on behalf of the church.
Likewise, the husband is called to sacrifice his life for his wife. Interestingly, the wife is only called to submit but never called to sacrifice her life for the husband. One might ask, which one seems more desirable? This call for personal life sacrifice may be hypothetically embraced by some husbands who relish the declaration of their bravado. They may say they would take a bullet for their wives—but a more practical question is if they would be willing to sacrifice a fishing trip with the guys or attendance at a championship ball game in order to meet her needs. The degree of one’s willingness to sacrifice is a revealer of one’s degree of love and commitment.

There is wide diversity of opinion about the true meaning of verse 26. Let us approach it phrase by phrase. The words “to make her holy” means to directly assist in the encouragement and development of her spiritual growth and her closeness to God. Some people are intimidated by applying the word holy to themselves or to other humans. But 1 Peter 1:16 reads, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” To be holy is to be sanctified and consecrated to God’s service. It means being conformed to the will of God (see Romans 6:19, 22; Ephesians 1:4; Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 1:15). Personal holiness is not instantaneous but is a gradual work that lasts a lifetime and is enhanced by worship, prayer, service, fellowship, obedience, and exposure to and absorption of the Word of God.

To be cleansed by the “washing with water” through the Word does not refer to baptism. The scriptural concept of “cleansing” in general was related to liquid water as well as to various perfumes and fragrances that were especially applied to a young woman who was preparing for marriage. A spiritual washing with the Word most likely refers to the consistent, unrelenting exposure of the wife to the truth of God’s Word and the application of that truth in specific ways to address the individual unique needs or deficiencies of the wife. This might be accomplished through encouragingly quoting relevant Scripture to her, leading her in a targeted study of Bible passages, or other ways of exposing her spirit to the powerful principles of God’s Word which do not return void.

The goal of the church is to mature in holiness and blamelessness (verse 27). Matthew 5:48 states, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Literal perfection is obviously impossible as long as we are in the flesh. This concept refers to spiritual maturity and Christlikeness more so than to the ability to be 100 percent without error.

Verse 28 runs parallel to the concept of loving found in Mark 12:31 (NIV): “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no commandment greater than these.” If this concept were implemented in every marriage, the divorce rate would instantly and dramatically decrease. The deadly disease that causes most marriages to die is the disease of selfishness. No marriage can survive and thrive when selfishness is present, because healthy marriage consistently asks the question, “What can I do for you?” Godly marriage prompts and empowers the husband to follow the example of Jesus
Christ and “not only to protect and cherish his wife, by giving her the necessaries and conveniences of life, but also to cleanse her; that is, to form her mind, and assist her in making progress in virtue. [This shows that he] really loves himself, and promotes his own happiness in the best manner. For his wife, being thus loved and cared for, will be strengthened for performing her duty; and her mind being improved, her conversation will give him the greater pleasure. Withal, having a high esteem for her husband, she will submit to the hardships of her station with cheerfulness” (Benson Commentary, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ephesians/5-28.htm).

C. The Marvel of Marriage
(Ephesians 5:29-33)

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

It is utterly unnatural and unimaginable for any man in his right mind to hate himself, because the first law of nature is that of selfpreservation (verse 29). Just as men naturally take care of themselves, God gives husbands the power, ability, and instinct to nurture and care for their wives. The husband’s high calling for his marriage is to imitate the love that Christ shows toward the church. That love is everlasting and unchangeable. It provides nourishment, love, and grace. When it comes to His bride—the church—Christ “grants them near and intimate communion with himself, [and] nothing is more desirable . . . or joyful to them; [nothing] more revives and encourages faith, hope, and love; he clothes them suitable to their dignity and character, as his spouse and bride” (John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible, https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/ephesians-5-29.html).

