Ages 16–18

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 16–18
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Table of Contents

Prayer 4
Obedience 7
Repentance and Faith 10
Sacrifice 14
Commitment 17

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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
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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

Since the very beginning of time, man has been given a tool for communicating with God. This communication device is called prayer. Prayer is our direct and conscious appeal to the divine. While prayer can take on many forms, this lesson will show us the importance of communicating with God through prayer as well as what God expects from our prayer life.

MESSAGE FROM THE PARABLE, AND EXPECTATIONS

In Luke 18:1, Jesus tells his disciples that they should always pray and not give up. Our lesson text is an excellent example of what God expects from us in prayer. Simply, in addition to the effort of communicating with God, He expects us to communicate honestly and with humility. Unlike the Pharisee, God wants us to look to Him and His strength, seeking His will rather than relying on our own understanding and capabilities (I Chronicles 16:11). This is true in seeking salvation as well as seeking direction for our lives. The earlier we begin seeking God's guidance daily and in prayer, the better off we will be in our decision making and the direction we take in life.

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

The bible is full of examples of the importance of prayer. Matthew 26:41 tells us to watch and pray so that we will not fall into temptation. Sin is all around us and it is something each of us has to contend with on a daily basis. Praying to God for the strength to withstand temptation should be a daily request from everyone. II Chronicles 7:14 says, "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 will forgive their sin and heal their land." Sin not only consumes individuals but also countries. It can lead to the destruction of both. This scripture shows and supports the need to pray for strength and guidance from God, and again, seek His will rather than relying on our own understanding. If we do petition God and seek His will, as told to us through His word, He has promised to hear and answer our prayer.

CONDITIONS AND PROMISES OF ANSWERED PRAYER

When we seek to communicate with God and come to Him on His terms and by His conditions, in order to meet His expectations, He has given us the promise to hear our call and help in our time of need. The bible tells us time and again of this truth. Luke 11:9&10 says, "Ask and it will be given to you: seek and you will find; knock and the door will be open to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be open." What an awesome promise! This scripture applies to both the unsaved and saved. To the unsaved, you must diligently and whole-heartedly seek God's forgiveness for salvation. Like the Publican, God wills us to come to Him with a humble and sincere request for mercy and forgiveness. If you meet the conditions of honesty and humility, God has promised to answer your prayer and open the door of salvation and eternal life to you.

To the saved, it is God's will that we also humbly and honestly pray to Him for forgiveness of our sins. In addition, He wants us to seek His will in our lives, depending on His guidance not only in our time of need, but also through the good times, with thanksgiving.

We have spoken of two conditions of prayer - honesty and humility, and the promise of answered prayers. Just because God has promised to answer our prayers, this does not mean we have a free ticket to everything we desire. God knows our hearts and our needs and has promised to supply. John 15:7 says, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you." The key to answered prayer is remaining in God's will and seeking His will when we have strayed. When we are in the proper place with God, our requests to Him will be appropriate. We should do our best to stay in the will of God, this being accomplished by knowing and seeking His will through prayer. Jeremiah 29:13 tells us that when we seek God with all our heart, we will find Him. Isaiah 58:9 says, "then you will call and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help and he will say, Here am I...".

CONCLUSION

Prayer itself is a humbling experience. To know that you can communicate directly to an all knowing, all-powerful God is beyond complete understanding. But to know and have the promise that God, who is so great, is waiting to hear our request and answer our needs, is truly a blessed and moving thought. To know that we have the promise and assurance of His provisions should humble everyone to pray and praise Him daily. God has blessed us with the ability to communicate with Him. No one or nothing can take this away from us. We can talk to God anywhere and at any time. Let us not take for granted the blessing of prayer.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Comments from Jesus on Prayer:

Jesus praying on the mount of Olives. (Luke 22:42) "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

Example of Prayer from Man (David):

(Psalm 71:17 – 18) "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

Your Prayer:

Above are two wonderful examples of very real and very moving prayers. Take this opportunity to think about your life – where you've been, where you are, and where you're going, the blessings the trials – and then write a prayer, your prayer to God. Keep in mind the things we've learned on prayer but, most importantly, make it a sincere and honest prayer from the heart.

