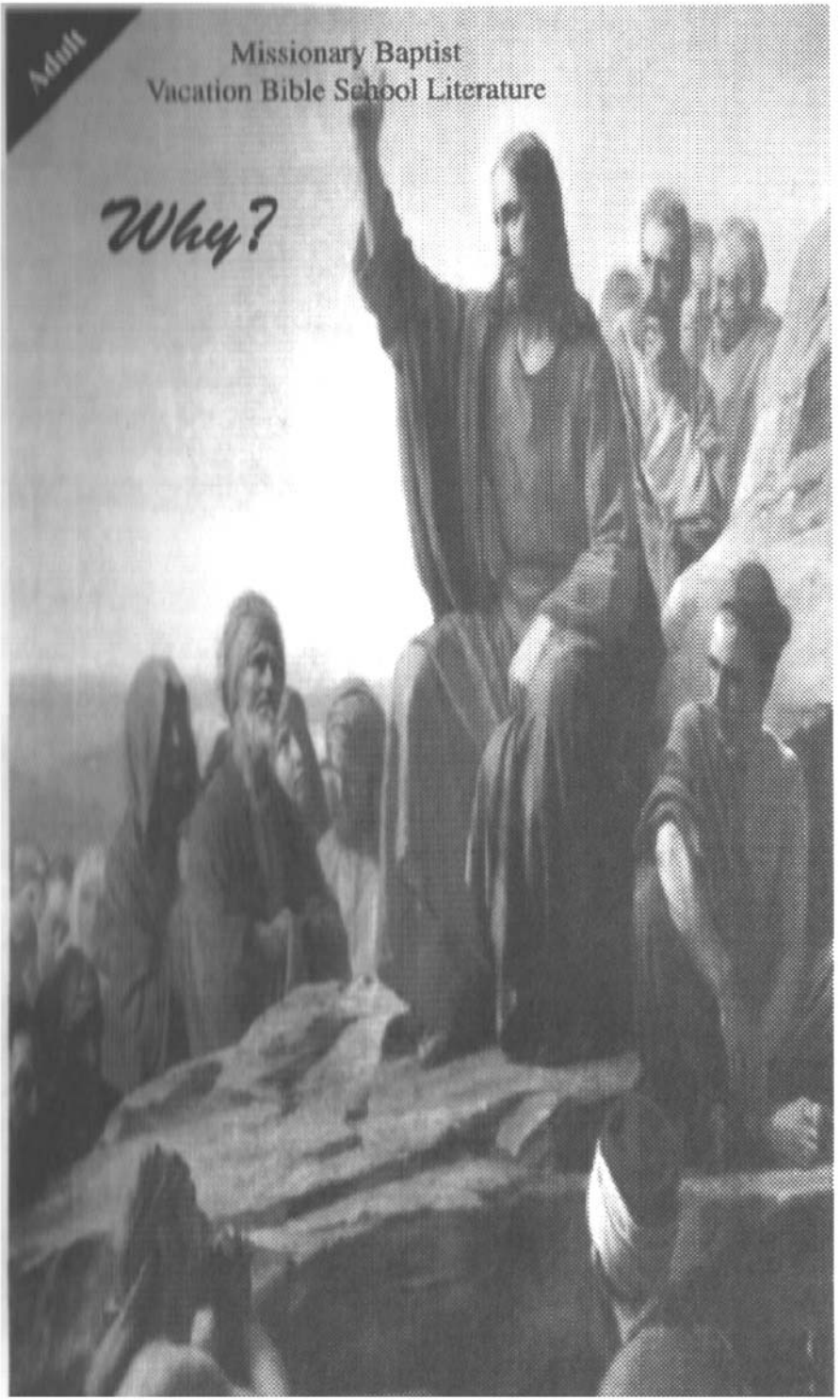
Adult

Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature

Why?



The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

"WHY?"

Vacation Bible School Lessons for Adults

Written by Brother Roger Carter, Brother Ronald Gray, Brother Dallas Wheat, Brother Clifford Hayes, and Elder Ron Spurgeon

Table of Contents

Why Obey? 3
Why Surrender? 6
Why Pray? 10
Why Give? 13
Why Worship? 16

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LESSON ONE

WHY OBEY?

