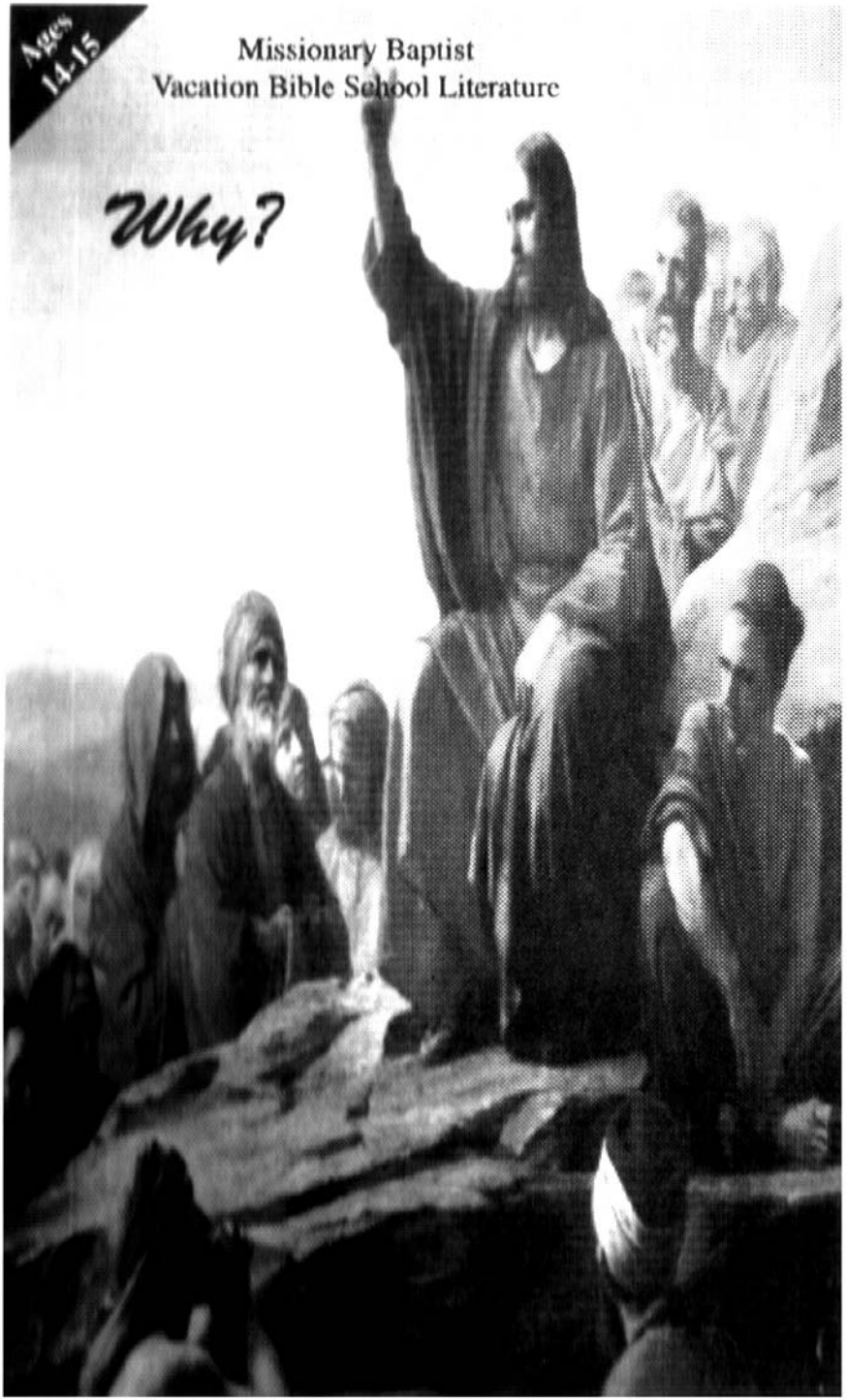
Ages 14-15

Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature

Why?



The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

"WHY?"

Vacation Bible School Lessons for Ages 14–15

Written by Brother Greg Powell, Sister Karen Powell,
Sister Allison Jackson, Brother Mike Jackson, Brother Brent Sanford,
and Brother Chris Shuffitt

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LESSON ONE

WHY OBEY?

