

LESSONS *from the* BOOK OF LIFE

2018 June - October



QUALITIES *of a* TRUE BELIEVER

“But the hour cometh....when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth....” John 4:23



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rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation while we continue in prayer (Romans 12:12). Therefore, let us use the following verses to encourage our hearts as we try to be patient; being mindful that God always keeps His promises and His timing is perfect:

- Lamentation 3:22-24
- John 14:2 & 3
- Romans 5:3-5; 8:25
- Galatians 6:9 & 10
- 2 Thessalonians 1:4 & 5

Like Job, in chapter 14:14, let us wait for our change, endeavouring to be patient in all things, and bearing in mind that he who endures to the end shall be saved.

LESSON 20

JOB'S PATIENCE

SCRIPTURE: James 5:7-11 | **KEY VERSES:** James 1:2-4

INTRODUCTION

To be able to accept or tolerate delays (over which we have no control), problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious is to be considered patient. There are numerous Bible characters who were faced with situations which required them to be patient; some were successful and others were not.

THE LESSON

“All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come” (Job 14:14), are the words spoken by the man whose patience was considered to be legendary. Job lost his health, children and property, yet he exercised patience as he trusted God for deliverance.

When you are patient, you will be blessed. Though Job suffered much, he was greatly blessed and God's name was honoured through his experiences. After hearing the news, Job mourned, tore his robe, shaved his head and fell to the ground in worship saying, “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:20&21).

As we wait let us take comfort from these passages:

- Psalm 25:21; 27:14; 37:7; 37:34
- Philippians 4:19
- Romans 8:18
- James 1:12

The Bible instructs that as we pass through difficult times we are to

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that a blessing is pronounced upon those who take Him at His Word without doubting. Jesus Himself, after his resurrection, declared this when addressing Thomas in John 20:29, “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed”.

ACTIVITY

In light of the lesson, discuss Isaiah 55:11

EDITORS' NOTE

Greetings Sabbath School,

Welcome to another series of Lessons as we seek to delve further into the Words of God.

The topics presented in this series, are geared towards helping us to develop the qualities which represent true believers of God. It is therefore hoped that as we study, we will grasp the necessary spiritual ingredients and be motivated to develop the qualities of a true believer.

Happy studying and sharing!

LESSON 19

ABRAHAM - A MODEL OF FAITH

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For participants to:

- i. *demonstrate faith in their daily lives*
- ii. *understand that only through undergoing tests will they be able to assess the depth of their faith.*

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8 – 10 & 17 – 19

KEY VERSE: Hebrews 11:6

INTRODUCTION

Abraham, born Abram, is the patriarch from whom all Jews trace their descent. Hence, in some quarters, he is popularly referred to as 'Father Abraham'. Abraham is recorded among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11.

THE LESSON

Throughout his lifetime Abraham demonstrated great faith. Some instances of this are:

1. he willingly left his home and kindred for a land he did not know on the directive of the Lord (Gen. 12:1, 4 & 5, Heb. 11:8);
2. he lived in a strange country, dwelling in tents awaiting the promise of greatness (Heb. 11:9)
3. he offered up his son through whom the promise of innumerable descendants should come (Heb.11: 17-19).

Believers can learn from the life of Abraham, that unwavering faith in God will result in rewards. As experienced by Abraham, they should be encouraged to hold fast to the promises of God and be mindful

LESSON 1

NOAH'S OBEDIENCE

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 6 | **KEY VERSE:** Genesis 6:22

What is Obedience?

Obedience, as defined by the Oxford Concise English Dictionary is; submission to another's rule/authority. Other sources define the word as yielding willingly to commands, orders or injunctions; performing what is required or abstaining from that which is forbidden.

According to Genesis 6, as man began to multiply on earth, their way of life grieved God to the extent that He was sorry He had made man, hence He decided to 'wipe' man and other living creatures from the face of the earth. However, there was one man-Noah, whom God favoured because he was just and pleased Him.

God had told Noah that He would destroy the earth with man and his wicked deeds. (Gen. 6:13) so he gave Noah the specifications of the Ark which he should build to preserve species of all living creatures. He also made a covenant with Noah to preserve him and his family.

The Ark should be made of gopher wood, having one window and one door in the side of it. It should also have three stories: lower, second and third, and should be sealed with pitch. The instructions also stated that clean species of animals should go in by 'sevens' and others by 'pairs'. Noah followed God's instructions very carefully - not questioning why he was asked to perform such a mammoth task, neither did he substitute other material for the construction of the Ark. Noah obeyed and executed God's commands to the letter.

While building the Ark, Noah must have been warning people of the imminent flood, and might have been ridiculed for constructing such a strange thing. This would not have in any way deterred him since he was making sure he obeyed God's commands.

