Ages 14–15

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 14–15
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Written and published by the authority of
Mount Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church

Price Per Booklet: $1.50

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3841 Mt. Lebanon Church Road
Alvaton, KY 42122
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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.

INTRODUCTION

From the time we were very small, we have been taught that prayer should be an important part of our lives. As children, we were taught to "say our payers" and give thanks for what we have. When we come to the age of accountability, we pray for forgiveness and salvation from sin. As Christians, we often pray for strength to help us through hardships and pray for others that are burdened by illness or troubles. Throughout our lives, we turn to God through prayer.

Prayer is mentioned many times in the Bible. The first mention of prayer can be found in Genesis 4:26, "Then began man to call upon the Lord." Isaiah 56:7, "Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." In these scriptures

we discover mankind's universal need for prayer.

PRAYER: GOD'S COMMAND

The scriptures teach us to pray when we are in need of divine intervention. For our prayers to be answered, we must pray earnestly. Luke 18:1 states, "That men ought always to pray and not to faint," and I Thessalonians states, "Pray without ceasing."

WHY SHOULD SINNERS PRAY?

A sinner needs to pray for forgiveness of his sins and salvation as soon as he realizes that he is lost and in need of God's help. Romans 10:13 states, "For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS PRAY?

Christians must continue to pray to strengthen their faith and help through the hard times. Matthew 26:41 tells us "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptations. The Spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak."

CONDITIONS OF PRAYER

For our prayers to be answered, we must be humble, persistent, sincere, and believe with all the heart. Our lesson tells us of a widow who, because of her persistence, was given what she asked of the judge. This parable shows us that even though the judge had little regard for the widow, he granted her wish. The verses are meant to show us that God, who has much regard and love for His children, will answer our prayers if we ask. Again, II Chronicles 7:14 tells us "If My people which are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their land."

EXAMPLES OF ANSWERED PRAYER

God does expect man to call upon Him and ask for the things we desire. When man does this, God promises He will hear from heaven and answer him. When man obeys His commandments and does those things pleasing in His sight, then whatsoever we ask, we will receive of Him. This promise is taught in I John 3:22.

SINNERS' PRAYERS ANSWERED

Verses 10-14 from our lesson tell us about the Publican, a sinner, that went into the temple to pray. Realizing his need, without lifting so much as his eyes to heaven, he prayed for mercy; God answered his prayer and justified him because of his humbleness and faith.

In Psalms 116: 1-9, the Psalmist relates his experience with God. He found trouble and sorrow in his heart and said "I was brought low and he helped me." He called upon the name of the Lord. God heard his prayer and delivered his soul from eternal death. He then said, "... he dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

BELIEVERS PRAYERS ANSWERED

Elijah demonstrated great faith in God. He followed God's instructions and built an altar and prepared a sacrifice exactly as God commanded. To prove that his God was the true God he prayed that the power of the Lord would be known

to the people. Then fire came down and consumed the altar and the sacrifice. The people fell on their face and acknowledged that Elijah's God was the true God.

We read of another miraculous answer to the prayers of a faithful servant, Zacharias. His wife, Elisabeth, was barren and was well advanced in years. He prayed and the angel of the Lord told Zacharias his prayers had been heard. "His wife shall bear him a son and his name shall be called John.", Luke 1:13.

SUMMARY

Having faith and believing that our prayers will be answered can sometimes be difficult. The Bible, as well as the world around us, can help us believe that our prayers will be answered.

In our everyday lives, we see prayers being answered. Whether it be the sick being healed or something as small as making it through a hard day. Prayer can provide strength when we are in need.

ACTIVITY

The following is a list of reasons for prayer studied in our lesson. List them in order of importance to you, and be able to discuss why you listed them in that order.

1. Personal
2. Prayer for others
3. Salvation
4. Strength as a Christian

Can you think of any additions to this list?

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

Obedience is an active response to what one hears. There is an obligation to be active and not passive when a command is made. There are many different reasons why people are obedient. Among them are fear, hope of reward, guilt, and love.

We first learn obedience as young children. We need to learn that the rules God has set, much like those our parents set, are out of love, and are for our own benefit. The Bible tells us to keep the commandments and statues of the Lord for thy good.

THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE

In our lesson, we learn of many blessings that God promised the children of Israel for their obedience. Among these are material things, divine protection, prosperity, a nation with great respect and honor among nations, also abundant food and supply. As they obeyed God, they received these blessings. We will also receive blessings when we obey God. James 1:25 states "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

EXAMPLES OF OBEDIENCE

Throughout the Bible, there are many examples of people who were obedient to God's commands. These people were obedient for a variety of reasons.

As young children, we were afraid of the consequences of disobedience. Likewise, Christians should fear God's consequences for disobedience. Jonah was a man who served the Lord because he feared God. He saw and experienced the displeasure of God. He was cast into the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Jonah then obeyed God because he was afraid.

Obedience is a way to success. God promises a long life in Deuteronomy 32:47, "For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land."

In Genesis 6:9-22, we read about Noah and his family. Noah was a just man and considered perfect. Because of this, God chose him to build an ark. God gave him instructions on building the ark.

God told Noah that he would bring a flood that would destroy all life on Earth. Noah was to take two of every creature, male and female, to keep them alive. Because of his obedience, Noah and all his family were spared destruction.

In Genesis 22:1-14, Abraham demonstrates his great love for God. God told him to take his son, his only son, into the land of Moriah and offer him to God as a burnt offering. Abraham went up on the mountain. There, he laid the wood in order, bound Isaac, and laid him upon the wood. As Abraham stretched forth his hand to slay Isaac, an angel of the Lord called out unto him from heaven saying, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him." Because he had obeyed God and held back nothing from Him, he proved his love for God.

CHRIST THE EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE

There could be no better example of true obedience than Christ. He was obedient even to the giving of his life. He did not seek his own will, but the will of His father who sent him. So obedient was He, that at one point He prayed, "Fa-

ther, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." Luke 22:42.

Christ's example should show each one their need to obey God's will. Those that obey God's will and seek Him are promised entrance into God's kingdom. Jesus said, "If you keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my father's commandments, and abide in his love." John 15:10.

THE PENALTIES OF DISOBEDIENCE

As god promised blessings for obedience, He promises penalties for disobedience. There are many penalties for disobedience given throughout the Bible. Two such penalties are loss of reward and destruction.

EXAMPLES OF DISOBEDIENCE

Saul disobeyed God. He was chosen by the Lord to be the first King of Israel. He was commanded to totally destroy the nation of the Amalekites. However, he saved the best of the animals and all that was good. This was disobedient to God's command. As a result, the Lord rejected him as King of Israel. Read I Samuel 15:1-26.

For those who disobey the call of the gospel, there will be destruction. Luke 13:3,5 states "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

II Thessalonians 1:8-9 says " In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." You can see in these verses how important it is to obey the gospel and God.

SUMMARY

We must be obedient to God's commands. God requires it, and there are great rewards for obedience. Likewise, there are severe penalties for disobedience. True obedience is done out of love, sometimes fear, but it takes great determination on the part of the individual to fulfill God's commands.

ACTIVITY

Answer the following questions.

1. What is one reason why people are obedient?
2. The Bible tells us to keep the _____ and statues of the Lord for thy good.
3. Name one of the blessings God promised the children of Israel.
4. Who was the man that showed obedience to God out of fear?
5. What man was chosen by God to build an ark?
6. Who was willing to sacrifice his only son Isaac?
7. Who is considered to be the best example of disobedience to God?
8. What is one penalty for disobedience to God?
9. What was the name of the nation that God commanded Saul to destroy?
10. Finish the following sentence: God promises a long _____ for those who obey him.

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

God expects repentance and faith from both the saved and unsaved. Repentance and faith are necessary to obtain salvation. Sinners must recognize their need for salvation and turn to God asking for mercy, trusting in Christ alone as their savior. Those who have been saved need to confess their sins to have fellowship with God. Faith is also essential

to please God in our service for Him. Repentance and faith are inseparable graces; both are sacred duties that are wrought in our hearts by the holy spirit that brings us into a state of blessed peace and favor with God.