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

Today's lesson is on the importance of being obedient to God's commandments. The Lord points out to the children of Israel in the lesson text that obeying the Lord's commandments will bring about certain blessings to the nation of Israel. As we study this lesson, let us learn how to be obedient in serving God and understand why obedience is so important to us in our service to God.

HOW TO BE OBEDIENT

Obedience is defined as "dutifully complying with the commands, orders, or instructions of one in authority." God expects us

to be obedient to His will. How are we to do this? First we must understand God's will for us. To understand His will, we must communicate with Him. As we studied in the previous lesson, this is accomplished through prayer. The second element in being obedient to God is being a doer of His word. James 1:22 teaches "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ...". Being a doer requires us to have faith. We demonstrate this faith through the actions of our life (See James 1:18).

WHY SHOULD WE BE OBEDIENT?

Obedience to God's commandments is required from everyone. In the lesson text, the nation of Israel had commandments from the Lord that they should follow. The children of Israel had the opportunity to choose whether or not to obey. However, in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, God makes it clear that it is a requirement that we obey Him for our own good.

To be saved we must be obedient to God's call. God has promised that everyone who seeks Him for salvation, in the right way, will be saved by His grace. As the Holy Spirit convicts the unsaved, they must humbly obey and repent of their sins until God is satisfied. This is obedience to God's conviction.

God also requires those who have been saved to be obedient. The Holy Spirit was sent by God to lead and guide us in the service of the Lord. Obedience to God's commands and the leadership of the Holy Spirit is for the good of us all.

When we hear God's instructions and believe them to be true, it becomes our obligation to obey the conditions of those instructions.

THE PROMISE OF BLESSINGS

In the lesson text, God explains what blessings will be given to the children of Israel if they obey the commandments set forth before them. The nation of Israel will be blessed with fruitful crops and cattle. God promises to protect Israel from their enemies so that the world will see that the nation of Israel is holy.

As sinners saved by grace, we are all unworthy of God's blessings, but He is merciful to everyone who is obedient to His will. The Lord will bless all that follow after His leadership. A good example would be a church member being led by the Holy Spirit to give a testimony in church, and having obeyed the will of God, a prayer is then answered or a burden is lifted. The testimony may not only be beneficial for the one giving it but also for others who hear it. Keep in mind that when we are led by the Spirit to do something and we refuse, the blessings may not be received. We may not only miss the blessing, but others may lose the benefit and blessing also. Deuteronomy 5:29 states that it would be good for us, as well as future generations, to keep the commandments of God. This is a promise of blessings for us and for our children.

WHEN SHOULD WE BE OBEDIENT?

Ecclesiastes 12:1 says "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." As teenagers it is very important for you to build a solid foundation with the Lord. When you begin to be obedient to God's commandments at a young age, you will be less likely to stray as you grow older. If you put off being obedient in your youth, it is likely that you will miss many blessings. You risk having a weaker foundation than if you are truly obedient to God's will. Having a strong foundation and following God's will is pleasing to Him. As the first two verses of our lesson text tell us, He will richly bless all that are truly obedient.

CONCLUSION

Obedience to the Lord and His commandments is expected from each of us. This is an important part of our worship and service to God. Each of us should strive to be

faithful in our obedience to God. Just as prayer is an important part of our worship, so is obedience. As we pray for strength, faith, and guidance, the Lord may impress upon us to obey a call from Him. If we strive to be obedient and do the will of the Lord, it is His promise to be with us and bless our lives.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus teaches Obedience:

Jesus taught that we should be obedient to Him as He was obedient to His Father. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:10-11).

An Example of Obedience from Man (Joseph):

Joseph, the son of Jacob, is a good example of an obedient man. Many examples throughout his life (see Genesis chapters 39-48) show his obedience to God, to his parents, and to those in authority. A good example of Joseph's obedience is found in Genesis 39 when he resists the advances of his master's wife. "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her." (Genesis 39:7-10).

Scenario on Obedience. What would you do?

You are out with a group of your friends. You find out that some of the people in the group have some beer and drugs. Your best friend wants you to drink a beer. This person and others are telling you, "It is Ok, it is just one, no one will ever find out, just one won't hurt anything, and besides everyone else is drinking." Discuss your reaction and options.