On the completion of Noah's work, it rained upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. Water covered the whole earth for one hundred and fifty days; all living creatures outside the Ark perished. After the water had subsided, God instructed Noah to disembark the Ark with his family and all other animals. Noah, in obeying God, was setting the stage for the earth to be replenished with living things.

Readers and Believers let us try to be obedient to God's commands.

ACTIVITIES

1. Identify (with scriptures) any similarity between Noah's and Jesus' obedience.
2. Let us reflect on the words of this Song:

Obedience is the very best way to show that we believe,
Doing exactly what the Lord commands,
Doing it happily
Action is the key to obedience,
The joy you will receive
Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe
O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E
Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe

4. he was not deterred by opposition; neither was he distracted from God's work (Neh.4:14-15; 6:2-4).

The zeal exhibited by Nehemiah towards the work of the Lord is worthy of our emulation. Believers should not approach the Christian life with a nonchalant attitude, but should serve the Lord with attentiveness, zeal and sobriety. Jesus, in Matthew 22:37-40 asks us to love with all our heart, our mind and our soul.

LESSON 18

ZEALOUS NEHEMIAH

SCRIPTURE: Romans 12: 9-21 | **KEY VERSE:** 1 Peter 4:8

INTRODUCTION

When an individual is filled with, or inspired by intense enthusiasm, zeal or fervency, he/she is considered to be zealous. One expresses this zeal for God by demonstrating love, hating what is evil, clinging to what is good, living in harmony with one another, among other things.

THE LESSON

Zeal for God will readily motivate us to work, as we do all we can, willingly and cheerfully (2 Cor. 8:16-24 & 9:2). It is distinguished from 'carnal zeal' by its lack of hatred and bitter envy (James 3:14). It is directed by a true knowledge of God's Word (Rom. 10:2) and is focused on piety of heart instead of superfluous externals (Matt. 23:23; Rom. 14:17). Zealous love includes holy indignation, because when we love something strongly we abhor all that is against it. The strength of zealous love moves the child of God to deny himself/herself and press on despite resistance. It fills him/her with holy grief and displeasure whenever God's truth, worship or servants are violated. For example, David expressed this in Psalm 119:139-141.

Let us discuss some lessons we can learn from Nehemiah's zeal for the work of God:

1. his great concern for the city led him to seek God on its behalf. He knew God's Words and His promises, and quoted them as he prayed (Neh.1:1-11);
2. he was prepared to make presentation to the king when the opportunity arose (Neh.2:4-8);
3. he included himself in problem-solving (Neh.2:17-18);

LESSON 2

MOSES –THE MEEK

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. *realize that even though they keep the Commandments they need to be meek*
- ii. *understand that it is not enough to say that one is meek, it must be displayed*

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 12 | **KEY VERSE:** Matthew 5:5

THE LESSON

Moses displayed one of the qualities which is hardly seen in individuals who have acquired some status in life whether by way of education or wealth. For some, it is hard to consider others as their equal. They place themselves on a pedestal, always thinking that they are better than everyone else. Moses, it can be said, walked with God and never lost the 'common touch' because he had a meek spirit. The scripture lesson declares that there was not a greater prophet than Moses, as God spoke to him 'mouth to mouth', yet he was very meek.

Aristotle a philosopher describes meek as being the middle ground between anger and indifference. It speaks to one who is not selfish but selfless, self- disciplined, gentle and affable. Moses' life embodies all of that and more. God had to intervene and defend him when his brother and sister criticized him. Moses could have defended himself but as what was said was not affecting his relationship with God, he was willing to ignore it. Consider Moses' attitude in Exodus 32: 31 -32.

There are Bible passages which speak of those who are meek and make references to the fact that they will inherit the earth or that God

will fight for them and be their deliverer (Psalms 22:26 & 37:11; Isaiah 11:4; Zephaniah 2:3).

The Church needs more members who are meek like Moses.

ACTIVITIES

1. Muse on the following statements sometimes used by believers:
 - I will never, go back to church...
 - I will never relate to him/her again...
2. Reflect on verse 2 in the Hymn 590 from the Redemption Songs

LESSON 17

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA – THE DEVOTED COUPLE

SCRIPTURE: Acts 18:1-4; 24-28

When Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, a Jewish couple - Priscilla and Aquila- who then resided in Italy, went to live in Corinth, where they met and provided accommodation to Paul, who was a tent-maker, as they were. Being of the same craft, and the same religious persuasion, Paul and the couple shared common working relationships.

