



**LESSONS FROM THE**

# **BOOK** *of* **LIFE**

**2022 JUNE – OCTOBER**



**A COMPASS TO GODLY LIVING**

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and  
worldly lusts, we should live soberly,  
righteously, and godly, in this present world”  
(Titus 2:12)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editors' Notes

LESSON # TOPIC

PAGE #

Lesson 1: Faith

Lesson 2: Love

Lesson 3: Joy

Lesson 4: Peace

Lesson 5: Goodness

Lesson 6: Giving

Lesson 7: Gentleness

Lesson 8: Meekness

Lesson 9: Temperance

Lesson 10: Longsuffering

Lesson 11: Practising Things that are Just

Lesson 12: Wholesome Thinking...Purity In Heart

Lesson 13: Attitude to Work

Lesson 14: Attitude to Business

Lesson 15: Attitude to Difficulties

Lesson 16: Attitude to Success

Lesson 17: Attitude to Worship

Lesson 18: Food

Lesson 19: Adornment/Dress

Lesson 20: Pagan Festival: Easter

Lesson 21: Pagan Festival: Christmas

## **EDITORS' NOTE**

Dear Study Participant,

The Bible Study Committee is pleased to present another series of lessons which have been previously studied but are being revisited because of their relevance to Believers at this time.

Some of the lessons have been adjusted to reinforce certain basic principles that are necessary for Godly living, as well as to further enhance the new Believer's knowledge of God's requirements and the principles of the Church.

Although directed to Believers, the lessons are also instructive for all who will study as they have been prepared with the hope that persons would be motivated towards establishing a relationship with God.

Happy Studying.

# LESSON 1

## FAITH

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

#### **For those who study to:**

- i. identify examples of faith in action
- ii. develop and maintain stronger faith in God

**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:1-40 | **Key Verse:** Hebrews 11: 6

### INTRODUCTION

Faith in Jesus Christ is the basis of the Christian Religion. In keeping with the key verse which states that without faith it is impossible to please God, the lesson seeks to highlight experiences of some of the heroes of faith as well as those of present-day Christians who demonstrated unflinching faith in God.

### THE LESSON

The Centurion's experience as recorded in Luke 7:2-10, denotes an unprecedented display of faith upon a request for Jesus to heal his dying servant. He saw himself unworthy of accommodating the Master and proceeded to suggest that it was sufficient for Jesus to have spoken the word and his servant would be healed. Jesus' reaction was that such faith had not been seen before in Israel. Subsequently, the servant was healed. Jesus taught that if one has faith, even as small as a mustard seed, mountains can be removed. Faith at work will lead one to act. It is through faith that we believe our sins are forgiven when we pray. It was faith at work when the three Hebrew boys after being threatened that they would be thrown into the fiery furnace, maintained that they would not bow before the king's image, declaring "...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace..." (Daniel 3:17). They believed their God could deliver them. **What Faith!**

The Child of God must endeavour to exhibit faith under all circumstances. However, in order to do so, he/she must seek to please God in everything. An individual therefore should never claim to be exercising faith in God when that individual seeks to acquire material possessions through gambling. *This is NOT God's will.*

Consider the former Overseer of the Seventh Day Church of God (Reformed), Pastor Hixroy Waugh, who in 1972 was told by God to vacate his dwelling at 20 East Road, for the purpose of extending the sanctuary. His faith in God prompted obedience, and so, along with his family, he vacated the premises. The Overseer and his team then carried through the extension of the building according to God's specification. This they did by faith not knowing from whence people would come to occupy the extended building. Miraculously though, there was an inflow of souls which resulted in the need for a further extension, as the building proved to be too small for the congregation.

To date, there have been several extensions to the building at 20 East Road (Headquarters) as well as the founding of twenty-eight (28) branches; twenty-five (25) island-wide, two (2) in the United States of America and one (1) in Great Britain. One can surely say that the work was built on faith. Other experiences of faith include the complete healing of brethren like the late Bro. Satchell and Sis. Ward, who were given over by doctors, but prayers of FAITH made the difference.

Even in these days the church continues to experience faith at work in additional ways, such as guidance, provision, deliverance and protection. Believers are encouraged to continue to build their faith in God, as He is the same today as He was yesterday and shall be tomorrow.