REPENTANCE WITH REFERENCE TO THE UNSAVED

The Bible teaches the importance of both repentance and faith. Jesus preached in Galilee "Repent ye and believe the gospel." It is God's desire that men repent, believe, and be saved. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.:"

The scriptures teach us that God is not slack concerning his promise but he is long suffering, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. In Luke 13:3 Jesus sends out a call for repentance saying "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." This is the end result for anyone who fails to repent and turn to the Lord by faith. Repentance and faith are sacred duties of every individual. It is profitable for everyone that hears the gospel to heed its words.

Everyone's main purpose in life should be to go to heaven when life here is over. No one can enter God's kingdom by their own good works. Salvation is by grace, it is the gift of God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God," Ephesians 2:8. Sin cannot enter into heaven. In order to enter that kingdom, a change must take place, a sinner must be saved, or born again. Jesus said "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3. Also, Acts 3:19 states "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out."

REPENTANCE WITH REFERENCE TO THE SAVED

We can ask the question, "Why should the saved repent?" Repentance is necessary in the life of a saved person. In order to have a close fellowship with God, we must repent and ask forgiveness for the things we do wrong. I John 1:5-10 teaches us that we must walk in the light, and confess our sins to have fellowship with God.

Our lesson text, Psalms 51: 1-13, is a good example of repentance by a saved person. The Psalmist acknowledged his sins before the Lord. He asked God to purge him and wash him that he might be whiter than snow. He asked God to not cast him from his presence, but to restore the joy we greatly desire.

Chastisement from God is not pleasant, but will bring repentance and correction. Hebrew 12: 5-10 teaches us not to despise the chastening of the Lord, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. As a father in the flesh corrects his son out of love, so does our heavenly father, correcting His children in the spirit because of his love for them.

EXAMPLES OF TRUE REPENTANCE

Jesus recognized the repentance of the Ninevites as true repentance Matthew 12: 41. The City of Ninevah had become a wicked city. God sent Jonah to this city to preach unto them of the destruction that was to come. In forty days the city of Ninevah was to be overthrown. The people of Ninevah believed God and repented unto Him. Neither man nor beast did eat or drink anything, they put on

sackcloth and cried mightily unto God. Everyone turned from their ways. God saw that they had repented. God changed his mind, and did not destroy the city (Jonah 3:5-10).

John the Baptist, while baptizing in the wilderness of Judea, preached repentance and faith in Jesus. Those Jews that came unto him confessing their sins and believing were baptized. When many of the Pharisees came, John asked of them fruits as evidence of repentance and faith Matthew 3:1-12. These scriptures illustrate how true repentance is accepted by God. Those who do not truly repent will be cast into the fire.

SUMMARY

Repentance and faith are important for everyone, both unsaved and saved. In this lesson, we have discussed the necessity to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God which requires repentance and faith. As Christians, we must confess our sins in order to maintain fellowship with God.

ACTIVITY: CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What is true repentance?
2. Why is repentance important to you?
3. What are some ways that repentance and faith are profitable?
4. What can keep a person from repenting?
5. What happens to a person who does not repent and believe?

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

Sacrifice is the unselfish giving up of one thing for another. It is a necessary part of a Christian's life. Throughout the Bible we see many examples of individuals sacrificing their lives in service to God. These individuals felt the value of sacrifice and therefore gave up worldly possessions to receive spiritual blessings from God. We as Christians should also be willing to give up worldly goods in sacrifice to please God. If we do this we too can have hope of receiving great benefits in the future.

The sacrifice of a Christian cannot be compared to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. God's sacrifice for sin requires death, or the shedding of blood. We as Christians are required to be a living sacrifice. This involves abandoning our personal desires in order to obtain a close fellowship with God.

ORIGIN OF SACRIFICE

In the Old Testament, most of the animals that were sacrificed were slaughtered, and offered to God as dead sacrifices. These ceremonial services were an image of the true sacrifice that was to come. These services were to be observed until the lamb of God (Christ) was slain, and the true sacrifice for the sins of the world was offered.

In Genesis, God clothed Adam and Eve after they had broken God's commandment. The Lord shed the blood of an animal in the Garden of Eden as a sacrifice to make coats of skin for them.