LESSON TEXT
LEVITICUS 26:3-12

WRITTEN BY
GREG AND KAREN POWELL

3. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;
4. Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.
5. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.
6. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.
7. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.
8. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.
9. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you.
10. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new.
11. And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you.
12. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

INTRODUCTION

Why should we obey God? How do we know what God expects us to do so that we can obey? There are two facets to obeying God. One comes in the form of the Ten Commandments which are tangible guidelines (we find these laws written very plainly in the Bible) for day to day living. These laws are applicable to every person. The other aspect of obeying God is very personalized and exist only within our individual hearts. Lets take a look at obeying God in these two aspects.

OBEYING GOD THROUGH THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

We have all recited and memorized the Ten Commandments many times, but have we ever stopped and thought about what they are really saying and what they represent? The Ten Commandments were given to all people by God through Moses shortly after the deliverance from Egypt. Moses and the children of Israel reached an area known as the Sinai Wilderness about three months after their exodus (Exodus 19:1). The Sinai Wilderness is a rough and barren land bordered on the north by the Mediterranean Sea and on the south by a series of mountains. Mount Sinai (also referred to as Mount Horeb), one of the mountains within that range, is the site where God chose to speak the law to Moses in the form of the Ten Commandments which were written in stone by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18). "The Ten Commandments form the heart of the special covenant between God and His people."[1]

Exodus 19:5 and 6 (in part) states, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed , and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priest, and an holy nation."

"By obeying the Ten Commandments we display the name and character of God"[1] and keeping this covenant makes us special to Him.

The Lord gave the Ten Commandments accompanied by an awesome visible display of his power and authority. Exodus 19:16,18 tells us, "16. And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lighting, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

18. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke there of ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

The laws were given as follows:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. – Exodus 20:3

The first and most important commandment is one of loyalty. If God is truly first in our hearts then our outward actions will show this. It is important that Christians act "Christ like" so that our lives will show God's character and thus serve as a witness to the world.

2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. – Exodus 20:4

The second commandment is a supporter for the first. Many times we, as did the children of Israel, tend to give our thoughts and heart to worldly idols. Things that can be seen, touched, and enjoyed at the moment. But God is a spirit and obeying Him involves faith, which our natural eyes cannot see.

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. – Exodus 20:7

The third commandment is one of respect. We should only speak the name of God in complete holiness and admiration. We have the privilege to call upon God in times of trouble and to call out His name in praise. Isn't it wonderful to know the father on a first name basis! However, we should never disgrace His holy name by calling it out in a vain and empty manner, one in which there are no feelings attached.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. – Exodus 20:8

The Lord wants for us to set aside a day for meditation and worship unto him. A time to think about Him and all He has done for us. One day a week that is not for our gain but for the gain of the Lord.

5. Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land. – Exodus 20:12

God gave the world something very special when he created the institution of families. Through our family we learn very important principles and foster emotions such as love, trust, and obedience that will serve as a framework in our Christian life. It is crucial to our spiritual being that these feelings be established. It also helps us realize the depth of God's love for each of us. God loves us more than we are capable of loving anyone, even our families. Parents also serve as guideposts when we have questions about God, salvation, and many other things. They are our special intercessors with God when we need to be prayed for. Parents have been given a very special job by God and we should make that job as easy and rewarding as we possibly can.

Commandments 6 -10 deal with our relationships to others. A person whose heart is near to God will not want to harm others.

6. Thou shalt not kill. – Exodus 20:13

God created all life and only God knows when a life has fulfilled its purpose and thus is ready to end.

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery. – Exodus 20:14

Traditionally, this is thought to involve all sexual relationships outside of marriage. Sex was created by God for two reasons. One, it is a physical manifestation of the emotional bond between two people that have pledged there lives to one another in matrimony. Two, it is a means of procreation. Life should only be created through love and never through anything less. Sex devoid of this bond also

continued

represents enjoying oneself at the expense of others and can potentially hurt many people.

8.Thou shalt not steal. – Exodus 20:15

Stealing involves taking something that isn't yours. This could be a tangible article, someone's reputation, or their self esteem. When we talk badly about people or put them down, we are stealing their ability to feel good about themselves.