LESSON TEXT
LEVITICUS 26: 3-12

WRITTEN BY
ROGER CARTER

3. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandants, 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 the 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

The practice of obeying has been taught and learned since the beginning of time. Someone who loved us taught us to obey, and we in turn teach someone we love to obey. Obedience to God should be the main objective in everyone's life. In this lesson the main emphasis will be on the *why*, not the *how*, we are to obey God. Is the reason we obey love or fear? Could it be both? Are the things we are doing in our life pleasing to God? As we study this lesson, let us examine ourselves to see where we stand with the Lord concerning obedience.

WHAT IS OBEDIENCE?

The Webster dictionary defines obedience as submission to authority and doing as one is told. In today's world it seems we have put obedience behind us. We are advised these days, if it feels good just do it, and don't worry what others think or say. We always hear of someone bucking the system or breaking the rules. If no one wants to obey the rules, then why have them? Without rules and laws our world would be in total chaos.

Although we usually hear of those who don't obey the laws, we know that there are still law-abiding people in the world. These are the people who were taught the difference between right and wrong, and good and evil. Unfortunately, it seems the ones that want to do right are becoming fewer while the lack of morality is becoming greater. Have the people of this country and the rest of the world gotten so far from God, that they have little or no respect for Him? Is there any way we can reverse this trend? The answer is yes. We must become as the city Nineveh did. We must obey God and repent of our evil ways.

OBEYING THE LAW

Obeying the law is not a new idea. The apostle Peter writes "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;

whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (1 Peter 2:13-15)

Without laws, this world would have no order. Could you imagine the turmoil we would live in without laws? We need to be thankful for the people who set the laws up but where did the ideas for the laws come from? The answer is God gave us the laws through the Ten Commandments. Until God gave us the Ten Commandments, there were no written laws to go by. Men knew better, but they were doing things that were wrong both to God and man. When God wrote the Ten Commandments, He gave us laws that showed our moral duty not only to Him, but also to our fellow man.

If you look at the Ten Commandments, you will see that the first four deal with our service to God; the fifth deals with children who are not yet accountable to God, and their obedience to their parents; and the last five deal with our obligation to our fellow man. God expects us to obey these commandments. He warns of consequences for not obeying and blessings for obeying: "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and forth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20: 5-6)

Over the years, man saw the need to add more laws. Many are good laws, but some have been added just to please the world. The excuse is used that times have changed and the old laws are now outdated. This may be true for the laws which were set up by man, but the laws of God shall not change. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5: 17-18)

Jesus went on to confirm the importance of the Ten Commandments when he said, "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. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40) In this passage, Jesus is saying that our first and most important duty is to God. We are to show our love to Him completely: physically, mentally, and spiritually. Secondly, we must realize that everyone else in this world is our neighbor and how we should love them. If we would obey these two laws, would there be a need for any more laws? Unfortunately, we cannot obey these laws perfectly because of our sinful nature. As a result, Jesus had to come into this world to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. "Though he were the Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8-9)

OBEYING GOD

As we stated in the last section, obedience to God should be first and foremost in our lives, but why? What is it about God that gives Him such authority over the world and every living thing? The Apostle John states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1-3) How often do we take for granted the things that God has done for us? We can't even begin to imagine the power God must have.

We need to look around and see the things He spoke into existence. It was not a "big bang" or evolution that brought the world and life as we know it, but God. Some people say this is impossible, but as the bible states many times, "with God all things are possible." God created the world and He rules over us today. With such power, should we

not fear God? The answer is yes. We are serving the same God who did all these wonderful things long ago, but He is also the same God who destroyed everything from the face of the earth except Noah and his family and animals that were on the ark that God instructed him to build.

While God has brought wrath upon his people many times for disobedience, He has always promised if we would obey Him, this would not happen. Let us look at the people of Israel for an example. We know how God delivered them out of Egypt and even let them walk through the mist of the Red Sea on dry ground. We also know that He gave them manna to eat so they would not starve; yet when something difficult would come along for them, they would start murmuring against Him. Because of their sinful ways and thoughts, God caused them to wander for forty years in the desert and brought many bad things upon them. Jesus asked, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" (Luke 6:46) If we really believe in the Lord, we must fear Him—for he has greater power than to just destroy the world and the people in it. He has power over all eternity. Jesus says, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28) No one else has this power, so we owe it to God for our eternal salvation, and through the fear of eternal torment we call upon Him for salvation. Through the repentance of our sins, this fear is taken away from us and is replaced with a love known only to a child of God.