As noted in Acts 18, the couple was very knowledgeable, committed and zealous. This is borne out in their keen knowledge of the Scriptures and of the doctrine of Christ. As a result of their knowledge and understanding of the work of the Church, Paul was comfortable to leave them at Ephesus (vv.18 &19), while he continued on his mission. Noteworthy also, is that, even the great Apollos - an eloquent preacher- had to be taught and guided by them on a number of church-related matters (Acts 18: 24-26). Others also benefitted from their knowledge and understanding of the words of God as they served in a number of churches.

Although Aquila and Priscilla were not frequently featured, the information available indicate that they were stalwart believers whose only interests were to serve and witness for the Lord. The following summarizes some qualities which represent this devoted couple:

- i. **Unity:** They shared common goals and interests;
- ii. **Service Driven:** They helped Apollos and others in understanding the work of God (Acts 18:26 & Romans 16:4);
- iii. **Paul's Helpers/Supporters:** They assisted Paul in the propagation of the Gospel (Rom. 16:3,4)

If all of us work for God as this couple did, we will satisfy the purpose for which He has called us.

Dorcas saw where she could ease their hardship and took the initiative.

This took place at a time when the believers in Jerusalem shared what they had to meet the needs of others (Acts 2:44&45, 4:34&35).

As Joppa, was some 40 miles from Jerusalem, the believers there might not have been able to benefit from the great sharing taking place in that city. Dorcas therefore made herself available and was very instrumental in ministering to the poor of Joppa. Her work might not have been done with the knowledge of the leaders in Jerusalem, but it certainly came to the attention of Peter upon her passing.

How great a contrast it is between the case of Ananias and Sapphira who died in Peter's presence; for their faked generosity, and the case of Dorcas who was brought back to life by Peter as a reward for her true generosity.

We are encouraged to be like Dorcas, giving in whatever way we can, to help the less fortunate among us. Whereas we may not be so blessed to be brought back to life on this side, we can surely look forward to the reward of eternal life in the earth made new.

ACTIVITIES

Review and be guided by the following scriptures as they relate to this lesson:

1. James 2:15&16
2. Matthew 25:31-46

LESSON 3

CALEB & JOSHUA - POSITIVE REPORTERS

PURPOSES OF STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. *know and understand the blessings and victories which can be gained by adhering to positive reports*
- ii. *see the devastating effects of negative reports*

SCRIPTURES: Numbers 13:1-3 & 16-33 & 14:5-9

KEY VERSES: Numbers 13:30 & 14:9

INTRODUCTION

To be positive is to be confident in opinion or assertion; a person who is fully assured, absolute, and optimistic. A reporter is an individual who gives as a statement, a formal account of an investigation. Positive reporters then, would be persons who give information that would motivate, inspire, and create hope, despite the problems or obstacles being faced or experienced.

THE LESSON

Caleb and Joshua were two of the twelve men sent by Moses as spies to explore the land of Canaan which was promised to the Israelites by their God – Jehovah - who had taken them from Egyptian slavery. They were to discover how fortified the cities were, observe the habits and strength of the people and ascertain whether the land was fruitful. They were to bring back fruits of the land as evidence. After forty days the spies returned and made their report. They all agreed that the place was fruitful and presented the fruits taken from the land. Ten of the spies though, delivered a report that was negative. They reported that the cities were walled/ fortified, and as the inhabitants were giants, the Israelites would not have been capable of taking the land (Numbers

13: 27- 29). This report was so damaging that some of the Israelites lost hope in their God and wanted to return to Egypt, saying it was better to be slaves in Egypt and die there, than to suffer and die in the wilderness (Numbers 14: 2-4). Because of this report they wandered in the wilderness for forty (40) years where all those who were twenty years and older died, except Caleb and Joshua (Numbers 14: 22-23 & 29-30). Negative reports can prove very devastating as they demotivate and destroy hope, and in this instance caused loss of faith in God's protective ability.

Two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua gave a positive report. They reported that the cities were fortified and there were giants in the land, but they were well able to conquer it (Numbers 13:30 & 14:7-9). Caleb and Joshua saw possibilities instead of problems, God instead of giants, and victory instead of defeat. They were men of hope and faith. They were confident, courageous, and optimistic because they knew that their God who had promised was faithful. "Faith looks at difficulties through God, but unbelief looks through difficulties at God" (Anonymous).

Persons called by God must always remember that this God is God in the good times and in the bad times. He is God of the mountains as also the valleys. Read 1Kings 20:23 and 28. Believers should at all times have and maintain a positive attitude as this fosters hope and confidence, thus leading to positive actions. Eternal life is promised to all those who remain faithful through disappointments, discouragements, difficulties, and buffetings of Satan. God has given enough positive reports through Prophets, Gospel writers, the Epistles, and even through His "true Ministers" in this present time.