# LESSON 2

## LOVE

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

#### For participants to understand:

- i. what love is
- ii. that love is an integral component of the “Fruit of the Spirit”
- iii. how to express, practise and respond to love

**Scripture:**1 Corinthians 13 | **Key Verse:**1 Corinthians 13:13

### INTRODUCTION

Love, according to the Oxford Concise English Dictionary, is an intense feeling of deep affection or fondness for a person or thing. Because the English concept of love is limited in expressing the various aspects of how love is demonstrated, we turn to the Greek which has a more expansive way to express love; three of which are:

- i. **Agape** - selfless love originating from God for mankind. This love should be reciprocated - that is God loves you and you should love Him in return. It should also be extended to your fellowmen
- ii. **Philia** – affectionate love which occurs among friends and family members
- iii. **Eros** – romantic love.

This lesson will, however, focus on Agape and Philia.

### THE LESSON

God created and loved mankind from the beginning. Even when man sinned, He never stopped loving him and thus He gave His Son as a sacrifice to repair the relationship between Himself and man (John 3:16 & 1 John 4:19). It is necessary, therefore, to reciprocate this love by completely

surrendering our lives to Him in gratitude for this great sacrifice. The individual who has surrendered his life to Christ must possess the “Fruit of the Spirit” as described by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. This fruit contains nine virtues among which is Love.

In Romans 12:9, Paul told the saints that love should be without hypocrisy. It is at times difficult for some persons to express love, and so in some cases, they only pretend to love. It is important to love without showing preference as the Bible teaches that as children of God, we are going to be known by our love (John 13:35); thus, we should show love even to our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

1 John 3:16 encourages us to emulate the way Christ practised love, that is, through selfless giving. This might not literally mean to give one’s life for another but is better explained in verses 17 and 18. If we love, there must be the willingness to share what we have with others. A word of caution is necessary because not all those who give/share do so out of love (1 Corinthians 13:3). There are those who give for a show, others just because they want the praise, and still others give to manipulate the recipients. All giving should be characterized by love. This means we will not be partial in giving but will be motivated to give through love because a need exists.

When Christians begin to develop or demonstrate love, others will find it a pleasure to be in their company (1 John 4:18). Even when correction must be meted out, it should be done in love. One should therefore be mindful of how, where and when correction is given. When we carefully look at the description of love given in 1 Corinthians 13:4 -7, we get a clear understanding that what the world calls love, falls short by far of what is expected. The anger, the impatience, the killing, the maiming, and the stealing, to name a few, are sure results of the lack of love which exists in our world today.

What the world needs most is love as taught by Christ.

### **ACTIVITY**

List some benefits that can be derived when we love according to God’s expectations.



# LESSON 3

## JOY

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

- i. to identify the source of the Believer's joy
- ii. for Believers to recognize the importance of maintaining their joy

**Scripture:** John 15: 8-11 | **Key Verse:** Psalm 16:11

### INTRODUCTION

The Believer in Christ has much with which to be joyful. Apart from earthly things which may provide some measure of enjoyment, usually temporary, the Child of God has a deep-seated and permanent source of joy which results from his/her relationship with God. When the Believer is abiding in Christ, this joy remains even in time of tribulation.

### THE LESSON

Salvation is the fundamental reason for the Believer's joy (Isaiah 12:3). The knowledge that one has been redeemed through the shed blood of Jesus gives a sense of elation that is incomparable to any other type of pleasure that man can experience. Joy is an essential part of the Christian's life (Romans 14:17).

The Child of God should not allow any external influences to deprive him/her of this joy. When the Believer is in full fellowship with the Lord, the scriptures tell us that hardships such as famine, persecution and fiery trials do not affect his/her joy (Hab. 3:17-18, Acts 5:41, 1 Peter 4:12-13). When the Believer loses this joy, it is usually as a result of sin. David realised that his joy in the Lord was gone after he had sinned. In his prayer for remission of sin recorded in Psalm 51, David requested that God restore that joy to him (Psalm 51:12).

Joy is among the virtues which compose the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Paul encourages Believers to walk in the spirit (Galatians 5:16).

If this is practised, then Believers will maintain their joy in the Lord.

### **ACTIVITIES**

1. Explore ways in which the Believer can foster joy.
2. Discuss ways in which a Believer may lose his/her joy and what may be the consequences

# LESSON 4

## PEACE

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

- i. for believers to know what true peace is
- ii. to encourage believers to demonstrate and maintain peace in their everyday lives.