We also need to obey God because of the love He has for us. Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21) We need to remember how God set up the plan of salvation before the world began. God promised this in the Garden of Eden when after the fall of man He said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15) Because of the sinful state of man, God made this promise to all mankind. "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." (John 3:16) To believe, we must obey God and repent of our sins. When we become a child of God, we must then follow the Lord in whatever direction He leads us. He has a work for all of us to do and he will bless us over and over if we just obey Him. Sometimes the way will not be easy. Sometimes man and his laws will get in the way. When this happens, we should stand and say just like Peter and the other apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than man." (Acts 5:29) God will give us the strength to fight the battles that are before us and we will win. As Paul says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

CONCLUSION

Ecclesiastes 12:13 sums up this lesson with one verse: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Everyone that loves the Lord should try to obey every command that He has for us. Let us take the Godly love He has instilled in our hearts and go about as He has commanded. "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." (Matthew 28:19-20)

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Do you believe obedience to God is more difficult today than in the past? If so, why?
- Discuss how some of man's laws are hindering the spreading of the gospel and what can be done about it.

LESSON TWO

WHY SURRENDER?

LESSON TEXT
ISAIAH 55:6-9 & EXODUS 4:10-18, 28-31

WRITTEN BY
RONALD GRAY

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 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.

Exodus 4:10-18, 28-31

10. And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.
11. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?
12. Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.
13. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.
14. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.
15. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.
16. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.
17. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.
18. And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

28. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.
29. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:
30. And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.
31. And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

INTRODUCTION

Today we constantly hear discussions about the moral decline of our nation as well as that of other peoples beyond our borders. The severity of the moral affliction presently strangling all nations is manifest in broken homes, diseased bodies, and corrupt governments. Our moral consciousness is assaulted by conversations, which would not have been tolerated in polite society fifty years ago. The devil never takes a break in his efforts to hinder God's cause. Mankind is inherently evil and doomed for destruction without the intervention of a loving God.

How does a depraved race merit God's intervention? How do we oppose the devil? God commands our best efforts. Critical to those efforts are the characteristics of submission and surrender. Why do we need to surrender to God and be submissive to His will and His ways? Why are surrendered children of God so important to God's cause?

SURRENDER

Surrender: To give one's self up

Submission: An humble obedience to another's will

The most important move that anyone can make in this life is to seek God for the salvation of his or her soul. This is not an easy task because God requires that we come to Him in total surrender. The key element of a successful seeker is surrender to God. Modern religion portrays this task as simple. The idea that salvation is ours for the taking - without repentance and surrender - is erroneous. Countless thousands of deceived souls will stand before God lost and without hope because they chose the "easy way". Lost humanity is required to "seek" God for salvation (Isaiah 55:7). We are to "call upon Him" when conviction pierces our soul. No overt deed can make us acceptable to God (Ephesians 2:9). God commands each and every soul to repent. This requirement has been a stumbling block for many as they sought God.

The act of repenting, or mourning over our sin, brings us in a sorrowful manner to God. This "Godly sorrow" (II Cor. 7:10) leads to the "giving up" of our self-will. God requires that before He gloriously saves our soul. He will accept nothing short of total and unconditional surrender. Yes, it is an humble obedience to another's will – GOD's ! The reward is eternal salvation.

The vast majority of the readers of this study have probably been saved for many years. Why would the remainder of our Christian life require surrender? Our early Christian walk requires the leadership of God's Spirit in order that we may work for Him, as He would have us to. He leads and directs our lives while we remain in the world, and He would have us to be "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). It is a sad truth, but many young Christians fail to continue their submissive attitude toward God, and therefore fail to grow into the servant God would desire them to become. Sadly enough, many among us surrender to God for salvation but never submit to true discipleship.

The Lord always has work for His people to do. However, we must be submissive to feel His directives. In a portion of our lesson text God called upon Moses to return to Egypt from his 40-year stay in the deserts of Midian. He wanted Moses to be the one to lead Israel from the captivity of the cruel Pharaoh. Moses failed to surrender initially and made excuses for not accepting the tasks God had for him (v.10). God will always make a way for us to succeed in His work when we are submissive to His will. Eventually, Moses submission to God transformed him into a stalwart disciple.

When "the word of the Lord" came unto Jonah, telling him to go to Ninevah and preach the word, he refused to submit. Af-

ter three days and nights in the belly of the great fish, Jonah became obedient to the call. The result of Jonah's surrender was the preaching of God to the people of Ninevah. The people there "believed God" (Jonah 3:5) and many thousands were saved. The city was spared as a result (3:10).

