Ages 10–13

Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature

# WHAT GOD EXPECTS FROM ME

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

# "What God Expects From Me"

Vacation Bible School Lessons for Ages 10–13
Written by Sister Janet Carlock, Bro. Chris Shuffitt,
and Sister Ronica Shuffitt

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LESSON ONE

# PRAYER

**LESSON TEXT**
**LUKE 18:1-14**

1. And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
2. Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;
5. Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.
6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?
9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:
10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.
11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.
12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.
13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.
14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

***Note To The Teacher:** Students will need a Bible to use with this particular lesson.*

## INTRODUCTION

"Prayer takes on many forms but real prayer is a conscious appeal to the divine; a conscious effort to hold communion with the almighty God." From this defining thought we can see that prayer, our communication with God, must come from a conscious effort within. However, most of us easily slide through well-worn lines recited for decades or we quickly throw a cliche or two at God and call it a prayer.

"Our Father which art in Heaven" (the model prayer from Jesus), "Now I lay me down to sleep," and "God is great, God is good," while commonly used as models to follow for prayer, should not be substituted for conscientious prayers

from the depths of the heart. In Matthew 6:7, Jesus warned of "vain repetitions" and added "your Father knows what things you have need before you ask Him." Further, Jeremiah 29:13 tells us that we shall find God when we search for Him with all our heart. In other words, when we pray, we must pray in earnest from deep within our hearts.

Jesus used parables to teach the people about the ways of the Lord. A parable is defined as "a short simple story from which a moral lesson can be learned." Our lesson text contains two parables from Jesus on the subject of prayer.

## THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

Jesus used this parable to teach persistence when we pray. However, Jesus said that persistence in prayer does not mean endless repetitions or painfully lengthy prayer sessions. Instead, persistence in prayer means to always pray, keeping our requests constantly before God as we live for Him day by day, always believing He will answer.

Widows and orphans were among the most vulnerable people in both the Old and New Testaments and they needed to be cared for (Exodus 22:22-24). The widow in the parable persisted in coming to the wicked judge until he answered her. Jesus' point from this was if evil judges respond to persistence, then how much more will a loving and merciful God respond to us. If we have enough faith and believe He loves us, we can know He will hear our cries for help.

## THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN (VERSES 9-14)

Jesus used this parable to teach to be humble when we pray. Humbleness is necessary in order to show God that we are sinful and in need of His mercy.

The Jewish people went to Temple to pray and worship. The Pharisee, a member of this strict religious group who demanded minute obedience to the Jewish law and traditions, went to the Temple to announce to all who were there how great he was—not to pray to God (verses 11-12). The Publican, a tax collector, went realizing his sin and begging God's mercy (verse 13).

Self-righteousness, as demonstrated by the Pharisee, is an extremely dangerous thing. Self-righteousness leads to pride, causes one to despise others, and prevents him/her from learning anything from God. We should follow the example of the Publican's prayer of humbleness because we all need God's mercy each day of our lives. Therefore, let us commit Proverbs 29:23 to memory—"a man's pride shall bring him low; but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit."

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO

1. Read Psalms 100 and 136.
2. Make your own "thanksgiving" list using the following statements. Explain each answer:
   a. I thank God that He is ...
   b. I thank God for showing me His love by ...
   c. I thank God for providing me with ...
   d. I thank God for helping me ...
   e. I thank God that I am ...
3. Explain what you think is meant by the statement: "Faith is not just knowing, it is doing."
4. Write your own psalm of thanksgiving to help you remember that God is your source of all that is good and eternal.

## THE POWER OF FAITH

The main requirement of prayer is faith. God's promises for those who have faith are astounding. Jesus prayed and spoke a great deal about prayer. The following are just a few of the many instructions He said about faith as a part of the act of prayer:

To the disciples in the storm, "Why are you afraid? Where is your faith?" (Mark 4:40, Luke 8:25);

To Jairus, "Only Believe, and she shall live" (Luke 8:50);

To the blind man, "Do you believe that I am able to do this? Be it unto you according to your faith" (Matthew 9:28-29);

To Martha at Lazarus' tomb, "If you believe, you will see the glory of God" (John 11:40);

To the Syro-Phoenician woman, "O woman, great is your faith. Be it unto you even as you desire" (Matthew 15:28).

Perhaps the greatest instructions Jesus gave for faith as an act of prayer are found in Matthew 17:20 ..."for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you"; in Matthew 21:22 "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Matthew 21:22 does not mean that we will get ANYTHING we ask for. God does not grant requests that would hurt us or others or that are violations of His will. Our prayers must first be in harmony with God's will and principles—causing God to be happy to grant them in His own time and as He sees fit.

## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Hannah, one of two wives of Elkanah*, was unable to have children. In Old Testament days, a childless woman was considered a failure and a social embarrassment to her husband. Children were extremely important to the Jewish society's financial structure. They were a source of labor for the family and it was their duty to care for their parents in their old age.

Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, gave him many sons and daughters as we find in 1 Samuel 1:4. Peninnah ridiculed Hannah for being barren, which caused Hannah extreme grief and pain (1 Samuel 1:10). In 1 Samuel 1:11, Hannah "vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou will indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." This was a Nazarite vow which parents could take for their unborn children. The Nazarite vow was a promise to be set apart for special service to God (Numbers 6:1-5). As long as the vow was in effect, the person's hair could not be cut. Although some vows were temporary, Hannah's was for life.

We should be careful what we promise God in prayer because He may hold us to it. Hannah desperately wanted her prayer to be answered so she made a deal with God. He took her up on her promise, and to Hannah's credit, she stuck with her promise even though it was painful (1 Samuel 1:27-28). Although we are certainly in no position to bargain with God, He may still choose to answer a prayer with an attached promise. However, remember that it is

dishonest and dangerous to ignore a promise ESPECIALLY to God. God keeps His promises and he expects us to keep ours.

In 1 Samuel 1:18, we find that Hannah's behavior was no longer sad as it had previously been. The fact that she had honestly prayed to God and resolved to leave the problem with God can account for this change. In His time, God answered Hannah's prayer and she gave birth to a son and called him Samuel "because I have asked him of the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:20).

Hannah praised God for being a "rock" (1 Samuel 2:2)—firm, strong, and unchanging. From this we know that God is always present and ready to help if we will just ask—even when everything else seems to be falling apart. You can read Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

**Lesson Note: Polygamy, having more than one wife, was not part of God's plan. Genesis 2:24 states that in marriage TWO shall become ONE flesh. Polygamy often caused serious family problems, as we see in the story of Hannah and Peninnah.*

## SUMMARY

The first mention of prayer is found in Genesis 4:26 where we are told that "men began to call upon the name of the Lord." From our lesson we have learned that prayer is a conscious effort to hold communion with God. Patience, perseverance, and persistence are important conditions for prayer, but the most important is faith. Faith plays a vital role in prayer. One must pray in faith believing that God will hear and answer the prayer. God holds in His hands the workings and inter-workings of the forces of the universe, and is able to bring into play powers that we know nothing about. Jesus said that God may be induced to do this through our faith in Him.

## QUESTIONS

1. Given the case of the Pharisee, in what ways can being "religious" interfere with a person's relationship with God? in prayer time/ Explain your answers.
2. Why is pride so dangerous? Give an example of how a person's pride can lead to disaster.
3. How does God view pride? Why does He see it that way?
4. Why is faith such an important requirement for prayer? Explain your answer.
5. Explain in your own words Jeremiah 29:13, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."
6. 2 Chronicles 7:14 states "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land." How does this verse apply to the current condition of the world? Explain your answer.

LESSON TWO

# OBEDIENCE

**LESSON TEXT**
**DEUTERONOMY 28:1-14**

1. And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:
2. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.
3. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.
4. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.
5. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.
6. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.
7. The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.
8. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
9. The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.
10. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee.
11. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee.
12. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.
13. And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:
14. And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

## INTRODUCTION

As humans, our lives are filled with past memories. People save memorabilia from various happy experiences of their lives. Everything from old pictures to letters to ticket stubs from ballgames and concerts gets stored away in a treasure box of memories only to be retrieved when one is feeling down and sad. The happy memories that these items possess aid in pulling the person out of the "dumps."

The book of Deuteronomy is a book of "memories"—more specifically a memory book for the children of Israel calling for them to remember who God is and what He had done. God had made a covenant, or promise, with the freed Israelites who came out of Egyptian bondage, but because of their disobedience and failure to trust God, He let them wander in the wilderness for forty years until they died. Moses instructed the new generation of Israelites, the descendants of the old generation, restating the Law and God's Covenant, preparing them to enter the Promised Land.

## GOD'S PROMISES FOR THE OBEDIENT

Our lesson text lists God's promises for the obedient as being material blessings, divine protection, prosperity, powerful testimony, abundant supplies, and special honor. Most importantly, in verse 2 of our lesson text, God tells us that if we will listen to His voice—many blessings will come our way. Not only SHOULD we obey God but Deuteronomy 10:12-13 tells us obedience is a REQUIREMENT of God and it is for our own good.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO

1. Some friends are wanting to steal some liquor and get drunk. They ridicule you for your refusal to join them. Do you stand firm in your decision or do you give in to their ridicule and join them?
2. Your parents are away for the night and you have been instructed to not have any friends over while they are gone. Your best friend calls and wants to invite some girls/boys over for a party. What do you do, knowing that your refusal could cost you your best friend?
3. Explain in your own words the statement, "Obedience is a long-term commitment."