The Passover is seen as a symbol of salvation from death by the shedding of blood. It was first offered by Moses and the children of Israel in the land of Egypt. The shedding of blood (the symbol of life) signified that because of sin the death of the offender was well deserved. God's plan for the salvation of the world was for Christ to shed his blood on the cross.

SACRIFICES BY GOD'S SAINTS

The Old Testament contains the record of many saints whose names are mentioned in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews states that these believers through faith

subdued kingdoms, obtained promises, closed the mouth of lions, quenched the fire, and escaped the sword. They suffered trials of cruel mockings, scourgings, bonds and imprisonment. Some were stoned and others wandered about destitute, afflicted and tormented. These believers were willing to sacrifice all these things to serve the Lord (Hebrews 11).

In previous lessons we have studied the obedience of Abraham and his willingness to follow the Lord. Abraham was willing to give his only son Isaac as a sacrifice because the Lord required it. Abraham proved his faith because he withheld nothing from God.

CHRIST THE GREATEST SACRIFICE

There is no greater sacrifice than the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Christ was God's only son. He left the Glory of heaven with all its benefits, and willingly gave his life for the sins of the world. Jesus came to the world without any material blessings. At times, he walked upon the earth without a place to lay his head. Jesus healed the sick and saved the lost. The life Jesus lived was full of heartaches and troubles. In the end Christ died a painful death so that we could be forgiven of our sins and made free.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT (ROMANS 12)

The lesson test states, the reasonable service of man is to present his body a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God. Romans 12:1.

A Christian is required to present himself as an example of the love of God that he claims to possess. This example must show to those around him, the good and perfect will of God. We are to control the desires of the flesh and walk in a manner that is pleasing to our heavenly father. To do this, man must be humble, and fulfill the duty God gives him. We must let God's love shine in our daily lives. We have to stay away from evil things and hold onto the things that are good. We also must bless those which persecute us and not return evil for evil. As much as possible we should live at peace with all men. This chapter concludes with these words of wisdom: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE

The Christian attitude is one of service to God. The word "Christian" means to be Christ like. For someone to be Christ like, that individual must present himself as a holy sacrifice. As obedient children, we can not fashion ourselves after our former desires for sin, but we must fashion ourselves after the image of Christ.

A close fellowship with Christ should be the attitude of every Christian. To achieve this close fellowship, we must surrender many of the personal activities we would prefer to do. Many activities, such as attending church, must take priority over other concerns. A Christian must be determined to serve God even if it requires sacrificing things we enjoy. This close fellowship with God should be the ultimate goal.

The life of the Apostle Paul is a good example of a true Christian's attitude. The scriptures relate the many troubles and trials Paul experienced during his life. Read I Corinthians 11: 24-31. This tells about the many times Paul was persecuted. In Philippians 3: 8-11 Paul

relates the worth of service to the Lord. The Apostle Paul regarded the losses he suffered as very small in comparsion to the blessings he received from God. Paul was indeed a living sacrifice.

SUMMARY

Through the ages all the people that made sacrifices were required to make a choice. They had to choose between following material desires (flesh) or to follow spiritual desires (God). Today, everyone must make a choice, either to follow the flesh or to follow God. What will you choose?

ACTIVITY

Christian are pressured to make difficult choices daily on whether or not to follow the "world" or to make themselves a "living sacrifice" to God. Read the following situations and decide how you as an individual would deal with them.

1. You are at a friend's house and he/she sneaks into his parents' liquor cabinet. After sampling the drink, he offers it to you. What would you do?
2. Your favorite sporting team has a game scheduled to play on Sunday morning (the same time church is scheduled). What would you do ? Would you attend church, or the sporting game?
3. The class bully has been trying to pick a fight with you all day. He challenges you to a fight after school. How would you handle this situation?

What are some other situations you have been in where you have been asked to sacrifice your wants or desires of God?

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

Do your parents expect you to go to church every Sunday? Even on days you'd prefer to stay home? Not that forcing you go to church makes you a Christian any more than sitting in a classroom makes you a good student. This just gives you the opportunity to learn about God. Joshua challenged the Israelites to choose whom they would serve. He chose for his house to serve the Lord. You too must decide for yourself as Joshua did to serve the Lord. Each person faces this same challenge— including you.