While these two examples end with God richly blessing both circumstances, submission to God does not guarantee us life's easy road. When Stephen surrendered his life to God and His work, God blessed him (Acts 6:8). Stephen's devotion and faith to God cost him his life. Could we go to these same lengths today? One result of Stephen's death was the impact on the young Pharisee Saul. He heard the gospel from Stephen's obedient lips just before the crowd stoned him. Conviction later overtook Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4-9) where he was saved and called to preach the gospel. Through Paul's surrender much of the world was able to hear the word during his missionary journeys. Paul himself would later be martyred, but what an impression he had made on a lost world. Word of God's mercy was spread abroad by the preaching of one who had previously been such a hindrance to the cause.

God desires that His children live close enough to recognize His call and subsequently obey His will. When bodies of baptized believers surrender themselves totally and immerse themselves in His work, great things happen. When churches are complacent and "at ease in Zion" the devil applauds, for this makes his job much easier. If we work for the Lord, though, Satan will take every opportunity to wreak havoc. His efforts to destroy, discourage and deny Christian influence and truth are continual. Is the devil opposing you on every hand? If not, you could be right where he wants you.

When we surrender our whole being to God, great work is usually accomplished. Christ left His church the commission to work and the power to be successful (Matt 28:16-20). The passive Christian never becomes the soldier most capable of winning the war. Battles are won for God by those who are totally and selflessly committed to His cause. He supplies "all power" (v.18) and promises to be "with us always" (v.20).

Both the Old and New testaments tell us to "walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8 and I Peter 5:6) Such service is impossible without total surrender and submission. Pride can have no place in the life of a child of God. Our goal should be to do as the apostle Paul commanded in Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech ye therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And, be ye 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." When we do this we demonstrate our surrender to God and hold Him up before them as an eternal promise. By "yielding ourselves to God" (Romans 6:13) we show our friends, neighbors, and co-workers what God has done for us.

CONCLUSION

God's people today need deep burdens. Burdens that endure are productive. Hearts that are heavy seek God's guidance. We need to pray for burdened hearts and wait for God to lay them upon us. A small number of surrendered souls can do more than a legion of souls "at ease". He can use the small number, the legion is useless. Surrendered churches have awesome capabilities. Through the members of these churches, God displays His greatness.

Christian service is a challenge. The devil and the world await to oppose us on every hand. God has given us scriptures of great strength and truth. (I John 4:4). Why should we be intimidated by the opposition? Finally, we have these scriptures of truth to direct our paths. (James 4:10 and Matt 16:24-26) Perhaps the more appropriate question to ask is, "Why not surrender to God?"

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Is it possible for a person to surrender to God for salvation but never submit their life to true discipleship?
- What is true discipleship? How is your definition of discipleship relative to your inclination to submit your life?
- What is the level of discipleship of a church "member" who has not attended in many years?
- Can a man submit to the call to preach, but never truly submit to the Lord's work?
- Can "old-time" Baptist churches long exist when the majority of its membership is "at ease in Zion"?

STUDY REFERENCES.

Micah 6:8

Matthew 16:24-26

Mark 10:21-22

Romans 6:13

Romans 12:1-2

James 4:10

I Peter 2:25

II Cor. 7:10

I Peter 5:6

LESSON THREE

WHY PRAY?

LESSON TEXT
NEHEMIAH 1:4-11

WRITTEN BY
DALLAS WHEAT

4. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,
5. And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:
6. Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.
7. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.
8. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:
9. But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.
10. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.
11. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible depicts prayer as a form of worship which encompasses all the attitudes of the human spirit in an effort to communicate with God. It is the loftiest activity which the spirit of man can attain, for it is communion with his creator.

Paul summarizes God's work in salvation by placing our right to call upon God as Father at the pinnacle. Abba, as used in Galatians 4:7, is an Aramaic term used to show affectionate intimacy toward the father in a family. God, in allowing us to approach Him in prayer as we would approach our father, demonstrates His great love for us. Also, in approaching Him in prayer we strengthen and manifest our love for Him (ref. Galatians 4:4-7).

Prayer offered in faith is man's strongest resource. By prayer we may induce a Sovereign and Holy God to grant that which we desire; but prayer offered in faith is at the same time a request which induces us to desire those things which He wills to grant. The objective of a prayer should be to pray as Christ prayed, always in the will of the Father.