## GOD'S CONSEQUENCES FOR THE DISOBEDIENT

The prophet Jonah is perhaps one of the best examples of disobedience to God. God told Jonah to go to Nineveth and tell the people to repent of their evil ways or He would destroy them, but Jonah was afraid because Nineveth, Assyria was Israel's biggest enemy. He knew that God had a very important job for him to do. Jonah's fear made him run from God's will but his running caused much more trouble for him. Jonah 1:17 says, "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Jonah's prayer of repentance while in the belly of the fish was heard by God and the great fish vomited him onto dry land. Jonah learned a valuable lesson about disobeying God. God's punishment for disobedience can be a most fearful thing. The Bible tells us that to fall into the hands of a just and angry God would be a horrible occurrence. We should al-

ways heed God's warning and do everything in our daily lives to obey Him and to do His will. The Hebrew nation is another example of disobedience. The Jews disregarded God's laws and His words and received an outpouring of His wrath upon their nation.

The rest of Deuteronomy Chapter twenty-eight tells of the great curses that would come upon the Jews for their disobedience to God. The Babylonian captivity and the Roman destruction is vividly pictured. The "eagle" mentioned in Deut. 28:49 was the ensignia of the Roman army. In both the Babylonian and Roman sieges, men and women ate their own children for food (Deut. 28:53-57). The despersion of the Jews, unceasing persecutions upon them, and trembling of their hearts and pining of their souls, even unto the present time, are all specifically and graphically foretold. One can see from reading the rest of Deuteronomy Chapter twenty-eight that to be disobedient to God will bring much trouble and heartache. God is a fair, merciful, and just God. No one can say that He is unfair as He always gives His requirements for obedience as well as His consequences for disobedience.

## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Noah was a man of consistency, patience, and obedience. During Noah's lifetime, he saw the occurrence of two great tragic floods. The first was a flood of evil. Genesis 6:5 tells us that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The world was so evil that even the thoughts of every person were corrupt and sinful except for Noah who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). Noah pleased God; however, he was far from perfect. Noah committed the sin of becoming drunken (Gen. 9:20) but repented and gained God's forgiveness. Still, he wholeheartedly loved and obeyed God, choosing to find grace in the eyes of the Lord in spite of the sin that surrounded him in the world.

The second tragic flood was the punishment sent from God upon the sin-cursed world. God gave the world a one-hundred-twenty-year chance to repent and turn back to Him. During this time, He instructed Noah to build an ark. When people saw Noah building a great boat on dry land, they thought he was crazy and they ridiculed him. Still Noah continued to obey God, and when the flood waters came, no one was able to say that they had not been warned. Obedience meant a courageous long-term commitment to Noah.

Many times we have trouble sticking to a project, especially in the face of opposition. Noah obeyed God and worked on one project longer than our average lifetime. The only project we have comparable to Noah's is our life. Noah's example teaches us that we should live, dependent on God's help, an entire lifetime of obedience. Therefore, we should commit Genesis 6:22 to memory—"Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did."

## SUMMARY

From our lesson, we have learned obedience to God and His will creates for us abundant blessings and is for our own good. Furthermore, God requires that we be obedient to Him. He tells us in Joshua 1:5 that obedience is the way to success and in James 1:25 that a doer of the word and work shall be blessed in his deed.

Two final important lessons can be learned from this: 1.) to the saved—remember what God has done for you by saving your soul and commit yourself to live your life trusting and obeying Him; and 2.) to the unsaved—God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) of their sins to gain everlasting life. This commandment is the most important act of obedience that a person could ever do!

## QUESTIONS

Choices are an important part of obedience. Choosing to follow God produces good results in our lives while choosing to ignore God's will results in harm for us as well as others.

1. Respond to the following statement—"You always have a choice. It always makes a difference."
2. Is it possible for a person to make a choice against God's will and get away with it? Explain your answer.
3. How do you feel when a friend makes a choice that leads to bad or harmful consequences in his/her life? Explain.
4. What are some choices facing you in the present time or near future? Complete this sentence: "I will choose to obey God because..."