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbors. – Exodus 20:16

God's people should display exceptional respect and honor for one another as a reflection of the way the Father feels about us. Participating in gossip is a sure way to dishonor someone and to be a false witness against them. We should extinguish gossip instead of adding fuel to it. When someone is down we should try to help them up, taking care not to be judgmental. After all, only God knows what they are really going through. Aren't we glad God does these things for us?

10. Thou shalt not covet. – Exodus 20:17

God gives all of us better than we ever deserve. Be exceedingly thankful for what you have and be glad for others in the things God has given them. Though we may have differing amounts of worldly treasures, we all have been freely given a chance for the best gift of all which is salvation and having God with us throughout life. Beyond this, everything else is just "stuff".

The Lord promises that if we obey the Ten Commandments that He will have respect for us and abundantly supply our every need. Most of all, He will be with us. What an unspeakable reward.

OBEYING GOD INDIVIDUALLY

Remember the Ten Commandments represent laws applicable to all nations, but what about obeying God on an individual level? Many times we need a personal point in the right direction. Perhaps we need more specific help than what the Ten Commandments can give. How do we know what to obey in these situations?

The prophet Elijah found himself in this position and he was instructed by God to go to Mount Horeb (the same place God had previously spoken the Ten Commandments to Moses). I Kings 19: 11-12 says, "And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rock before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

The Bible gives two accounts of the Lord speaking to people in two very different ways in the same location (Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb). To Moses He spoke as a mighty thunder and to Elijah He spoke as a gentle still voice. When we need personal answers to individual problems we must go to that place within our hearts where God speaks to us, and then we must listen. The answer may come as loud and shaking as a sea billow rolling or it may come as a whisper of sweet peace. With what ever voice God chooses to direct you, it is still God and the most important thing we could do with our life is to obey.

Additional scriptures:

Matthew 19: 16-22 Jesus repeats the Ten Commandments

Matthew 22: 35-40 Jesus tells of the greatest commandment

Leviticus 26: 15-46 Consequences for not obeying the Ten Commandments

Referenced quotes:

1. Nelson's Illistrated Bible Dictionary

LESSON TWO

WHY SURRENDER?

LESSON TEXT
PSALMS 116:1-15; ISAIAH 55:6-9

WRITTEN BY
ALLISON JACKSON

PSALMS 116:1-15

1. I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication.
2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.
3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow.
4. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
5. Gracious is the Lord, and righteousness; yea, our God is merciful.
6. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.
7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.
8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.
9. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.
10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:
11. I said in my haste, All men are liars.
12. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?
13. I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.
14. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.
15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

ISAIAH 55:6-9

6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.
7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man in 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.
8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.
9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we will study the concept "why surrender is necessary to obtain salvation." First of all let us look at the meaning of the word *surrender.* Webster defines surrender as "to give up or yield possession or power, or to give up one's self." So, to further explain the lesson's question, it is asking why should we give up ourselves to be saved. In our lesson text, the verses explain that the Lord commands that forsaking one's own ways and thoughts is necessary for salvation; this is definitely surrendering (Is 55:7). Because we are human, we certainly are not perfect beings. It is in our nature to sin and to have ways and thoughts that are not pleasing to the Lord. We are in no way like the Lord, because he is the Creator—holy, righteous, and perfect. Isaiah 55:8 says "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." This verse further explains that the Lord is a much higher being than we. Therefore, we must believe in

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Him, respect His commandments and what the Bible teaches. God commanded all men everywhere to repent. Repentance is granted when a person is so sorry for his sin that he willfully surrenders unto the Lord.

AN EXAMPLE OF SURRENDER

A good example of surrender is Saul's conversion experience written in the book of Acts 9:3-18. You may refer to these verses for further reference and detail about the story.

Saul had done much evil against the Lord; in fact, he had the authority from the chief priests to imprison all that called on the Lord's name. As Saul was traveling near Damascus, there was light that appeared all around him. He fell to the ground and heard the voice of the Lord. He asked Saul, "Why are you persecuting me?" Saul answered, " Who art thou, Lord?" Jesus said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul then, "...trembling and astonished" said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Saul then surrendered by repenting and received salvation.