Let us now look at some fundamental reasons or occasions for prayer.

DELIVERANCE

King David, in Psalms 40, allegorized between the lost and regenerated states of man. He likened the lost state to being stuck in miry clay in a horrible pit, and the regenerated state was depicted as being set upon a solid rock. The most important prayer which can be prayed is the prayer offered to God from a broken and contrite heart in repentance with faith in Christ as our personal Savior. This prayer delivers from the bondage of sin (ref. Psalms 40: 1-16).

Luke recorded the teachings of Jesus on the insignifance of temporal things of this life, and the supreme importance of having a right relationship to the Heavenly Father. Jesus asked the very pointed question, "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?" Matthew 17:25. This is the teaching of numerous Scriptures in both Testaments. Solomon set forth this same teaching when he concluded that an untimely birth (stillbirth) was better than living a long life filled with riches but void of having a soul filled with good. These passages set forth the importance placed upon the deliverance from the penalty of sin (ref. Luke 12:13-21; Ecl 6:1-4).

DIRECTION AND HELP

It is in the nature of man to attempt control of the situations in which he finds himself. As we "mature" we come to realize that most situations are beyond our control and we must depend upon God for help. Jeremiah makes a very interesting observation in Jeremiah 10:23, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We must seek God's will in living our lives. We are not to depend upon our understanding, but are to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways and let Him direct our lives (ref. Proverbs 3:1-8).

Important decisions that we face in life should be approached in prayer. Read II Kings 19:14-19. In this passage, as in our lesson text, prayer is being offered in the interest of a nation and of God's people. Notice how Hesekiah approached the problem that he faced. He went into the house of the Lord, spread the information before the Lord, and sought God's help. The spreading of the letters before the Lord symbolizes the openness which we should exhibit in our approach to God in prayer. Concerns and activities we try to hide are left unforgiven. Those problems that are too hard for us are yet under His control (ref. Jeremiah 18:1-10).

The inhabitants of Nineveh are described as "not able to discern between their right hand and their left hand." This description is used to convey the spiritual wickedness of that great city. Wisdom, "the skill of Godly living," is the direct opposite of spiritual ignorance. In the Epistle of James we are instructed to ask God for wisdom and promised that He will honor our request. The Lord indeed is our Shepherd, and He desires to lead us through life (ref. Jonah 4:11; James 1:5; Psalm 23).

FORGIVENESS

Paul explained in the Roman Letter that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. Sin is portrayed in the Bible as falling short of God's expectations. Man may exceed his own standards. However, left to himself, he can never reach God's standard of righteousness. We go astray like wandering sheep, transgressing God's laws and substituting our own will for God's. Our sins, if left unchecked, affect our relationship to God as well as our relationship to those around us. As Christians we should not sin; but if we do, we should remember to call upon our Advocate, Christ Jesus. When we confess and turn from our sins, a right relationship with God is restored.

Our lesson text centers on a four-month period in which Nehemiah fasted and prayed for the forgiveness of the sins of Israel and for God's blessing in fulfilling his desire to rebuild the city of his fathers. His prayer was fervent, persistent and focused. This is the type of prayer which James described as a

prayer which availeth much (ref. I John 1:9-2:2; Nehemiah 2; James 5:13-20; Psalms 51).

THANKSGIVING

The opening verses of Psalms 136 involve the giving of thanks unto the Lord. Our blessings, our opportunities, and yes, even our lives are direct gifts from God. "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17:28. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights." James 1:17. We honor God and show forth our love for Him when we give thanks for the blessings of life.

OBEDIENCE

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." are Jesus' own words to his disciples. An equivalent form for this statement is, "If you do not keep my commandments, then you do not love me." Both Testaments command us to pray. Saying that we love the Lord and not praying are contradictory. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is nigh." is the admonition give us by Isaiah. Jesus instructed in the Sermon On The Mount, "Ask and it shall be given, ...For everyone who asketh receiveth." Though God knows each of our needs before we ask, we are to come boldly and confidently unto His throne of grace. In so doing, we acknowledge and honor the Lordship of the Father, and we demonstrate and strengthen our love for Him (ref. Isaiah 55:1-6; Matthew 7:7-11; Hebrews 4:14-16).

CONCLUSION

The Bible depicts a wide array of men and women in prayer. The externals, vocal power, location, body position, and so forth are incidental to meaningful prayer.