LESSON THREE

# REPENTANCE AND FAITH

**LESSON TEXT**
**LUKE 13:1-5 & PSALMS 51:1-13**

**Luke 13:1-5**

1. There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?
3. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
4. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?
5. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

**Psalms 51:1-13**

1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.
4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.
5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.
10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
11. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.
13. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

## INTRODUCTION

Repentance as defined by Webster is to turn from one's sins to feel regret or contrition. Faith is defined as belief and trust in and loyalty to God; firm belief in something for which there is no proof - something that is believed with strong conviction. Repentance and faith are sacred duties - in fact, moral requirements - in order for an alien sinner to be forgiven and saved from the wrath to come. They are also inseparable

graces, wrought in our souls by the regeneration Spirit of God.

In the life of one who has been saved, repentance is necessary to maintain fellowship with God (I John 1:8-10). Faith is essential in the life of the believer in order to please God in the service we render to Him (Hebrews 11:6). Hebrews Chapter 11 is the faith chapter. Read this wonderful chapter. Faith is conviction based on past experiences that God's promises will surely be ours.

## REPENTANCE AND FAITH FOR THE UNSAVED

In our lesson text we see Jesus as he commands that all must repent or perish. In Acts 17:30 we again hear the command that all men everywhere repent. Those who are lost and separated from God by sin must seek their soul's salvation or be eternally separated from God in a devil's hell. Adam's choice to reject the command of God regarding the eating of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil separated us all from God (Gen 1:17). God provided a way by which fellowship between God and man could be restored. He gave us his only son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for our sins.

In Mark 1:15 Jesus tells us to repent and believe the gospel. Acts 3:19 says repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out. In Jonah 3:5-10 we find Jonah preaching to the people of Nineveh "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed." The people of Nineveh believed God's preaching. They proclaimed a fast and put on sack cloth. Even the king took part in this and commanded that all the people cry mightly unto God and turn from their evil ways.The people of Nineveh exhibited true repentance and God recognized this (Matthew 12:40-41).

God's message of repentance is for everyone, even the wicked people of Nineveh. The Ninevites were open to God's message and repented immediately. The people of Nineveh needed to hear God's message only once. God responded in mercy by canceling the threatened punishment. God is willing to save all who will repent and believe the gospel (John 3:16).

## HOW DO WE REPENT?

The Ninevites put on sack cloth and prayed that God would forgive their sins. They approached God with a contrite heart (sincerely remorseful heart), begging His forgiveness. Everything else was put aside. They didn't even eat. In other words, God's forgiveness of their sins became more important to them than any other concern. In Psalms 116 we hear David as he tells about his feelings when he was seeking the Lord, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord; O, Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul". The Lord heard and answered David's prayer. Read Psalms 116.

Repentance without faith is impossible. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Faith is believing with all your heart that God will do what He says. We are told that God will save us when we come to Him with a broken heart, sorry for our sins, trusting Him and Him only for our salvation.

In Luke 23 we have the account of Jesus' trial before Pilate. Even though Pilate found no fault in Jesus, he refused to let him go (Luke 23:22). Pilate even made a show of washing his hands in order to demonstrate that he had nothing to do with the blood of "this just man." This is what Pilate did with Jesus.

When you feel the guilt of your sins, what will you do with Jesus?

**Lesson Note: Jesus' death was necessary so that each of us could be saved from our sins.*

## REPENTANCE AND FAITH FOR THE SAVED

In order for saved people to maintain fellowship with God, it is necessary that we ask forgiveness for things we have done that are against His will. Saved people are in a constant battle between a desire to do God's will or to succumb to the temptation of worldly sins. Paul said, "when I would do good, evil is always present with me." Our duty, as a Christian, is to try to live as close to God as we can and to be an example to those who are lost.

In Psalm 51 we find David praying to God for forgiveness for his sin with Bath-sheba. David had committed adultery* with Bath-sheba and had sent her husband into battle because David wanted Bath-sheba for himself. At this time in history those soldiers who were on the front lines were almost certain to be killed. David was aware of this and placed Uriah, Bath-sheba's husband, on the front line in the very heat of the battle, because it would mean certain death (2 Samuel 11). In 2 Samuel chapter 12 we read of the consequences of David's sin with Bath-sheba. The child that David and Bath-sheba had became sick and died.

**Lesson Note: Adultery is having a sexual relationship with someone other than your wife or husband.*

David was truly sorry for his sin with Bath-sheba and also for murdering her husband in order to cover up this sin. He knew his actions had hurt many people. However, he repented of these sins. In His mercy God forgave him. When we come to God in true repentance, begging his mercy and forgiveness, He is faithful and just to forgive us. Do you have the feeling that you could never get close to God because you have done something terrible? God can and will forgive you of your sin.

Even though God forgives us, he doesn't always keep us from the natural consequences of our sin. David and Bath-sheba lost their child, and the life of David and his family were never the same as a result of his sin (2 Samuel 12:1-23).