Let the Children of God always see the container as "half full" and not "half empty" and always have as their motto, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Philippians 4:13).

Let us be positive in all aspects of our lives, always making positive reports and following them.

LESSON 16

DORCAS - THE GENEROUS

SCRIPTURE: Acts 9:36-41 | **KEY VERSE:** Acts 20:35

INTRODUCTION

Most persons can readily identify someone who is in dire need. This means that there will always be a call for generosity on the part of those who have and are able to share. Regrettably, many acts of generosity do not address crucial needs and bypass the most needy.

THE LESSON

The scripture passage for this lesson tells of Dorcas (a disciple from Joppa) who was exemplary in her generosity – being described as "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did" (Acts 9:36). The outpouring of grief at her death was an indication of the impact she had on those who were really in deprivation.

The following are some points about Dorcas' generosity which are worth noting:

1. **Her deeds were tangible.** The widows were able to show the coats and garments she had made. She not only wished for persons to be clothed and warm but used her time and the resources at her disposal to ensure same.
2. **Her gifts were useful.** The garments generally would preserve human dignity by covering the nakedness of the wearer, while the coats would keep persons warm in the winter months. These items were practical and met basic human needs.
3. **Her generosity benefited those in need.** Widows were among those who had the greatest needs in those days.

are afraid. Jesus actually told His followers not to fear man (Luke 12: 4 -5) and in Revelation 2:10, the Spirit encouraged God's people not to fear the things which were to come upon / against them.

In this age we need more bold preachers like Stephen. He could have recanted or softened the tone but he never did; he maintained his boldness. He was not like preachers of this day who in order to please members or to gain the recognition of the wider society, refuse to speak the truth. At a time like this when the gospel message is not being preached in its fullness and people would rather hear soothing, smooth messages, Stephen would not be appreciated.

The Church in these days is called upon to stand like Stephen while using the words of Paul in 1Cor 2:4 and 2 Timothy 4:2 to help to strengthen our resolve.

LESSON 4

RUTH - EXAMPLE OF LOYALTY

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

For those who study to:

- i. *understand what is true loyalty*
- ii. *be motivated to show loyalty to Christ*

SCRIPTURE: Ruth 1:6-19 | **KEY VERSES:** Ruth 1:16 & 17

Loyalty may be defined as faithfulness to commitments/obligations or a faithful adherence to a sovereign, leader, government or cause (www.dictionary.com). From time immemorial, human beings have been known to show loyalty. People show loyalty to family, friends, political parties/government and to their employers among other affiliations. This loyalty however, is sometimes conditional – until, and if something goes awry.

The story of the life of Ruth, is well known, taught in schools and in churches as an example of true loyalty – she demonstrated true loyalty to her mother-in-law – Naomi. Ruth's mother-in-law, who had a bad experience in the land of Moab, was bidding her farewell as she was about to return to Bethlehem. Ruth, however, insisted on remaining with Naomi and pledged to go with her wherever she went.

The incidents surrounding the early life of Ruth could have made her bitter and resentful; but no amount of persuasion from Naomi would cause her to change her mind. She remained committed and vowed to reject the false gods to which she was accustomed, and to cling to Naomi's God (Ruth 1:16 {l.p}). The loyalty she displayed is second to none.

The story proved that Ruth was not only loyal to Naomi but (without a

shadow of a doubt) to God. She knew that she could face rejection by the Israelites yet she was willing to make Naomi's people her people. Secondly, even though she could have argued that God had dealt harshly with her in the death of her husband, her brother-in-law and father-in-law, she was willing to accept the God of her mother-in-law.

The excellent attitude demonstrated in the face of difficulties, is worth emulating. There is a marked difference between Ruth's attitude and that of some believers today. Many times, we see or hear of individuals who walk away from the faith /stop serving God, because of the difficulties they encounter.

However, let us live as those described in Matthew 13:23, and in addition remind ourselves that only those who endure to the end will be saved (Matthew 10:22).

ACTIVITY

Discuss the following in light of the Lesson: Gen. 39:9 {l.p}| Job 2:10 | Matt. 6:24 & Rev. 2:10.

LESSON 15

STEPHEN - THE BOLD & STEADFAST

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. *be aware that they need to be bold and steadfast if they are to inherit eternal life;*
- ii. *realize that God will give his people the spirit of boldness*

SCRIPTURES: Acts 6:8-15 & 7: 54-60 | **KEY VERSE:** 2 Timothy 1:7

THE LESSON

Stephen was one of the seven men chosen to see to the welfare of the Grecian widows. He was not afraid to defend his belief and so argued with those who opposed him. As there was nothing to rightly accuse him of (as he did nothing wrong), they rallied men to conspire against him. They accused him of bearing false witness and of blaspheming Moses and God. The men stirred up the people against Stephen and so the authorities arrested him and quickly organized a trial using the witnesses they had subpoenaed.