However, there are some characteristics which are vital to meaningful prayer. Some are Faith, Openness, Sincerity, Perseverance, Pursuit of God's will, and above all Presentation in the name and spirit of Christ.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What is prayer?
2. Why should we be persistent in prayer?
3. How can we secure wisdom?
4. How should we approach decisions which we must make?
5. List other reasons for prayer.
6. What was the object of David's prayer in Psalms 51?

LESSON FOUR

WHY GIVE?

LESSON TEXT
II CORINTHIANS 9:6-8

WRITTEN BY
CLIFFORD HAYES

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 to every good work:

INTRODUCTION

The planners for this year's lessons have chosen a theme that is very much needed. The instructions we have received on our obligations to God relative to giving have been heavier on the side of "where, when and how" than on the side of "**why**" it is our duty to render this service to God.

The very young babes in Christ have no knowledge of God except for their experience of salvation. Those who have begun to grow spiritually can draw closer to God and use the study this week as a learning experience in understanding what is expected of them in His service. God's children who have been fed the meat of His word may have heard lessons on their duties and responsibilities many times, but they still need to be reminded of the biblical truths that relate to this area of study. Peter was aware of the need of man to have his memory stirred and gives us instruction in 2 Peter 1:12, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.".

There have been many reasons stated why we should offer of our means to the service of God, but the first and most compelling reason is that this form of Christian stewardship is commanded by God. Because of this there are many examples of generous giving cited in the scriptures.

EARLY EXAMPLES

After Adam sinned and was driven from the garden, the next human act that the bible records in detail was the giving of an offering to God by Cain and Abel. When the waters of the flood receded and the ground dried, Noah, his family and all the animals came out of the ark. The bible records that Noah's first act was to build an altar and offer a sacrifice to God, worshipping Him for the saving of the human race from the flood (Genesis 8:20).

Other illustrations could be given, but perhaps the most notable instance of sacrificial giving is found in the example of Abraham and Isaac. After years of childlessness due to the wife's being barren, God was true to His promise and gave Abraham and Sarah a son. Then God tried Abraham's faith by telling him to take his son, his "only son Isaac, whom thou lovest", and offer him for a sacrifice. What a trial! This patriarch had been waiting for an heir for years. Abraham had believed God when He told him that this child was the child of promise- the one through which all the world would be blessed- yet God was instructing him to kill this covenanted child. A lesser man would have failed this test. Abraham, however, never wavering, hastened to obey because God had commanded it. There are other lessons to be learned from this account, but in

the context of our lesson, we learn that God is pleased with sacrificial giving. It is in the Bible, II Corinthians 8:2. The churches of Macedonia had been going through much trouble and hard times, but they had mixed their wonderful spiritual joy with their deep poverty, and the result had been an overflow of giving to others.

FOR THE WORK TO CONTINUE

If the church is to accomplish the things Christ commanded, the members of the church must, of necessity, give of their financial means that the work outlined in the Great Commission might prosper. Those who have been touched by God to go and take the gospel to peoples who have not heard it must be supported in their efforts. Remember also, when the God- called man goes, his family goes with him and they have physical needs that must be met. Many ministers, whether pastors or missionaries, have said that it is very difficult to work at a secular job during the day and then try to do pastoral visitation or witness to those in the community at night when their bodies are physically tired. Yet, they continue to do this because of the great love they have for their families and for the Lord's work. The church is neglecting it's duty when she allows these conditions of physical need to exist. The living necessities of food, clothing and shelter should be supplied by the churches to those who has the responsibility to carry the Word to the world. Paul teaches this in I Corinthians 9:13-14," Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (Underlines mine). This writer also personally believes that these two verses ties the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ together as far as giving is concerned. Here in the New Testament is the command to tithe just as emphatic as it is commanded in the Old. However, this lesson is about WHY of giving to the Lord's cause and not HOW. That discussion will wait for another lesson.

Not only is it imperative that we contribute to the support of the ministry where ever it is to be found, it is important that the local church have a comfortable place of worship. Whether dealing in truth or deception, the entire religious world is after the same souls. The New Testament Church is in competition with the apostate church for these souls and these organizations with their doctrines of death, presents an appealing invitation to the unsuspecting and the ungrounded, but in reality they are "whited sepulchres." The face we present to the world that we wish to win must be attractive, but, at the same time, we must not sacrifice principles. All of us work to make our homes as beautiful and comfortable as possible. Our meeting houses should be no less appealing than our homes.