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

As we continue study on the theme of "What God expects from me", in this lesson we consider two very important duties God expects for us to establish and maintain a relationship with Him. These are *repentance* and *faith*. Repentance and faith are sacred duties, in fact moral requirements, for a lost sinner to be saved. They are inseparable graces given by God and placed in our soul by His regenerating Spirit when we are saved. Repentance continues to be necessary once we are saved for us to grow spiritually and have fellowship with God (1 John 1:8-10). Faith is essential in the life of a Christian to please God in the service we render to Him (Hebrews 11:6).

We begin this lesson by defining three important terms introduced above. The definitions given are taken from "The American Heritage Dictionary."

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance means "Remorse or contrition for past conduct or sin." Repent means "To feel remorse, contrition, or self-reproach for what one has done or failed to do; To feel such regret for past conduct as to change one's mind regarding it; To make a change for the better as a result of remorse or contrition for one's sins." The Bible tells us in Ezekiel 18:30-31, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith is defined as "Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, an idea, or a thing; Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence; Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance; In theology – secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will." The Bible tells us that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1).

WHAT IS GRACE?

We find grace to be defined as "A disposition to be generous or helpful; Mercy; clemency; A favor rendered by one who need not do so; A temporary immunity or exemption; a reprieve: In theology – Divine love and protection bestowed freely on people; The state of being protected or sanctified by the favor of God." The Bible tells us "O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies." (Daniel 9:18).

EXPECTED FROM THE UNSAVED

The scripture in our lesson text taken from Luke tells us what God expects from those who are unsaved. We must repent to be saved. There comes a time in our lives when we realize that we are lost and separated from God. The Holy Spirit reveals this to us. God works through His Spirit to convict us (makes us feel guilty) of our sin. We must, to the degree that we can, see ourselves as God sees us as vile and dirty sinners. Our righteousness is as filthy rags compared to the righteousness of God. Once we feel this condemnation, God expects us to obey His call to seek Him through prayer, earnestly appealing to Him for His mercy and forgiveness of our sins.

God also expects us to have faith that He will forgive our sins. Faith in what? Faith in Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made for us. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. In Luke 18:35-43 the account is given of a blind man who cries out to Jesus and Jesus gives him sight. When Jesus gave him sight, He told the blind man, "Receive thy sight : thy faith hath saved thee." This man had faith that Jesus could and would make him see both physically and spiritually. Just as this blind man had faith as he cried out to Jesus to give him sight, we must have that same kind of faith as we ask God to save us.

When a lost person has repented and exercised faith by placing their dependence in Jesus, God will let that person know he or she is saved by giving inner peace and joy where there had been condemnation and conviction.

INSEPARABLE GRACES

How can we repent and have faith in an all-powerful and holy God that we cannot physically see or touch? We are unable to by ourselves. We must have God's help and grace to do this. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" (Ephesians 2:8). This scripture tells us that it is by God's grace that we have the faith to repent and be saved. So we see that

God through the Holy Spirit gives condemnation and conviction to cause us to see the need of repentance. Then when we believe in Jesus and His sacrifice, God gives us the faith necessary to be saved. This is the reason repentance and faith are referred to as inseparable graces.

EXPECTED FROM THE SAVED

When God saves us, He seals our soul against sin. In salvation He places His Spirit in us and He is the keeper of this salvation given to us (Psalm 51:12). The soul of the saved will not sin again. Although the soul is preserved from sin, the flesh remains carnal and subject to temptation and sin. There are times when we give in to temptation and sin. We are held responsible for our actions in these fleshly bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 tells us of this responsibility - "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Our lesson text taken from Psalms 51 gives an example of what God expects from the saved that have sinned in the flesh – **repentance**. This repentance must be true and from the heart. Forgiveness and mercy must be sought from God through prayer. God expects us to have **faith** that He will forgive our transgressions. Just as when we were saved, we know of God's forgiveness when He returns the peace and joy of His salvation to us. Although we may suffer in body from tests of our faith and for sins committed in the flesh, we can still feel joy and be blessed spiritually when we have sought and obtained forgiveness from God (see 1 Peter 4:19).