The accusation was stated and Stephen was given a chance to defend himself. He was unfazed and as he made his defence those looking on had to admit that his face took on the features of an angel. Stephen in addressing the magistrates and the crowd which had gathered, displayed that he was full of wisdom and very knowledgeable. He gave a lesson in Jewish history culminating with the crucifixion of Jesus; pointing out that they were responsible for His death. That point did not go down well with them and so they dragged him out of the city and stoned him (he is said to be the first Christian martyr).

Very often in the face of danger people refuse to do what is right as they

Although Joseph was not one of the regularly featured followers of Jesus, he clearly believed in Him in that, he acknowledged Him even when other disciples forsook Him.

As a disciple of Christ, one must tangibly show that he/she believes in Him by positively identifying with His sacrifice and His suffering.

LESSON 5

ABIGAIL - A TACTFUL PEACEMAKER

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to understand the merit of being a peacemaker.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 25:1-35 | **KEY VERSE:** Romans 14:19

INTRODUCTION

Abigail, a woman of beautiful character, was the wife of Nabal, a man of great possession. Her intelligence and tactfulness were demonstrated as she wittingly strategized to bring peace between her husband and David.

THE LESSON

David and his men encamped in Carmel where they offered protection to Nabal's shepherds who tended the flocks nearby. As it was told to David that Nabal was shearing sheep, he sent his men to garner food from him. This request was refused by Nabal who remarked, "who is David that I should give what I prepared for my shearers to him?"

The men returned to David and rehearsed to him what had happened. As a result, David and about four hundred men girded on their swords to go after Nabal. By this time, Abigail learned of the churlish attitude of her husband and his shepherds towards David's men; she knew she had to act promptly and decisively to appease the impending wrath of David and his men.

Abigail made haste and prepared food and sent her servants ahead while she followed. At this point, this strategy was not made known to her husband. She now used the opportunity to intreat David to be lenient towards her husband. Having heard the words from her, David accepted and thanked God for her advice and counsel which prevented him from avenging himself and shedding blood (verses 32 & 33). It is

of note that David's impending actions would have been so devastating that even Abigail herself would have been destroyed.

Believers today are admonished to inculcate in their daily living, tactfulness and wisdom, as they seek to bring an atmosphere of peace in the environs in which they operate.

ACTIVITIES

1. In light of the Lesson, explain Matthew 5:9
2. Cite other examples where individuals could be considered to be tactful peacemakers

LESSON 14

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA - THE BOLD DISCIPLE

SCRIPTURE: John 19:38-42 | **KEY VERSES:** Matthew 10:32-33

INTRODUCTION

Today's lesson focuses on a man called Joseph, who was from Arimathaea – a place described as a city of the Jews. Having originated from Arimathaea, he became known as Joseph of Arimathaea (Luke 23:51).

THE LESSON

Joseph was a rich man (Matt. 27:57) and a counsellor (Luke 23:50). His position placed him (as Bible scholars have said), within a group called the Sanhedrin—a respected body of men from scholarly orientation, who earned the authority to interpret and act as guardians of laws and Jewish traditions. Pertaining to morality and humanitarianism, he was referred to, in Luke 23:50 as a good and just man.

Despite the scant regard for Jesus by the dignitaries of his time, Joseph, being a dignitary himself, acknowledged Jesus and became His disciple (Matt. 27:57). One example of his discipleship was his disagreement with the schemers of Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:51). And although not recorded in Scripture, one imagines that as a disciple, he would have featured in other ways consistent with his commitment to Jesus.

Among other significant acts he performed were:

1. negotiating with Pilate for the body of Jesus (after the crucifixion), as in those days people who died in that manner were not buried in the usual way;
2. sharing in the preparation of the body for burial;
3. laying the body in His own new tomb

(See Matt. 27:57-60; Luke 23:30-53).

Could this level of humility be found among us as children of God?

Let us examine Mary's reaction through the following scenarios; when:

1. she was approached by the Angel, Mary asked one question and made no demands. She was willing to be a part of God's plan of redemption of mankind (Luke 1:34 & 38);
2. Jesus told her that he had to be about His Father's business (Luke 2:42– 52)

As believers, our walk with God would be far more worthy if we would, adhere to the following scripture passages:

- Micah 6:8
- Luke 14:7-11
- Colossians 3:12
- James 4: 6 -10
- 1 Peter 5:5-6

LESSON 6

URIAH - THE DUTIFUL

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. *understand what it is to be dutiful*
- ii. *learn from the examples of individuals in the Bible who were dutiful in God's service*

SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 11:1 & 6-13 | **KEY VERSE:** 2 Samuel 11:11

INTRODUCTION

One of the qualities necessary for Christians to practise in order to be good stewards is that of dedication to duty. Paul in Romans 12:11 instructs that we be fervent in business, and in Colossians 3:23, that we do our duties "as to the Lord and not unto men".