UNDER CONVICTION

When Saul is described as "trembling and astonished," he is experiencing being under conviction. This is always the condition of a person before he experiences salvation. Conviction is a very uncomfortable feeling, often because one has realized that he is lost and separated from God. The Holy Spirit reveals this to us. God works through this Holy Spirit to convict us of our sins. A person may experience fear, guilt, sorrow, and many other feelings that reflect being unsaved. However, there is hope that conviction may not last but only if the person is willing to fully surrender and submit himself to God. Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and contrite spirit."

HAVING FAITH

Webster defines faith as "a belief in the value, truth, or trustworthiness of someone or something; belief and trust in God, the Scripture, or other religious writings; a system of religious belief." Faith is a belief that does not require material evidence to prove. The Bible says that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). It is expected from God for us to have faith that He will forgive our sins and save us. What is our faith in? It is faith in God that Jesus Christ made the supreme sacrifice for us and died on the cross so that there would be a plan of salvation. There are many examples of faith in the Bible. One example that stands out is the story of the blind man. After Jesus healed this man from his blindness, he told the man that "thy faith hath saved thee." Because this man truly believed in the Lord and had faith, he was saved not only physically but also spiritually. As a sinner, a person must obtain the same faith just as the blind man had.

THE RESULT OF SURRENDERING

As a result of surrendering unto the Lord, there is salvation! It is the utmost experience of inner peace and joy when God lets us know we are saved. A very popular verse of scripture is John 3:16 "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." Is this not a wonderful verse of truth? Because of surrendering to the Lord and having faith, salvation was received. This remains the ultimate experience that any person may have. Deuteronomy 4:9 says, "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all they heart and with all thy soul." It is a gift of God, and only God is able to save us. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). This verse also tells us that we cannot

be saved by the works that we do here on earth; salvation must be of the Lord. Many people are deceived by believing that they can reach heaven by doing good deeds here on earth, by baptism alone, or by just repeating a simple line of prayer. How sad this situation must be!

WHY SHOULD I SURRENDER AND BE SAVED?

God wants and teaches us to repent and have faith in Him to be saved. It is extremely important to have salvation, especially in your upper teen years. At this time in your life, you are going through a period of making decisions that may affect the rest of your life. If you have a close relationship with God, this will help you to stand strong to resist temptation of many sins that you face every day. Think about all that you come across in your everyday life. No doubt there are trials and temptations that are very difficult to try to resist. If you do not have the Lord in your heart, it is easier for you to give in to temptation. However, if you are a saved individual think about how much stronger you are to have the Lord on your side. Being this age is very hard, probably the most difficult time in your life. Many feelings are experienced such as wanting to be independent, striving to fit in with your peers, wanting to be attractive in appearance, along with many sexual desires such as feeling tempted to experiment with alcohol, drugs, and sexual encounters. Obviously, it is not easy to be you. However, God does give you the ability to decide what is right and what is wrong. Satan is very powerful and often does win you over from time to time. You absolutely must not let Satan influence your decision in life especially when salvation is the concern. If you feel convicted or lost, seeking the Lord is the absolute right thing to do! Do not let Satan tell you otherwise!

CONCLUSION

As our lesson teaches, it is imperative that we surrender to obtain salvation. It is the commandment of the Lord. We know this because the Bible teaches it. By the examples in the scriptures, we also see that surrender is a must. If you realize you are a sinner, then you must repent and surrender yourself unto the Lord, have faith and be saved. The result is astounding!

It is important to be a child of God not only because we will go to heaven, but we will have His guidance and help while here on earth.

LESSON THREE

WHY PRAY?

LESSON TEXT
DANIEL 6: 10-24

WRITTEN BY
MIKE JACKSON

10. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being opened in his chamber toward Jersualem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.
11. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.
12. Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; hast thou not signed a decree, that every man shall ask a petition of any god or man within 30 days, save thee, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, the thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.
13. then answered they and said before the king, that Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O King, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.
14. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.
15. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, know, O King, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute that the king establisheth may be changed.
16. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions, now the king spake and said unto Daniel, thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee.
17. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.
18. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.
19. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste into the den of lions.
20. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said unto Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?
21. Then said Daniel unto the king, O King, live for ever.
22. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion's mouth, that they have not hurt me: for as much as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O King, I have done no hurt.
23. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.
24. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and break all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

INTRODUCTION

This is a powerful story in the Bible about prayer. It covers all of the reasons why we should be faithful and pray. There are numerous instances in the Bible about men and women who prayed, but we will focus on this particular story. It is very important that we understand exactly what prayer is. In its simplest form, and there are many, prayer is our effort to communicate with God. Prayer is the most important privilege a Christian person has. It is also the most important thing in a lost person's life when he is praying for the salvation of his soul. So you see, God hears all prayers.