According to standards set by the world, extramarital sex between two consenting adults is acceptable if nobody gets hurt. However, people do get hurt - in David's case a man was killed and a child died. All sin hurts us and others, but ultimately sin offends God because sin is rebellion against God. When you are tempted to do wrong, if you remember that you will be sinning against God, this will help you stay on the right track.

Just as David came to God confessing his sin and seeking forgiveness, we need to daily approach God in humility in order to obtain forgiveness for our sins. This daily communion with God indicates that we want to keep our relationship with God clean and growing. David's prayer is a perfect example of a humble heart seeking after a close relationship with God.

We are told in I John 1:9 that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. However, we must not use the fact that Jesus is merciful to us as an excuse to sin and take advantage of God's mercy. In I John 2:1 we are instructed "to sin not and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." We are to strive to live as close to God as we

can. However, since we are still in the flesh we may make mistakes. If this happens, the only hope we have is to cast ourselves on the goodness of a merciful God. What a sweet relief it is when we do this.

## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

No person, other than Jesus himself, has shaped the history of Christianity like the apostle Paul. Even before he was a believer (saved), his actions were significant. His continual persecution of Christians following Stephen's death got the church started in obeying Christ's commandment to spread the gospel to the whole world. Paul's personal encounter with Jesus changed his life. He never lost his intensity, but from then on it was channeled for spreading the gospel.

Paul was very religious. His training under Gamaliel was the finest available. His intentions and efforts were sincere. It was said of Paul that he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He knew the Bible and sincerely believed that the Christian movement was dangerous to Judaism. Therefore, Paul hated the Christian faith and persecuted Christians without mercy.

Paul gained permission to travel to Damascus to capture Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem. However, God had other plans for Paul and stopped him in his tracks on the road to Damascus. Read about Paul's conversion in Acts Chapter 9. Many lessons can be learned from the life of Paul: forgiveness and eternal life are a gift of God's grace received by faith in Christ and available to all people, obedience flows from a relationship with God and God doesn't waste our time. He uses our talents — even our whole life for his service.

This verse from Phillipians 1:21 sums up the life of Paul, "for me to live is christ but to die is gain."

**Lesson Note: Before his conversion Paul's name was Saul of Tarsus. After he was saved, his name was changed to Paul.*

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

1. Your friends know that you are a Christian. One day at school you became very angry and said things that you shouldn't. Your friends, who you know are lost, heard you. When you went home, you couldn't get that situation out of your mind. What would you do?
2. You and your friends are discussing church. You don't say much because you are afraid that they will think you are strange. Later this keeps returning to your mind. What does God expect of you?

## SUMMARY

In this lesson we have discussed repentance and faith as it pertains to both the saved and unsaved. David's prayer of forgiveness for his sins demonstrates to us that when those of us who have been saved go against God's will, we have a merciful God who is ready to forgive if we are sorry for our sins. We then need to seek His forgiveness and go on living for Him.

Repentance and faith is also necessary for those who are lost to be saved. The only hope of a lost sinner is to beg forgiveness of his sins from a merciful and righteous God. In Luke 18:9-14 we see the Publican (Publicans were tax collectors and were despised by the people) going to the temple to pray. He recognized his sins and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The Bible tells us that this man went home justified.

God is merciful both to the saved and the unsaved. He expects repentance from us all!

LESSON FOUR

# SACRIFICE

**LESSON TEXT**
**ROMANS 12:1-3**

1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

## INTRODUCTION

The word "sacrifice" means to slaughter, to put to death. In the Old Testament days the sacrifices were animals that were slaughtered and offered to GOD as dead sacrifices. Sacrificing an animal was important during Old Testament days. These sacrifices cost dearly. A sizable sacrifice such as a bull or goat was offered from the more wealthy person. A pair of doves, or some flour was offered from the very poor people. But in all cases a person would feel the cost. It would in most cases be something that person had grown on his own farm.

Just how can a killing of an animal make things right between GOD and people? There were five kinds of offerings that fulfilled two main purposes: one was to show praise, thankfulness, and devotion; the other for atonement, the covering and removal of guilt and sin. When Jesus died on the cross for all of our sins, people no longer had to give temporary offerings or sacrifices for their sins. Jesus' death took care of that for the whole human race, forever. Only Jesus' sacrifice had the power to actually forgive sins and change lives.

But GOD made it clear that obedience from the heart was much more important in our service for HIM. GOD wants us to offer ourselves as "living" sacrifices. Each day of our Christian life we should put GOD above our own desires. We should put all of our resources, energy, and skills at HIS disposal and then trust HIM to guide us through the good times AND the bad times in our lives.