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?

What do these things mean to you in your upper teen years? You are going through a time of wanting and obtaining independence. This is a time when you are making decisions that will possibly impact and shape the rest of your life. Some things you must contend with probably include pride, competition, appearance, acceptance and desires to name a few. You no doubt face many trials and temptations. This is an important time in your life to seek and keep a close relationship with God. Such a relationship can help you through difficult times and temptations.

If you have not been saved, pray for God to deal with you. If you get under conviction (feel really bad on the inside), seek to find God by praying to Him and asking for forgiveness. Believe and have faith that Jesus died for your sins. Ask your pastor or someone you believe has experienced true salvation for advice and guidance. However, remember no other person can tell you when you are saved. God will let you know you are saved by giving you peace with Him that only He can give. "Salvation is of the LORD." (Jonah 2:9.)

When you have been saved and make a mistake or give in to temptation, seek God's forgiveness as David did in the Psalm in our lesson text. Have faith that He will forgive. When He does forgive, do as the Psalmist indicates in verse 13 of our lesson and grow from that experience and seek to help others find what you have. As the lesson on obedience told us, when God saves us He expects us to live by the rules and guidelines given in the Bible. When we do this we provide a good example to others, especially the unsaved. He also expects us to grow in knowledge and through the help of His Holy Spirit to teach others about Him.

CONCLUSION

God wants and expects us to repent and have faith in Him to be saved. After God saves us, He desires and expects us to keep His commandments and walk close to Him as we live our lives. When we transgress His law or drift away from Him, God expects us to return to Him repenting through faith that He will forgive and restore our fellowship with Him.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Comments from Jesus on Repentance and Faith:

(Mark 1:15) "And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Matthew 21:21) "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."

Example of Repentance and Faith from Man (Jonah and the People of Nineveh):

In the book of Jonah we find examples of repentance and faith for both the saved and unsaved. Jonah was saved and called by God to do something. When he refused and ran, God chastised him and he had to repent and have faith. "And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." (Jonah 2:2).

The people of Nineveh were lost but repented and put faith in God after Jonah preached to them: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. ... Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. ." (Jonah 3:5,9-10).

Scenario for discussion:

You have a friend that has been coming to church with you for a while. This friend is beginning to ask a lot of questions about what you believe. Also they may be talking about feeling bad or frightened. Discuss some things you might do and advice you might give.

As you discuss this consider the other side. You are the one with questions and bad feelings. Discuss some things you might do and advice you should seek.

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, according to Webster's dictionary, means "the offering of anything to God, anything offered to a divinity, surrender made in order to gain something else." There are many examples and stories of sacrifice in the bible. Old Testament sacrifices were conducted to honor God and give Him thanks for His goodness and mercy. These sacrifices stood for the wiping away of sins, or the sacrifice of Jesus that was to come. The sacrifices made by those who lived in Old Testament times were not conducted on human terms but as willed by God on His terms and provisions. A well-known Old Testament example of sacrifice is the Passover.

In the New Testament, the sacrifice of Jesus, Himself, is the major event of the time. This was the perfect sacrifice for which the Old Testament sacrifices stood. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice. It was the ultimate surrender that God made so that the human race could gain something else...eternal life. Jesus Christ's life was taken so that the sins of all mankind could be wiped away. His sacrifice substituted our spiritual death for eternal life. No sacrifice could be greater.

In the bible, all sacrifices made after the one of Jesus Christ are those of spiritual sacrifices. The first sacrifice we as humans make is the surrendering of our life to God, through Jesus, to gain salvation and eternal life. This is an individual experience done through prayer and repentance. Once an individual is saved and becomes a child of God, on His terms and by His provisions, we are called to make a different kind of sacrifice. As we will study in this lesson, God requires and expects each of His children to sacrifice in the sense of devoting our lives to Him so that we can be a living testament of His good and perfect will. The lesson text states God's will on sacrifice in an eloquent and moving manner. I encourage everyone to meditate on this scripture to really grasp its depth.