FAITHFULNESS IN PRAYER

Daniel was one of God's Old Testament prophets over twenty-five centuries ago. He was a man of God with high ideals and integrity, but most of all, he was a man of great faith and trust in God. He practiced this through prayer three times a day. He was a disciplined believer and did not falter in his prayers to God. Daniel could have found many excuses over the years to falter from his closeness to God, and he lived among a pagan people. He worked for many rulers who did not believe in the true and living God but continued to talk about the Lord and his blessings. He lived a pure and clean life before everyone. At this time, Daniel was King Darius's top advisor. The King obviously had much respect for him, because of the position he had put him in. King Darius noticed that Daniel worked more efficiently and capably than the rest. This was undoubtedly a result of Daniel's salvation, and that the holy spirit dwelled in him. This caused him to influence others. Chapter 6, verse 3, states, "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." It was at this time that the other officials become jealous of Daniel. They then began to conspire and plot against Daniel. Behind Daniel's back, they met with the king and flattered him into making a royal statute. In Darius' day this was law, and once it was decreed, not even the king could revoke it. The statute that king Darius was tricked into making is in Chapter 6, verse 7, "All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselor and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions." Most of these men who conspired knew that Daniel prayed three times a day to his God and that would probably not change. Even though Daniel knew of the decree, he was faithful to God, and knelt to pray with his windows open toward Jerusalem as always. This is a wonderful example of how we should always remain faithful in prayer to God. Do you pray even though you are not comfortable or when you are away from home or someplace strange? As they planned, these men assembled outside Daniel's house and found him praying to God. This was the trap that they had set for him, but we will soon see how deceitful and wicked men are soon brought to justice. These that saw Daniel praying went before the king and accused him of breaking the very law that the king had commanded. We read in verse 14 how the king was displeased with himself ,and he studied a way to deliver Daniel out of this predicament. Even the king had great respect for Daniel and feared God, knowing Daniel served a true and living God. Once again these men confronted King Darius about the law that was broken and how the king must carry out punishment because of Daniel's disobedience. Since the king feared an uprising and a loss of control, he ordered Daniel to be thrown into the den of lions. To break a king's statue meant death. An unusual event occurs in verse 16 when the king tells Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." See how living a true and faithful life to God, being obedient in serving Him always affects others, even non-believers. The king and the officials then

continued

sealed the lions' den so that no one could get in or out. King Darius, fearing God, could not eat or sleep the entire night. We read that at first light, Darius went in haste unto the den of lions and cried out in a lamentable voice to Daniel to see if he was still alive. The king, fearing God and knowing Daniel served Him faithfully, knew great harm could fall upon him, but in verse 22, Daniel answers, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouth, that they have not hurt me, forasmuch as before him, innocency was found in me, and also before thee, O King, have I done no hurt."

JUSTICE TO THE WICKED

When the king heard Daniel, he was exceedingly glad because he had that night realized that he had played a part in an unjust and deceitful plan to kill Daniel. King Darius, angered by these wicked men's actions, sentenced them to death. Persian law also permitted the king to sentence women and children (the families of these men) to death in the lions' den. See how great a judgment can be when God's people are wronged. We read in verse 24 how violent and sudden the death of these people were. "And the king commanded, and they brought those men, which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den." They didn't even touch the floor as the lions caught them in their mouths. Now King Darius was so happy that he had not harmed Daniel, that he wrote a letter to all people in all nations as a witness unto God. See how powerful a witness we can be and how we can affect others with our faithfulness and prayers; read verses 25 through 28.

CONCLUSION

There is great power in prayer. The Bible tells us that prayer can help us overcome temptation and is a key in overcoming the forces of evil, and serious prayer can keep us close to God. That is why prayer in a Christian's life is most important. Always remember to pray.

LESSON FOUR

WHY GIVE?