## CONFORMING TO THE WORLD?

Verse 2 of our lesson text states, "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

What is GOD's will for our lives as Christians? GOD wants us to live good, pleasing and perfect lives. We should live our lives to honor and obey GOD. In so doing, we must understand as Christians that we cannot live and do the things that others in this world (sinners) do on

a day-to-day basis. Many "worldly" behaviors are "off limits" to Christians. This world is a sinful place. And just because someone (be it a friend or enemy) is doing a particular act, that does not mean that it is acceptable in GOD's sight.

Our refusal to conform to this world's values and behaviors must go beyond the act of refusing to participate in a particular activity. We must understand in our hearts AND in our minds that certain behavior is against GOD's will. "....be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds" (Romans 12:2). This action may mean that we do not participate in activities with our friends. How does a young Christian handle this?

As a young Christian you must always strive to be in GOD's will. When GOD's will conflicts with that of your friends, it is your responsibility to explain to your friends why you cannot participate. As hard as this may be on occasion, GOD will always bless you for your Christian actions. The key to continually following GOD's will is to know that as long as we serve and honor GOD, HE will always bless us. Those blessings will be much more than any "worldly" reward or praise.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS?

1. Your friend wants you to come over to their house. He/she wants to "party." Their parents will not be home and your friend wants to "test" the alcohol in the liquor cabinet. What do you do?
2. Your best friend gives you a beer and says, "Try it. One won't hurt you." What do you do?
3. A friend says, "Let's go buy a lottery ticket. I do it all the time for my dad." When you get to the store, your friend gives you money to buy a ticket also. What do you do?
4. You and your friends are out at the mall. "If you are really brave, you will steal that hat from the store," one of your friends challenge you in front of everyone else. What do you do?

## WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

Self-esteem is the way we feel about our self. Hopefully, most of the time we have a positive image of ourselves. One of the key areas of self-esteem is being bold enough to stand up for what we believe in, even if we are left standing alone. That's tough! People your age want so much to fit into "the in-crowd." And to do that, many times we get caught up in things that we know down in our hearts we should not do. It takes courage, self-confidence, and knowing that we should always try to do the right thing to get through some of those rough times. Being part of "the in-group" is fine, but being part of GOD's group is even better. We are one of GOD's works in progress. HE has made each of us capable of being His servant. When we trust HIM to lead us in the right direction, we begin a life of service for HIM.

It would be good at this time to read I Samuel chapter 15. God was upset with King Saul. Saul began to lie. This was wrong in the eyes of the LORD. Saul's dishonesty became worse. Yet Saul's greatest sin was to be more concerned about what others thought of him, rather than what GOD thought of him and what the status of his relationship with GOD was. What is the status of your relationship with GOD?

## "LIVING" SACRIFICES

There are many characters in the Bible who were "living" sacrifices for GOD. These people lived their life for GOD. They proved the old saying, "actions speak louder than words."

As GOD's church grew in Jerusalem, additional help was needed to assist the poor and manage the distribution of food in the early church. Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah were usually cut off from their families. As a result, it was more important than ever to see that GOD's children were well taken care of. Taking care of this great work required additional people. The disciples instructed the members to choose seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, to be put in charge of the distribution of food. One of these seven men was Stephen.

Besides being good at his church position, Stephen was also an excellent speaker. As the word of GOD increased, there was a certain group in the synagogue that began to disagree with Stephen. These men began to lie about Stephen and spread the rumors that he was teaching false doctrine. Stephen was arrested and brought before the Jewish Council. This council had been told that Stephen was speaking against the Law of Moses. That was something that this council could not tolerate. In his defense, Stephen told the council that they were accusing him of the same offenses of which they accused JESUS. Stephen told the council that the Jews had constantly rejected GOD's message and his prophets and that they had also rejected GOD's Son, JESUS. In his summary of Jewish history, Stephen angered the council and they wanted to stop his words.

Finally, members of the council could not have their evil motives revealed. They overtook Stephen and led him outside where they began to throw stones at him. These Jewish Council members stoned Stephen to death while he prayed for their forgiveness.

Stephen's death made a lasting impression on a young man named Saul (Paul) of Tarsus (Acts 7:58). People may not stone us to death today or try to kill us for witnessing about all that CHRIST has done for us. But they usually let us know very quickly that they don't want to hear what we have to say about JESUS CHRIST. Stephen's life is a continual challenge to all Christians today. Stephen was the first to die for the faith. How many of us would be willing to risk our lives to stand and speak about all that JESUS has done for us?

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A "LIVING" SACRIFICE?

Paul began to consider everything that he had done during his lifetime (Philippians 3). "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss.." After he was saved, Paul realized that all the things great and small meant nothing until he met CHRIST. Paul realized his relationship with CHRIST was more important than anything else. Paul gave up everything in order to know CHRIST. He gave up his family, friends, and political freedom.