A LIVING SACRIFICE

What does God expect from me in terms of sacrifice? Initially, the word sacrifice may sound unappealing, but when we think of all God has done for us, the word should take on a new and better meaning. Let us shed a new light on what it means to surrender or give up.

We should all make a conscious effort to live daily for Christ. This requires us to pray and meditate daily on God's will so we can make the distinction between what we want and what God wills. There are many things in our society that tempt us or make us believe we need certain things in order to live a good or fulfilled life. God, in His word, gives us

direction and guidance in this area. Colosians 3:10 says it well. Here we are told to set our hearts and minds on the things above and not on earthly things. We, who are saved by God's grace through the sacrifice of His son Jesus Christ, are required to sacrifice the unholy things of the world, such as sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed. The bible tells us all these things are idolatry and will be consumed by the wrath of God.

Through Jesus, we are made new in the spirit. God requires that we renew our minds and actions and not conform to the things of the world. We have all heard before that actions speak louder than words. This is so true. We should all live in such a way that even if we never say a word to others who may be watching, they can see in our lives that we are living a Godly life. As we studied earlier, this is obedience to God's will. This is also our sacrifice...a surrendering of the evil things of the world for a devotion of our life to God. In this light, sacrifice isn't such a bad thing. I Peter 1:13-16 tells us that we must be self controlled and set our hopes on the grace of God. As obedient children, we must not give in to evil desires, but give up these things and live holy as Jesus Christ is holy. We should not be vain or self-centered but humble, keeping in mind not only our interests but the interests and well being of others also (Philippians 2:2-8). This sounds simple enough, right? What God expects from us in sacrifice is easier said than done, but we must remember that God does not put on us more that we can handle. In Matthew 11:30 God tells us "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light". Sometimes just the honest willingness to sacrifice is sufficient. A good example is Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. We have the directions to do God's will, we need to make the effort to follow the map. It can be done, through prayer to God for guidance, direction and strength.

CONCLUSION

God made the ultimate sacrifice when His son Jesus Christ died for our sins. God not only gave us life, but through His son, gave us the opportunity to live eternally with Him in heaven. When we think of the earthly sacrifices we should make of material and worldly things, compared to God's sacrifice of His son, our requirement pales in comparison. Because Jesus died for our sins, God's request that we live for Him is more than reasonable. Living does require sacrifice. While nothing comes freely, if we seek God's help we can overcome the temptations and live according to "His good and acceptable and perfect will."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Comments from Jesus on Sacrifice:

(Matthew 16:24-26) "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Example of Sacrifice from Man (Abraham):

(Genesis 22:2) "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Scenario of Your Sacrifice. What would you do?

You and a friend have just been given two tickets to the last night of your favorite concert that is to end tonight. Tonight is also the last night of revival that you and your friend have been attending. Your friend has been showing signs of conviction and you feel your friend may make a move at the next given opportunity. The concert starts at 5:00 and is over at 7:00. Revival starts at 7:30 but the concert is 45 minutes away. You and your friend want to do both but think of the

possible consequences: the concert could run late making you even later for church, it may put your friend's mind on other things and keep him/her from focusing on his/her spiritual situation, but it might all work out fine... could you take the chance on your friend missing the opportunity for eternal salvation and life? Discuss what you would do and how you would handle this scenario.

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

As the title indicates, this final lesson in our bible study on "What God expects from me" is about **commitment**. To commit means "to pledge, dedicate, or obligate ourselves to a certain position or way." Dedication is a term that interchanges with commitment. Does God expect commitment and dedication from us? The first of the Ten Commandments given by God states "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3). Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-38 "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Do you think these examples indicate God's expectation of commitment?

GOD'S COMMITMENT

Before we look at the commitment God expects from us, consider the commitment God has demonstrated toward us. First, God made us and all that is around us (Genesis 1:1,27). We find throughout the scripture where God made covenants (which is strong commitment) with and promises to His people. Some examples of this are Adam (Genesis 2:16-17), Noah (Genesis 9:1-17), Abraham (Genesis 15:18), the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:5), and His church (Matthew 28:20). God has never broken a commitment he has made.