THE LESSON

Uriah is an excellent example of an individual who demonstrated commitment to his duties as is recorded in the lesson scripture. King David had called Uriah from the battle and enquired about the progress of the war. He then instructed him to go home. Uriah, however did not accede to this command as his priority was to be with the men in the battle (v 11). Instead, he camped out by the king's door with the King's servants, unwilling to go home and be at ease, while his fellow soldiers were in open fields fighting for their survival.

As an Officer in the army, Uriah's decision to remain with his fellow soldiers, demonstrated a high level of commitment to duty. The work of the Lord was priority for him; he would not feel justified that he was home when Israel were vigorously engaged in a battle.

Children of God today need to demonstrate this level of commitment by working assiduously in His vineyard.

ACTIVITIES

1. Identify and discuss any other Bible character who demonstrated commitment to duty.
2. List some ways in which Children of God can improve in their commitment to duty.

LESSON 13

MARY - THE HUMBLE

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. *understand that humility is something practical and not theoretical*
- ii. *learn that it is important to practise humility*

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:46-55 | **KEY VERSE:** Matt. 23:12

INTRODUCTION

“True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less” (C.S. Lewis)

Many persons at times, because of their station in life or because of their relationship to persons in authority, act in a haughty manner. Some spare no effort in reminding others with whom they interact, that they are related to individuals who wield certain levels of authority. This they do to drive fear in the other party or to highlight their importance. This should never be once named among the children of God.

THE LESSON

The Bible does not actually speak to Mary’s humility. However, the way she conducted herself after she was chosen to give birth to Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 1:31-32) and after she gave birth, reflects the humble spirit that she possessed. She could have adopted a different attitude and act in a haughty manner, perhaps like the King of Tyrus and/or King Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 28:11-19, emphasis on verse 17 & Dan. 4:28-32). She, however, remained humble, not making any demands; neither did she speak highly of herself based on the honour she was given to be the mother of Jesus.

insignificant in the eyes of some. She may even have felt embarrassed as her two coins made a jingling sound, as she may have tried to deposit them as quickly and quietly as she could into the receptacle.

Let us not for one moment think that God does not appreciate the offering of the rich as He does that of the poor. What He wants the poor to realize is that their seemingly small gifts are of great significance in His sight. Jesus said the widow had given more than the others. One may wonder how this could be. The answer is that the rich had a lot of money left after contributing, while the widow had nothing left to provide for her needs. Hers was a true sacrifice.

Another lesson to be learnt is that God is pleased with us when we give in faith. The widow was herself in need of monetary aid, but she was moved to give despite her needs. She believed that the God to whom she was making this sacrifice would be faithful to provide for her daily needs.

Like the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-16) who gave her last meal to the man of God, this widow gave the last of her possession towards the work of the temple. Though nothing else is said of her, based on our personal experience, we can deduce that her needs were satisfied by a faithful and loving God.

Let us be assured that whatever we give to God – whether tangible or intangible, great or small – He takes note and is faithful to bless us abundantly.

ACTIVITY

Name other sacrificial gifts (tangible/intangible) which may be made towards the work of God.

LESSON 7

SOLOMON - A GUIDE TO WISDOM

SCRIPTURE: 1Kings 3: 1 – 13; 4:29 – 34 | **KEY VERSE:** Proverbs 9:10

INTRODUCTION

Wisdom, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement; the quality of being wise. In today's key verse however, wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. It is clear therefore, that one can never be truly wise until that one has recognized that the Lord should be revered.

THE LESSON

Given a chance to request anything of the Lord, some persons would ask for wealth, long life or power, among other things. However, Solomon, the third King of Israel, when asked by God to choose, asked for understanding in order to be an effective leader of God's people. God was pleased with this choice, so he added wisdom (1 Kings 3:9-11).

It was this wisdom which led to His fame being spread abroad. Even the Queen of Sheba travelled from far to ascertain if Solomon was as wise as he was said to have been (1 Kings 10:1-13).

Among the greatest Bible stories, is the account of his judgment of the mothers and the babies (1 Kings 3:16-28). Solomon's wisdom also played an essential part in him erecting a temple to the honour and glory of God. He was able to commandeer the best craftsmen, artisans etcetera, to construct a temple like no other. Solomon through this wisdom, gifted of God, was able to write scores of instructions especially geared towards the young - a stage that is sometimes guided by folly. The book of Proverbs is replete with such instructions, that if followed would steer the young as well as others away from danger.