LESSON TEXT
2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-8

WRITTEN BY
BRENT SANFORD

6. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.
7. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.
8. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound in every good work:

INTRODUCTION

This lesson will teach many of the reasons we should give. We will learn that we should give for the blessings that we receive and that when we give, we receive more blessings. We will learn that giving is necessary to spread the gospel to all that need to hear. Finally, we will learn that giving helps us to become better Christians.

BECAUSE OF GOD'S BLESSINGS

One reason we should give is because of all the blessings we receive daily from God. The following are two areas that God blesses us: materially and spiritually.

In James 1:17, we find that God is the source of all our blessings. It reads, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." We gain these 'gifts' in the form of food, clothing, medicine and many others every day by the generosity of God. For this generosity, we should be grateful.

Even though the Lord abundantly supplies us with material blessings, it does not compare to the spiritual blessings we receive. There are many types of spiritual blessings.

We have the blessing of prayer. I Peter 3:12 states, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers" At any time, we can humble ourselves to God and go to him in prayer. He is always there to listen and answer our prayers.

We have the blessing of God's word. The Bible allows us to read and meditate on the words of the Lord. Although the Bible was written by God's disciples, II Timothy 3:16 tells us that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." We also find in the same verse that the Bible "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." It stands as a guideline for being better Christians.

We have the blessing of light. In I John 1:5, we find "that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." By following God's word, He reveals to us His light. Psalms 119:105 states, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." We are not left to grope and stumble in the darkness, but to walk in the glorious light of God and Christ. Matthew 5:14-16 tells us that we are to let God's light shine in us for all to see.

We have the blessing of fellowship. While we are in God's light, we are allowed to fellowship with God and Christ, according to I John 1:6. Verse seven in the same chapter of I John goes on to let us know, that if we walk in the light, we also have fellowship with one another. This is having reference to God's people, the church.

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We have the blessing of the cross. Probably the most important blessing of all is that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son on the cross to die for our sins (John 3:16). Christ also loved us so much that He voluntarily died on the cruel, shameful cross for us. Isaiah 53:5, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed." Through the blessing that Jesus gave us at the cross, we also find the blessing of forgiveness and the blessing of eternal life in heaven.

With this being only a short list of material and spiritual blessings we receive from God, how can we not look to give what we can back to God? Verse six of the lesson text tells us that we reap what we sow, so the more we give, the more blessings we will receive.

TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL AND SAVE THE LOST

I Romans 1:16 reads, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." With the gospel being the power of God to save men, we need to make sure every lost person is able to hear it. In Mark 16:15, Jesus commands that the gospel be preached to every creature. Without generous, sacrificial giving on the part of Christians to missionary work, we will never be able to preach to every creature. With the millions of lost in the world, we must give to enable the gospel to reach them, so they may be saved and have the same blessings we enjoy.

TO GROW IN CHRIST

By being liberal in giving to God and the church, we grow in Christ. It helps us to be more God-like. In II Corinthians 8:2, we find that giving liberally expresses our overflowing joy in obedience to God. Chapter 10 of Acts tells of an angel of God that came to Cornelius and told him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." This means that liberality lends acceptance to prayers. Giving also leads to blessings from God. Luke 6:38 reads, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." Matthew chapter 7 encourages us to lay up treasures in heaven rather than here on Earth. We can do this by giving amply to God and the church. The treasures that we gather here will eventually go away, but the ones we gather in heaven are eternal. No one could ever imagine all the joys and victories possible for the person that is fully dedicated to Christ (Ephesians 3:19-21). The first commandment is to love the Lord "with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Can one who loves God with all his or her being be stingy when it comes to giving?

CONCLUSION

When we take into account all the blessings that we receive from God, it becomes hard to justify not giving something back. But we must be careful that we give generously from divine motives, because if not, verse seven of our lesson text tells us that they are given in vain. So count your blessings, help spread the gospel, and help yourself grow stronger in Christ, and give everything you can to the work of the Lord.

QUESTIONS

1. List some of the many blessings you receive from God.
2. How is what we give to the church used to spread the gospel?
3. In what ways do we grow stronger in Christ by giving?

Study References

II Corinthians; I Corinthians 9:9-14

Key Verse

James 1:17

LESSON FIVE

WHY WORSHIP?