How is God committed to us today? God gives the unsaved opportunity to seek Him for salvation. In 2 Peter 3:9 we read "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." After giving salvation God helps us and keeps us in this life (Psalm 121). He gives His blessings when we please Him and provides chastisement and correction when we stray. Above all in salvation He promises us eternal life with Him (Mark 10:27-30;John 10:28).

God's commitment to us is unquestionable and strong! How strong? He sent His only Son to live in this world as a man without sin and to die a cruel death for our sins. (John 3:16). Remember our lesson on sacrifice.

WHAT ARE YOU COMMITTED TO?

It is human nature for us to seek a reason for living. Everyone commits his/her life to some cause or purpose. As you begin this section, ask yourself this question: What am I committed to? Then examine your life and desires to seek an answer. Consider some of the things that may be competing for your attention in your upper teen, early adult years - money, having a good time, a car, a job, a relationship, fame, a particular group of friends, appearance, social status, school, family, your church, God. What do you spend your time thinking about? What do you spend time, effort and resources seeking after? Anything that you dedicate yourself to obtaining is where your commitment lies. Matthew 7:21 tells us, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

WHAT SHOULD YOU BE COMMITTED TO?

What does God expect from us when it comes to commitment? God, our Creator, expects us to commit or dedicate our lives to His will and to worship and serve Him. Throughout the bible, God gives us direction and guidance on His expectations. In our lesson text, God's word tells us to "fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth" by laying aside the ungodly and evil things of the world. Good, sound instruction for young people is provided in Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

God expects us to seek and live for Him. Job 5:8 says "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause." History teaches us and we can observe today people who commit their lives to such things as fame, fortune, pleasure seeking, power or another human being. But we know and are taught in God's word that these things are earthly and will fade with time and come to an end. God, however, is everlasting and those who seek and find Him in salvation will gain those things that will never end.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

How do we make the commitment that God desires? We are only able to make and keep such a commitment with the help of God. The scripture tells us how we are to commit our lives to God. First we are to seek Him for salvation. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:6-7). Also Jesus says in Matthew 4:17 as He began His ministry, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It takes prayer and submission of our will to God's to repent and be saved. Any other commitment to Him is impossible without knowing Him spiritually.

After being saved, our thoughts and actions should reflect the marvelous thing that God has given us. "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established." Proverbs 16:3. We need to be obedient to God's instructions given through the preaching, teaching, and study of His word. "But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Josh 22:5).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Does committing our lives to God and His cause mean we must give up other things in life such as material things, status, etc.? No. Commitment to God simply means putting Him first in our lives and letting Him add the other things we need and want. "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:4-5). Also read Matthew 6:24-34 where Jesus talks about trusting one master.

HOW DO WE COMMIT?

The most important thing in our commitment to God is to follow His will for our individual lives. How we serve God will be somewhat different for each of us based on the talents, abilities, and interests God has given us. However, there are some important institutions given by God that require a Godly dedication:

- the institution of the Lord's church
- the institution of marriage
- the institution of family
- the institution of government

All of these we are to honor and respect in their rightful place, not worship. We need to be faithful to, nurture, and cultivate these institutions as taught by God through His word.

CONCLUSION

Commitment to God is living for God. To live for God, we must know Him. We must communicate with Him. We must obey His commandments and instructions and obey the leadership of His Holy Spirit. When we make mistakes or face trials of our faith, we must ask for God's help, forgiveness, and strength. We must be willing to sacrifice the things of the world in order to serve Him. In Hebrews 12:1-3 we find confirmation of God's commitment for us as well as encouragement to us to be committed to God. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

We commit and dedicate ourselves to God through prayer, obedience, repentance and faith, and sacrifice.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Words of Jesus asking for and making Commitment:

(Matthew 28:18-20) "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Example of Commitment of Man (Paul):

After his conversion Paul made a commitment. He dedicated his life to serving God. At the time of his conversion Paul asked a question, "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 6:9). The Lord answered Paul and he listened and obeyed. Near the end of his life Paul, giving encouraging instructions to a young preacher, could say, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim 4:6-8)

Commitment Discussion – What about you?

Discuss some ways God expects you to show commitment or dedication now. Discuss possibilities for the future.