We too have access to this knowledge, but we may have to make sacrifices to enjoy it fully. What kind of things are you willing to give up in order to live closer to GOD? Are you willing to spend a few minutes each day for prayer and studying the Bible? Are you willing to sacrifice some of your plans or pleasures in order to work for GOD or possibly

help someone in need? Whatever it is, knowing that you are living for GOD is more than worth the sacrifice.

## "FAITH OF OUR FATHERS"

There are a number of "role models" from the Bible that fit into this lesson. One was David. David was a man after GOD's own heart. When David sinned, he recognized it and confessed his sins to GOD. David committed his life to GOD and remained loyal to HIM throughout his lifetime.

Another man to pattern our life after was Abraham. Abraham lived for GOD. He was even willing to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, to GOD. We have already mentioned Stephen. Stephen sacrificed his life for his GOD. And then there was Paul. Paul sacrificed his way of living to follow GOD and do GOD's will. No person, apart from JESUS himself, shaped the history of Christianity like the apostle Paul.

## SUMMARY

When the apostle Paul met JESUS CHRIST, he found the one and only reason for living. GOD did not waste time in using Paul's skills to honor and glorify HIS holy word. Paul sacrificed everything, from his previous life before he was saved, to work for the honor of GOD. "For to me to live is CHRIST, and to die is gain" (Phillipians 1:21). You will never know all GOD can do with your talents and skills until you let HIM abide in your life.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is a "living" sacrifice?
2. How would conforming to the world be in violation of the teachings in the Bible? Give some examples.
3. Tell about something you did that was good in GOD's sight.
4. Name some things that young Christians such as yourselves can do for your church and for GOD.

## POSSIBLE DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What kind of things can the young people in your church do for the needy in your community?
2. How can your church help you become a stronger Christian?
3. What can you do to become a better Christian?

## BIBLE STUDY AND REFERENCES

Hebrews 13:12-16

Romans 6:7-16

I John 2:1-2

Hebrews 1:1-2

Hebrews 9:24-26

Romans 12:1-14

I Peter 1:13-15

Philippians 2:5-8

Philippians 3:8-15

Colossians 3:1-6

Ephesians 5:1-2

Psalm 4:5

LESSON FIVE

# COMMITMENT

**LESSON TEXT**
**JOSHUA 24:14-18**

14. Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.
15. 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.
16. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;
17. For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:
18. And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.

## INTRODUCTION

Commitment involves our being, our doing, and our suffering. We must be willing beings, willing to do, and willing to suffer. Commitment involves our body, soul, and spirit, and it encompasses "when", "where", and "as" GOD requires.

The idea of commitment seems to be more closely associated with the adult generation rather than young people. Yet, if you are a Christian, you must begin to build your commitment to GOD, your values, and your future goals.

## TO FULLY COMMIT ONESELF

The lesson text is part of Joshua's last speech to the Israelites (Joshua 24). Joshua was committed to obeying GOD. He is telling the people that they must obey the LORD GOD with all of their soul and being. ".....serve ye the LORD." It is easy to go about your life doing the things that please you and your loved ones close to you. But there comes a time when a person MUST choose who or what will control your very existence and being. Will it be GOD, your own limited personality, or another imperfect substitute? Once you choose GOD, you must continually reaffirm that commitment to GOD each day.

When Joshua finished his speech, all of the people immediately confirmed that they would follow GOD. But that promise did not last long. Why do you think this breaking of their promise with GOD occurred? It is easy to say that we will follow GOD. But it is much more important to live like it!

## "BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD" (JOSHUA 25:15)

When Joshua made this statement, he once again made a stand for GOD. This showed his spiritual leadership and his strong commitment to GOD. By making this statement, Joshua was willing to take the first step and in turn set an example for the others. The way we live our lives shows our strength and our commitment to our beliefs, values, and our GOD.

Who serves as a role model for you? Why? What kind of role model are you for your peers? What kind of role model would you LIKE to be?

## JOSEPH, THE SON OF JACOB

Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob and his beloved Rachel. Although Jacob had ten other sons, Jacob favored Joseph because Joseph was the first son of Rachel. As the years passed and Joseph grew into a young man, he found favor in the eyes of his father and in the eyes of GOD. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he had a dream that he interpreted for his brothers. His interpretation of the dream was that some day his brothers would bow down at his feet. Joseph's brothers deeply resented this dream interpretation. This resentment turned into jealousy. One day when Joseph's brothers were out tending their sheep, Jacob sent Joseph to check on them. When Joseph arrived, his brothers turned on him. They put him in a pit and were ready to leave him there to die. The brothers took the coat that Jacob gave Joseph and covered it with the blood of an animal after they sold him into slavery to a group of Ishmeelites.