The believer should, like Solomon, seek after wisdom, which he defines as the principal thing - critical.

ACTIVITIES

1. List some of the wise teachings of Solomon.
2. Say how any of these have helped to steer your life.

LESSON 12

THE POOR WIDOW'S SACRIFICIAL GIFT

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to understand that:

- i. *everyone has the ability to contribute to god's work.*
- ii. *the contribution of everyone is significant*
- iii. *god takes note of your sacrificial offerings.*

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:41-44 | **KEY VERSE:** 2 Corinthians 9:7

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is replete with accounts of persons offering sacrifices or giving to God. These types of offerings and the reasons for making them are also many and varied. Today's lesson focuses on a seemingly brief occurrence during Jesus' sojourn on earth.

THE LESSON

The scripture passage relates how Jesus observed persons placing money into the treasury. First came those who were wealthy; the text says they 'cast in much'. Then came a poor widow who "threw in two mites, which make a farthing." Jesus, as if reading the minds of those around Him, immediately told the disciples that the widow had placed more into the treasury than all others had, since she had given all that she possessed while the others had given just a portion of their wealth.

The action of this un-named widow and the observation made by Jesus hold significant lessons for us His children. Firstly, we are made aware that God does not see as man sees. Imagine the looks of approval that were accorded the rich as they placed their large sums of money into the treasury. On the other hand, the widow may have appeared

of authority. Daniel's life of unwavering devotion to God is indeed a lesson for us. Daniel got his strength from God, hence the desire to please Him. God is always in control even when it seems otherwise; we have to learn to trust Him. Being consistent pays (Jer.29:11; Rom.8:28).

God is celebrated because of Daniel's steadfastness. We today, if we stand faithful during our trials, can also bring glory and honour to God (Heb.10:23). As we live we must be aware that the world is watching us, just as they were watching Daniel. Thus, we must be consistent in serving God.

Let us take the encouragement given in 1 Cor. 15:58 to be steadfast/consistent as our efforts will not be in vain. John 15:4 admonishes that we ought to abide in the Vine, so as to maintain an unbroken relationship with God. May God help us to remain in consistent fellowship with Him.

LESSON 8

MICAIAH – DIVINELY STANDING ALONE

SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 22:1- 40 | **KEY VERSE:** Galatians 1:10

INTRODUCTION

There is only one incident in the Bible in which the prophet Micaiah is clearly named to have been involved. Nevertheless, in this one incident he is shown to be a true prophet of the Lord who spoke as God commanded him, even in the face of opposition and imprisonment.

THE LESSON

Micaiah faced the first test to his resolve when the messenger who came to fetch him suggested that he should just go along with what the other prophets were saying and tell the king what he wanted to hear. No doubt the messenger thought he was being helpful to Micaiah by offering this advice. Most persons on hearing the counsel of someone who has firsthand knowledge of a matter would readily take their advice. Micaiah, though, was no soothsayer and adamantly declared that he would say only what the Lord directed.

Then, Micaiah came face to face with his long time enemy, Ahab, king of Israel. This was an evil king who had as his wife the very vicious Jezebel who had no compunction about killing in order to get her way. Ahab had defeated the nation of Syria a few years before and so had the might of the Israelite army ready to carry out his bidding. Ahab was definitely not a man to be crossed. Despite all the risks involved in upsetting this ruler of his country, Micaiah declared the vision God had given him – something that Ahab did not want to hear – that Israel would lose the battle and Ahab would be killed.

Ahab's four hundred false prophets did not take kindly to being called liars by Micaiah. Whereas it had been a war of words to that point, things became physical when one struck Micaiah in the face. It was

bad enough to have so many of his ‘peers’ disagreeing with him, but the attack on his person made things so much worse. In the midst of this Micaiah remained undaunted, boldly telling the false prophet who had hit him, that eventually he would learn that he, Micaiah, was right.

In a final act against Micaiah, the enraged Ahab ordered that he be imprisoned under particularly miserable circumstances. This loss of his freedom did not faze the man of God so his parting words to the king were, “If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me” (v 28).

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LESSON 11

DANIEL A CONSISTENT BELIEVER

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For participants to:

- i. *understand what it means to be consistent*
- ii. *understand the importance of being consistent*
- iii. *develop the attitude of being consistent*

SCRIPTURE: Daniel 6 | **KEY VERSE:** Daniel 6:10

INTRODUCTION

Consistent, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, means “marked by harmony, regularity or steady continuity: free from variation or contradiction”. There are times when because of negative emotions the child of God does not feel like praying, reading the Bible nor singing spiritual songs. The child of God, however, must remain positive and recognize these as ways of growing his/her faith. Although difficult at times, consistency is a characteristic that the child of God should strive towards achieving.