**Scripture:** Genesis 13:5-9 | **Key Verse:** Philippians 4:7

### INTRODUCTION

The Little Oxford English Dictionary defines peace as freedom from disturbance, noise or anxiety. Peace is the absence of strife, internal and/or external. It comes when one has a sense of security. The Believer experiences this component of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) when he/she relies on God implicitly.

### THE LESSON

When some persons speak of peace it is often in the sense that there is no sign of physical or verbal strife, however, there may very well be conflict in the heart/mind. Jesus tells us that the peace that He gives is different from that which the world gives. Through Him, peace radiates from the heart/mind outwards. True peace is the legacy that Christ has given to all who come to Him (John 14:27).

The Believer must, firstly, be at peace with God. The belief that he/she is justified through Jesus Christ, gives this sense of peace (Romans 5:1). The Child of God is also called upon to make every effort to live peaceably with his/her fellowmen (Romans 12:18, 14:19).

This peace, which is beyond human understanding (Phil 4:7), enables the Believer to be calm even in the most trying situations. The Hymn “When Peace Like a River...” # 413 in the Redemption Songs, was written by a man who had experienced this inner peace. The following gives

an account of the events which led him to pen the words of the Hymn:

*After traumatic events in the life of Horatio G. Spafford (the death of his 4-year-old son, the great Chicago fire of 1871 which left him financially ruined and the negative impact on his business interests from the economic downturn in 1873), he decided to travel to England with his family. However, he sent his family ahead while he remained to complete some business matters with the hope of joining them later.*

*But alas! While attending to his business, he received the terrible news that the ship sank while crossing the Atlantic Ocean and that his 4 daughters died leaving his wife. After arriving in Wales, she sent him the message 'Saved alone...' While travelling to join his wife, and upon passing the place where his daughters died, he was inspired to write the Hymn..*

Such assurance of peace comes through the knowledge that God is in control of all things. The Believer is therefore able to face any ordeal by relying on the help of God (Psalm 119:165, Isaiah 26:3). In Psalm 34:14 we are urged to seek peace. The peace of God should permeate our minds (Colossians 3:15), and as a result engender thoughts, words, and actions that are peaceful.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss James 3:14-18
2. Examine ways in which we can preserve peace
3. Cite the benefits of being peaceful

# LESSON 5

## GOODNESS

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

#### For those who study to:

- i. identify instances of 'goodness';
- ii. sense the need of demonstrating goodness

**Scripture:** Luke 10:25-37 | **Key Verse:** Matthew 5:16

### INTRODUCTION

Goodness is often used to express the quality of being morally good or virtuous. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary (9<sup>th</sup> Edition) goodness is defined as kindness and generosity. As such, words like excellence, benevolence and humanity can be regarded as synonyms for Goodness. For this Lesson, however, Goodness will be viewed within the context of one's affinity /inclination to show kindness or benevolence – characteristics that should be demonstrated by the Child of God.

### THE LESSON

One of the most important characteristics of a successful Believer is that of being 'good' to his fellowmen. The Apostle Paul declares in Ephesians 5:9 that "...the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth".

Among the many instructions given to Timothy by Paul, was that he should charge those that were rich, to trust in God and do good (1 Timothy 6:17 & 18). He further instructed that they be rich in good works. This can be applied to all. Whether rich or poor, we must endeavour to be exemplary in all things including doing good deeds. When the Believer does this, he/she would be laying up in store, a good foundation against the time to come, and in the process laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:19).

Jesus encouraged His listeners to do good, even to those that hate them (Matthew 5:44). He declares plainly that when we do good to those who are less fortunate, we are doing the deeds to Him. Similarly, when we refuse to do good to them, we are refusing to do good to the Lord (Matthew 25: 34-46). Paul further instructed the Galatians to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

It is the tendency of some human beings to do good to only those who will return the favour. As Believers we should find it a pleasure to do good and not expecting a reward, just as the Samaritan demonstrated goodness to the man who was attacked and wounded by thieves.

### **ACTIVITY**

How can you as an individual assist those who are in need?