ATTITUDES IN GIVING

If a church realizes her full potential in the exercise of the Great Commission, the members must give cheerfully and generously. II Corinthians 9:7 informs us that God loves a cheerful giver. Some people have said that they were afraid to withhold offerings from God because they were fearful He would take what was owed to Him and then take more as a means of punishment. This idea misses the entire concept of giving because this attitude is motivated by fear and not by love. Works of giving, like other good works, should be done with thought, meaning and cheerfulness. Persons will sometimes give only to satisfy the appeal of those who request their generosity. That which they give is, in a manner, squeezed from them and their reluctance spoils all they do. We should give spontaneously, liberally and cheerfully of our means, being glad we have the opportunity to contribute to the Lord's work.

IT IS PLEASING TO GOD

We should give because personal giving is pleasing to God. In the 12th chapter of Mark, Jesus was teaching on the pretense of piety on the part of the scribes and had warned the people around Him to be wary of the

insincerity of these people. He accused them of loving to make a show of their holiness but they did not hesitate to take money from the poor widows. When Jesus saw evil and corruption, He was outspoken and righteously angry, but when He observed true piety, His words were kind and grateful. Notice the lesson of the widow and her mite.

Jesus was sitting in the temple, in plain view of the receptacles where people were placing their offerings. He could observe that many of the affluent including the scribes, deposited sizable sums. Then came the widow. By reason of her poverty she might have been excused altogether from making an offering. Yet, into the box she dropped two coins, the combined value being less than one cent. Did she give least of all? Listen to the words of Jesus. "She of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." After giving all her living, she had nothing to sustain life.

Here in these verses we have Jesus' words as to the standard by which men should measure their gifts to the Lord. It is not primarily the amount of the gift that earns the Lord's approval, but the spirit of the giver and the extent to which the element of sacrifice is involved.

CONCLUSION

Scriptural giving is to be in response to a need. God intends that the basic needs of His called be met, so that they might survive and share His gospel with others.

Giving is an expression of trust in God. When we have confidence in the words of God as recorded in Malachi 3:8, we will be more likely to contribute freely and become the channels of blessings for others.

Giving is to be free and cheerful. Cheerful giving of that which we have is an expression of love that is basis in our Christian stewardship.

Jesus is our example in all things. Therefore, when we give, let us not consider the cost but remember that Jesus paid the ultimate cost on the cross.

LESSON FIVE

WHY WORSHIP?

LESSON TEXT
JOHN 4:19-24

WRITTEN BY
ELD. RON SPURGEON

19. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.
20. Our fathers worshipped 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 worshippers 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

When I think about why I worship God, I am reminded that the greatest privilege in this life is to worship my Creator. The Apostle John put worship into prospective when he said, "We love him, because he first loved us." I John 4:19. It appears to be a natural thing to love someone who first loves you with unconditional compassion. God loves us unconditionally. He gave His only son to die on the "Cross of Calvary" to express that great love to the entire human race. Why should we worship God? The answer is simple but yet complex: He is God the Creator of all things.

To worship means to bow down before with reverence or to do obeisance. We notice from our lesson that the true worshippers of God will obey Him by humbling, and bowing with reverence, their heart to Him and seeking Him with the heart. The Apostle Peter states, "...for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." I Peter 5:5 – 7.

WHEN TRUE WORSHIP BEGINS

The first step in worshipping God is to get saved. Jesus says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33.

True worship begins with a born-again experience with God. The Samaritan woman at Jacob's well acquired an experience with God. She met the Lord Jesus Christ in person. Jesus explained to the woman about everlasting life by describing a spiritual well of water that would never go dry. He continued and told her how that she needed this spiritual drink, and in return she realized the great need by saying, " ... give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." John 4: 15. He told the woman about her sins, indicating that she had things in her life that must be changed and corrected, but more importantly He preached to her the great need of true worship and salvation. Read again John 4: 19 – 22.

The woman was affected by the fact that Jesus knew so much about her personal life and the many husbands. She was amazed, having not told him anything about herself. She claimed that Jesus was a prophet. The statement that touched the woman the most is found in John 4 verses 23 and 24. "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.*** God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Jesus explained to her the simple plan of salvation and how that God seeks people to worship Him, and when a person realizes that he is lost and without God and begins to seek Him, the true worship process is begun and completed in salvation by grace through faith and repentance to God's satisfaction.

How do we know that the preaching of Jesus affected the woman? "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" She was so excited about meeting Jesus in the free pardon of sin that she left her waterpot and immediately began to witness to other people about what the Lord had done for her.