LESSON TEXT
JOHN 4:19-24

WRITTEN BY
CHRIS SHUFFITT

19. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.
20. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.
21. Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.
22. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.
23. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.
24. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

INTRODUCTION

Worship was the primary focus of many Israelites whose vocation was centered on and around the house of the Lord. In the Old Testament, the priests put a great deal of work into worship, ensuring that everything was carefully and meticulously prepared so they and all the people could enter into worship with their minds and hearts focused on God. They performed many complicated tasks and ceremonial rituals which included animal sacrifices to worship the Lord God.

Animal sacrifices could not take away sin but only provided a temporary way to deal with sin until Jesus as our supreme sacrifice came to deal with it permanently. It is important to understand that Old Testament believers were following God's command for proper worship and He graciously forgave them when, by faith, they made their sacrifices.

However, in the New Testament, we worship in a new and living way. Verse 23 of our lesson text has Jesus telling the Samaritan woman, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him"(John 4:23). From this we know that God is the object of worship, and He alone is to be the object of worship (Exodus 20:1-5), and true worshippers must worship Him is spirit and and in truth.

THE ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

There are four elements of worship: 1.) External worship; 2.) Internal worship; 3.)Public worship; and 4.) Private worship. We will discuss each of these separately. Internal worship is more important than external worship because without true heartfelt (internal) worship, external activities or exercises of worship are meaningless. Jesus referred to those people as hypocrites because "this people draweth night unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." You are encouraged to read more about this in Matthew 15. Denominations that use ceremonial rituals in which God is "scheduled" out of the worship service are not worshipping in the new and living way. Most certainly they are not worshipping in spirit and in truth. Rituals without heartfelt internal worship are MEANINGLESS to God.

Because of the witness and influence it carries, external worship should not be dis-

continued

counted as being unimportant. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

The seat of public worship is the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. True worshippers will worship God in church, at home, on the job, in the car—wherever they may choose. Private worship is any time you and the Lord God are fellowshipping together. The Samaritan woman posed the question to Jesus about where worship should take place (John 4:20). Jesus answered her that God is present everywhere and can be worshipped anywhere and at any time. Jesus meant that it is not WHERE we worship but HOW we worship (John 4:20-24).

MARY OF BETHANY: AN EXAMPLE OF A TRUE WORSHIPPER

Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, is perhaps one of the best examples of a true worshipper in the New Testament. We first meet Mary during a visit Jesus paid to her home in Bethany. While Jesus visited, she sat at his feet and listened. When Martha became irritated at her sister's lack of help, Jesus remarked that Mary's choice to enjoy his company was the most appropriate response at the time (Luke 10:38-42).

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, we again see Mary "worshipping" her Lord by washing Jesus' feet with perfume and wiping them with her hair, an effort for which she was rebuked this time by Judas Iscariot saying, "Why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence, and given to the poor?"(John 12:5). Jesus answered, "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always" (John 12:7-8).

When we worship, we should be like Mary, shutting out the world, focusing on God, and worshipping with our complete heart and soul as we publicly show our witness for the Lord.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have discussed that true worship is composed of four elements: 1.) Internal worship; 2.) External worship; 3.)Public worship; and 4.)Private worship. All should be taken collectively to carry out the TRUE worship of God. One element CANNOT stand without the other. Just as a recipe needs all of its ingredients, so does TRUE worship.

Worship is also social inasmuch as worshippers assemble together to show the worth of God by singing praises to Him, honoring His exalted position by bowing and asking petitions of Him, testifying to the things He has done for us and promoting His cause by preaching His gospel.

However, without the heart's being in all of these activities, it is little more than "a form of godliness, which denies the power of God" from which we are instructed to turn away (II Timothy 3:5).

QUESTIONS

1. Why should we worship God? Why is God worthy?
2. Explain how Mary of Bethany demonstrated all of the elements of true worship.
3. Why did Jesus refer to the Pharisees and Scribes as hypocrites? Can we fall into hypocrisy as far as our worship practices are concerned?
4. Why or how do Missionary Baptist practice the TRUE way of worship? Explain.
5. Give two other examples of true worshippers in the Bible. Explain your choices.

Study References

Revelations 4:11

Acts 17:24-28

Psalms 95:6-7

Hebrews 10:1-25

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Leviticus Chapters 1-9 (These are instructions for the priesthood and Old Testament worship.)

Psalms 40:6-8

Matthew 26-6-13