THE LESSON

We often see changes in persons which sometimes make it difficult to identify with them. God’s children should be consistent in their relationship with Him as depicted in the life of Daniel. Being a captive in Babylon, Daniel’s consistency in prayer was tested when the king decreed that petitions should be made to him only. Even though he was aware of the plot and could have prayed privately until the danger had passed, Daniel continued with his daily prayers in the usual manner (Dan.6:1-10). This resulted in King Darius’ acknowledgement of God being the Supreme Being, and the promotion of Daniel to a position

sounded, all should fall down and worship the golden image. Those who failed to do so would be thrown into a furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, although threatened, were not deterred by the proclamation, as they were determined not to compromise their commitment to God. They therefore, bravely stood out and refused to bow even while others bowed and worshipped the image. The commitment of these young men was further demonstrated, as they told the king they did not have to think twice, as they had already resolved to maintain their commitment to God.

The king, in his rage, ordered that they be thrown in the fire, now heated seven times hotter. With unswerving confidence in their God, they chose to accept His divine will. God showed up mightily on their behalf. The hair on their head was not singed, neither their coat changed nor did the smell of fire pass on them. Because of their commitment, God revealed Himself to the king and the name of the Lord was exalted.

Like the three Hebrew Boys, the true Child of God should make every effort to demonstrate a high level of commitment to God.

ACTIVITY

Use Bible references to identify characters who were committed to doing the will of God. State the challenges they faced and the outcome.

LESSON 9

ESTHER'S SELFLESSNESS

SCRIPTURE: Esther 4 & 5:1-8 | **KEY VERSE:** Esther 4:16

INTRODUCTION

Selflessness is when an individual is more concerned with the needs and wishes of others than with his own. It also means, “without regard for oneself or one’s own interest” (New Webster 20th Century Dictionary).

Hadassah/Esther, the niece of Mordecai, was one of those taken from Jerusalem to Babylon in captivity by King Nebuchadnezzar. She was young and beautiful.

When Queen Vashti the king’s wife refused to comply with his order to parade her beauty at his special feast, he was outraged and on the advice of his counsellors, dethroned her in order to send a strong message to all other wives throughout all the other provinces. The king was also advised to seek for a new queen to replace Vashti. Many fair maidens were brought, but Esther’s beauty and demeanor exceeded them all. Hence the king chose Esther to be the new queen.

THE LESSON

In her new position as queen, Esther proved herself worthy and demonstrated selflessness in the following ways. She was willing to:

1. take on the plight of her people although she was in the king’s house (Esther 4:15&16);
2. along with her maidens go down in sackcloth and ashes on behalf of her people (Esther 4: 16);
3. go in to the king on behalf of her people, a practice that was done only by leave of the King (Esther 4:11 & 5:1-2);
4. disregard her own safety by accusing Haman, a man of great power, before the king (Esther 7:6);

God saw Esther's great deed and allowed the king to accept her. This selfless act prevented the great massacre of the Jews. Esther had great faith in her God and in her people whom she was willing to defend even if it would cost her life.

Would we today, perform such a selfless act for the cause of God and our fellow men? May God give us the fortitude to do so.

ACTIVITY

State some situations that could arise to necessitate us acting selflessly.

LESSON 10

THE COMMITTED BOYS

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

- *To inspire confidence and strengthen one's resolve and commitment to God*

SCRIPTURE: Daniel 3 | **KEY VERSES:** Romans 12:1-2

INTRODUCTION

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon invaded Jerusalem, took the people of Judah into captivity and deported them to Babylon. Special ones, including Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, were chosen to be trained for service in Babylon. While in captivity, they were given Babylonish names -Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

THE LESSON

Faced with a myriad of challenges, they embraced the admonition in Deut 5:9 "thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them...". They made God the centre of their lives in doing the things that are pleasing to Him. When one loves God, that one will seek to obey Him at all times. These young men demonstrated their commitment to God by not partaking of the delicacies of the palace; instead they consumed pulse and water for ten days. They appeared fairer and fatter than those who ate the king's meat (Daniel 1:12-15). Divine favour was bestowed upon them in wisdom, knowledge and skill in learning. The king found them wiser than those who were famous in his court (Daniel 1:17-20). Although they were made rulers of the affairs of the province of Babylon, they served the king but stayed loyal in their conviction to God.

When the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar made and set up an image in the province of Dura, all, including dignitaries, were assembled at its dedication. The herald proclaimed that when the musical instruments