When a person is saved, a whole new perspective on life and worship is acquired. You look at things differently and you have a desire given by the Holy Spirit to worship God who freed you from the bondage of sin and placed His love in your heart. This is evident in the change the woman made. She was a very sinful woman and well known by especially the men of the city, but now she is telling people to come and worship the true Messiah. And so it is when a person gets saved. The Apostle Paul says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." II Corinthians 5:17. One of those new things is the object of worship. We do not desire the former things to worship, but we desire to worship our Creator when we experience the new birth.

THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

The Lord God is the object of worship. He alone is to be the object of bowing down to with reverence and to obey. Jesus gives a plain and simple directive for worship: "... for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10. A second reason for worshipping God is that true worship of God is a commandment from the Creator, "I am the Lord thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." Exodus 20:1-5.

A major concern of God is the fact that a natural phenomenon of people is to worship something no matter what it is. Archaeologists have found evidence that heathen tribal people who have had no exposure to a civilized society will worship something even if it's a piece of carved wood. They have done this with chants, dances and songs while skipping around a fire with painted faces because, "...the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.." II Corinthians 4:4. The devil does not want anyone to worship God. For this reason, he has placed many distractions before the human race to lure us away from the worship of God. The television set is full of these allurements to the devastation of society and the worship of God.

There are two things that are to be observed in the object of worship. The Lord God is the object of worship and He alone is to be the ***only*** object of worship. Any other object of worship is a sin!

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WORSHIP

There are two kinds of worship: ***internal worship and external (or public) worship.*** Internal worship is more important than external in ways because the external exercise of worship is meaningless unless the heart or inward man is involved. "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4:24. Jesus referred to some people whom he termed as hypocrites by saying, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me..." Matthew 15:8-9. We refer to the fact that true worship begins with the salvation

experience, and it must be from the heart! The external worship is equally important because of the witness and influence it has. 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. Public worship is one way of accomplishing this. Public worship must be Holy Spirit driven, and the person whom the Spirit is leading must be obedient to the leadership. Quenching the Spirit is like pouring a cold bucket of water on hot coals of fire when God is wanting you to worship Him! The steam rises and quickly vanishes away! This is why *Spirit-led public worship* is so important in preaching what God wants preached: singing songs from the heart, praying out loud, saying "Amen," going to church and Sunday School, sending money to missionaries, and giving the right hand of fellowship to name a few types of public worship.

The Old Testament external/public worship was the carrying out of ceremonial rituals in which animal sacrifices were made. The New Testament external/public worship is a new and living way. Jesus tasted death for all mankind and offered His body, a living sacrifice, making Him the object of worship. (See Hebrews 10:1 – 25 and John 4:23)

The seat of public worship is the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our English word *worship* means "Worthship; denoting the worthiness of the person to receive special honor because of worth." True worship is not only internal and external, it is both private and public. It is also social in as much as worshippers assemble together to show the worth of Jesus 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.

FORM OF GODLINESS

One thing we must truly be cautious of is that we do not just merely go through the forms or actions of worship without our heart's being involved. Without our heart's being in all of the activities of worship, it is little more than, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." II Timothy 3:5. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are in perilous or dangerous times. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;" II Timothy 3:1 – 4. These are all hypocritical distractions away from the true worship of God. Please take notice and beware that one of the reasons we worship God is to be more like Him and to strive to do just the opposite of what Paul described would happen in the last days to those who had a form of godliness but denied Him.

WHY SHOULD WE WORSHIP

Why should we worship God? Because He is worthy. He has great worth as described in Revelations 4:11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." There has ***never*** been anyone worthier than Jesus Christ ***"the Savior of the World"*** to worship! And why is he worthy? Because he created all things. "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." Acts 17:24 – 28.

Why should we worship Him? Because we are His people. "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To-day if ye will hear his voice," Psalms 95: 6 & 7.

Why should we worship Him? Because He is our Savior, Redeemer, Lord, and soon coming King! "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" Hebrews 1:3. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Hebrews 9:28. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

CONCLUSION

Why we worship God can be summed up this way. We worship Him because He first loved us, and we have every reason in the world to worship our Creator, Savior, Redeemer, Lord of Lord, and King of Kings, the One who lives in our hearts. If you are not saved and do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, please make an altar today unto the Lord and then you will know in your heart ... ***why we worship God!***