SALVATION AND COMMITMENT

Before you can be committed to serving God, you must first be saved. The Apostle Paul told Timothy that the Lord had saved him (Paul) and called him with a holy calling (II Timothy 1-9). In verse 12 of the same chapter, Paul said he was not ashamed "...for I know of whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

CHRISTIAN LIFE — A GREAT RACE

The life of a Christian can be compared to a great race. As a great athlete would have many supporters cheering for him, a Christian has a multitude of saints to encourage him. When a Christian faces

hard times, he may feel alone, but is never alone.

Hebrew 12:1-3 gives a very good summary of the Christian life, We must have a goal. This goal is to be Christ-like. To reach this goal requires endurance and patience.

There may be habits, pleasures or friendships which interfere with our service to God. As a runner must sometimes cross hurdles to reach the finish, Christians must cross hurdles to reach their goal. We must shed them as a runner sheds his track suit as he goes to the starting line. We need the help of Christ to finish the race.

A CHRISTIAN'S PREPARATION

The best example for a Christian is Jesus, himself. A goal was set before him for which he endured all things, and winning meant the way of the cross. A cross was a humiliating thing. It was for the criminals and undesirable people. The scripture states Jesus despised its shame; yet he accepted it. If Jesus could endure that, so must we endure all things. One wonder of the Christian life is that we are surrounded by the saints, and Jesus is ever in our presence as we strive to finish our race.

How can a Christian prepare to face the devil? The Apostle Paul compared this preparation to a soldier going to the battle. We must put on the whole armor of God. For the Christian, this is truth and righteousness. A Christian's feet must be fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The last item mentioned is prayer. All of our prayers and requests must be made in the Spirit for our needs.

SUFFERING FOR COMMITMENT

As Christians we need to be committed to God, even if it requires suffering criticism for his name. Christ made a sacrifice for us, now he asks a sacrifice of us. There is no reason to be ashamed if you suffer because of your commitment; accept it cheerfully, because God rewards those who serve Him.

Commitment is a reasonable service when the mercies of God are considered. The scriptures teach us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. Non-conformity to the world is necessary to prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

God's truth has been passed down from generation to generation by committed individuals. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy in I Timothy 6:20-21 telling him to keep the faith which had been committed unto him. He was to avoid empty talking and controversies. Christianity is not a subject to argue about, but is something to live by. It is just as important for Christians in this age to protect the truth as it was for Timothy in his day.

PROMISES FOR COMMITMENT

God has promised to bless those that are committed to Him. Psalms 37: 3-9 relates these promises. Those that trust in the Lord and do good shall dwell in the land and be fed. Delight thyself in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Psalms 37:9 states that those who wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth.

EXAMPLES OF COMMITMENT

Daniel suffered because of his commitment to the Lord. He prayed three times daily. King Darius passed the decree that whosoever asked of any God or man other than the King himself should be cast in the den of Lions. When Daniel knew that the decree had been signed, he continued to pray three times daily. Daniel's commitment resulted in his being cast into the den of lions. God sent an angel to close the mouth of the Lions. God provides for those individuals committed to him (Daniel 6).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were committed to serving the Lord. King Nebuchadnezzer asked the Hebrew children, "...do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" (Daniel 3:14). They answered and said, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning firey furnace, ... O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Daniel 3:17, 18). The king cast them into the furnace and God did deliver them. Not only were they delivered from the fire, but there was not an hair of their head singed not the smell of smoke on their clothing (Daniel 3).

CONCLUSION

We as Christians should be dedicated in our service to God. We must keep in mind that we are never really alone. God is there to watch over us and help us in our daily struggles. We also have our fellow Christians to help us when we need them. The life of a committed Christian is never easy. We must prepare ourselves to face life's struggles. Reading the Bible, praying, and attending church regularly are essential for this preparation.

ACTIVITY

Read the following scriptures. Discuss their relationship to commitment.

- II Timothy 2:2
- Job 5:8
- I Timothy 1:8
- I Peter 2:23
- Psalm 31:5
- Psalms 37:5