This brief Scripture (verse 31) contains a powerful three-part formula for successful marriage. Part 1 is to leave. This concept involves the physical departure from a parental residence into one’s own abode. It is difficult for someone who is living under another person’s roof to formulate an individual pathway. We are called always to honor our parents, but marriage is the time to spread one’s own emotional, spiritual, and relational wings. Parents who encourage or allow the continuous attachment of the parental umbilical cord do a disservice to the child’s marriage. To leave also means to emotionally detach from parental control or allegiance. This sometimes proves to be a difficult maneuver, but it is necessary for success. Married couples should detach not only from parents but also from former friendships that are potentially strong enough to rival the relationship with the new mate. This does not mean that all friends should disappear, but their influence must be reconfigured to reflect the power and priority of the new marital relationship. Part 2 is to be
united or to cleave. To cleave means to stick like superglue. There are many practical actions and attitudes that promote marital cleaving, and the following are listed on the Web site decideyourlegacy.com: 1) schedule fun; 2) draft encouragement lists; 3) make a budget; 4) incorporate a question jar; 5) exercise together; 6) learn about marriage together; 7) pray together; 8) draft admiration lists; 9) entertain together; 10) get marriage mentors; 11) set goals together.

All these activities lead up to Part 3 of the formula: weave. To weave is to become one. Some of the most frequently given reasons for why couples divorce stem from problems with finances, infidelity, communication, and outside interference. All these issues are only surface problems—with the primary foundational issue being a lack of oneness and unity. Without oneness, small problems become glaring and seem unable to be overcome. The oldest military tactic known to humanity is that of divide and conquer. When marital oneness is strong and consistently intact, the marriage becomes unshakable and no problem is too difficult to overcome.

Verse 33 closes chapter 5 by restating and reaffirming the point previously stated in verse 29. That point is the supreme responsibility and privilege of the husband to demonstrate love toward his wife in the same way he demonstrates love toward himself. This love includes servant leadership, unlike what was seen in the Genesis narrative when Adam abdicated his responsibility to watch over Eve and to speak God’s truth when Eve was confronted by the Serpent.

The only effective way for a husband to love his wife is for that husband to be connected to the never-ending source of love—which is God—because God is love. God does not just have love or give love—God is the very essence of love, and without God there is no true love. When the husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church, that kind of love provokes respect within the wife.

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to support our marriages. One of the best investments in life is the investment in a healthy marriage, which tends to produce healthy children, healthy schools, healthy churches, and healthy cities. Please take the time to investigate the following resources that encourage healthy marriage in our community: smartrmarriages.com; nashvillemarriagenetwork.com; blackandmarriedwithkids.com; blackdemographics.com; hamptonu.edu/ncaamp/.

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Paul called for universal love, honor, and respect to be prominently displayed within the family and within marriage, which was the first institution created by God. The relationship between a husband and wife transcends the physical, emotional, and psychological dimensions and touches the spiritual. Healthy marriages benefit the community, and churches should cultivate a climate where marriages can flourish and
display the love that Christ has for the church. As husbands practice loving their wives like Christ loves the church, this will inspire wives to show respect and support to their husbands. All of this will cultivate oneness with a married couple, just as there is to be oneness between Christ and the church.

PRAYER
Lord, make us one in marriage and make us one as a body of Christ, just as Jesus prayed that we might be one. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
(August 19-25, 2019)

Marriage: A Covenant of Mutual Love
MONDAY, August 19: “Partners from the Beginning” (Genesis 2:18-24)
TUESDAY, August 20: “We Will Serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:14-18)
WEDNESDAY, August 21: “Capable Wife and Supportive Husband” (Proverbs 31:16-31)
THURSDAY, August 22: “Live as Children of Light” (Ephesians 5:6-20)
FRIDAY, August 23: “Parents and Children Together” (Ephesians 6:1-4)
SATURDAY, August 24: “Masters and Slaves Together” (Ephesians 6:5-9)
SUNDAY, August 25: “Marriage: A Covenant of Mutual Love” (Ephesians 5:21-33)