Many times we may get the feeling that no one in our lives love us or appreciate us. We may even begin to feel deserted and alone. Christians cannot in all reality always live on top of the mountain. Sometimes we find ourselves in the valley. It's then that our strengths and talents many times are put to the test. Don't ever feel that you are alone. GOD is ALWAYS with you. And it is GOD that will help you, through your own talent and strength, to climb those mountains again to the top. Our talents and our knowledge come from GOD, and it is GOD that we should thank each and every day.

Some people may wonder why Joseph didn't just give up when he was betrayed and deserted by his family. Yet, Joseph knew that GOD was with him. Joseph turned each setback into a step forward. Instead of asking the question, "Why?" Joseph approached each setback with the question, "What shall I do now?" Through this positive attitude, Joseph showed everyone he came into contact with that GOD was with him in each step he made. Read about the life of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37 through 50.

## A COMMITTED SERVANT

Joseph suffered many trials during his life in Egypt. He was sold into slavery by his own brothers and put into prison because of the lies of a seductive woman. Yet, through all of these hardships, Joseph remained a faithful servant to GOD. Prisons in those days were dark, grim places. There were no guarantees that you would be released from the terrible place where prisoners were treated as slave laborers for the Egyptians. In those days, prisoners were guilty until proven innocent. A trial for the

accused came only at the whim of the ruler. Joseph was in prison for two years before he was summoned to the Pharaoh. And then he was called to interpret a dream and not to appear in a trial.

The prisoners in Egyptian prisons saw their situation as hopeless. There was no promise of a tomorrow. Yet, through all of the miserable situations, Joseph seemed to make the most of it through a positive attitude. That positive attitude was soon noticed by the jail warden. He made Joseph a prison administrator. Even through bad times, GOD will see HIS children through. As Christians we must show a "Joseph-like" positive attitude, and GOD will help us overcome tremendous hardships.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS?

1. Someone that you considered to be a good friend spreads a terrible story around school about you. You hear people talking about you behind your back. What do you do?
2. The group of friends that you hang around with at school are considered by many as social outcasts. One of the popular kids approach you one day and tell you that you can join the "in group" if you make fun of one of your buddies in the cafeteria during lunch. What do you do?
3. You are a member of a missionary Baptist church. You are very active in activities at school with your friends. One could say that you are "popular." A friend comes to church with you one Sunday. They hear the gospel being preached and witness an altar service. After church, your friend begins to "make fun of" the service. What do you do?

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A COMMITTED SERVANT FOR GOD?

At this point, stop and read Psalms 37:3-9. GOD promises many good things to those Christians that are committed to HIM.

- "Trust in the LORD and do good..." verse 3
- "Delight thyself also in the LORD and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." verse 4
- "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." verse 5
- " And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." verse 6
- "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him;..." verse 7
- "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." verse 8
- "....Those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth." verse 9

At times we may feel that we are being punished for some reason. We may begin to feel that no one likes us. "Why does everyone pick on me?" When we dwell on our problems, we become negative, resentful, and many times angry people. It's then that we yell, "It's just not fair!" But, no one ever promised us that life would be fair! What matters is not so much the events or circumstances of life, but how we respond to those circumstances. As Christians, we have to find the strength and courage to pick our self up and say, "It's time to change my attitude. And, I'm the one to make the first step to improve MY life." Just as in Joseph's life, with GOD's help, we can overcome the bad times and turn them into good times.

## SUMMARY

We all want to be seen as a good, honest, just, and caring individual in the sight of GOD and of our family and friends. To do that we must be willing to commit our lives for GOD and do only that which is good in GOD's sight. God uses us in spite of our limitations and failures. As we grow in faithfulness, GOD gives us additional responsibility. It is through that faithfulness and responsibility that we grow in GOD's grace. GOD wants our total commitment and with that total commitment, we will receive rewards from above.

## QUESTIONS

1. What does commitment mean to you?
2. Think of a time in your life when you were committed to something. It may have been a school project, or taking care of someone, or a cause or strong conviction that you felt strongly about. What were your feelings concerning that commitment? How did that commitment touch your life? How did that commitment touch the lives of others?
3. List some things that you value in your life. Why?
4. What was it about Joseph that showed others his commitment to GOD?
5. What is the difference between an optimist and a pessimist? Which would GOD prefer?

## BIBLE STUDY AND REFERENCES

Ephesians 6:10-18

Matthew 16:21-27

II Timothy 1:12-14

Romans 12:1-2

I Timothy 6:20-21

I Peter 4:12-19

Hebrews 13:12-16

Hebrews 12:1-3