# LESSON 6

## GIVING

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. develop a positive attitude towards giving;
- ii. recognize the benefits to be derived from giving willingly

**SCRIPTURE:** 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 | **KEY VERSE:** Luke 6:38

### INTRODUCTION

Picture if you will, one of those large concrete tanks, much like the ones used in some rural areas as catchment tanks. It is fitted with a pipe from the main water supply that runs along the length of the tank from the base to the top to fill the large reservoir. The tank is filled, and the system prevents more water from going through the pipe unless the water level goes down. There is also a pipe that is fixed near to the base for the purpose of retrieving the water from the tank.

Picture also in your mind's eye, the state of this tank with water that is left undistributed for an extended period. Let me help you. The water has become stale and stagnant. Some green murky substance has grown on top of the water and along the inside of the tank. The water will soon have an unpleasant odour which could cause serious illness if consumed.

At this point, what is the purpose of this tank? And a more poignant question is, what is the value of the water that it holds? What a waste! Both are of absolutely no value in providing potable water in their current state. In order for the tank to serve its true purpose, it must, from time to time, give out what it contains so its supply can be replenished.

### THE LESSON

Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed

down, and shaken together, and running over...” (Luke 6:38). Somebody should have told this tank that it is in giving that it receives. The moral of the anecdote in the introduction is that, hoarding the blessings that the Lord gives, only creates stagnation, and limits the space that should be made available for future blessings.

Giving can be a painful experience for some people, as was the case with the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23), while for others, it is as natural as water flowing from a river. According to the Apostle Paul, in giving, one should not give with reluctance or under compulsion, for the Lord loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). When you give, do not boast about it by ensuring that everyone knows that you did a grand deed. Again, Jesus warns that we should not be like the hypocrites, who when they are doing a noble deed, sound a trumpet before them in the streets to call attention to themselves. Instead, we are admonished not to let our left hand know what the right hand is doing (Matt. 6:1-4).

The Lord pays attention to genuine sacrifices and rewards same accordingly. The offering made by the widow in Mark 12:41-44 is evidence that the Lord takes note of people who give sacrificially. Hers was not about how much one can give, but more about the attitude and motive with which the gift is given. When we do give, it should be that we give our best. Some people only give away those things that are of no value to them, or they reluctantly give the worst of what they have. This ought not to be so. In Matt 7:9-11, Jesus taught the importance of giving good gifts. This He further emphasised in verse 12, which is commonly referred to as the golden rule.

Giving just for the sake of receiving is definitely not recommended. This is similar to lending for the sake of reciprocity. This was the lesson Jesus taught His listeners in Luke 6:34 when He told them that they would be no better than sinners if they lend only to those from whom they expect to receive. The wise man, Solomon equated giving to the poor with lending to the Lord, and he gave the assurance that there will be a payback time (Prov. 19:17). Many persons who have given unselfishly, can testify that they have received great returns, far beyond their expectations.

Through divine inspiration, the prophet Malachi amplifies this fact as he



presented a challenge to those who would give their tithes to the Lord's service – "...prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal 3:10).

More often than not, when one thinks of giving, it is associated with tangible goods; as a result, one may say "I have nothing to give". It is important to note, however, that gifts may not necessarily be tangible or measureable by human standards. Time, for example, is an expensive commodity that very few people are willing to give away, however, time spent in service to the Lord has rich rewards that exceed any monetary returns.

Some ways in which we can give of our time in service to the Lord are:

- visiting and talking with shut-ins and others who are in need of help
- talking with and listening to persons who might need advice or counsel

One example of an individual who gave of herself in service to the Lord, is found in the story of Dorcas in Acts 9:36 – 41. Evidently, her kindness touched the lives of many, as at her passing the people sent for Peter to whom they expressed their sorrow and showed the many gifts of coats and garments that they received from her while she was alive.

Let us bear in mind that God gave the ultimate gift when He gave His only Son so that we who were destined to die might have life through Christ Jesus. Should we not therefore give of our best to Him?

## ACTIVITIES

1. Identify other examples in the Bible where persons gave willingly
2. Discuss Acts 20:35

# LESSON 7

## GENTLENESS

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

#### For study participants to:

- i. better understand what is meant by gentleness;
- ii. be motivated to be gentle in their daily lives.

**Scripture:** Genesis 45:1-15 | **Key Verse:** 2 Timothy 2:24

### INTRODUCTION

The Thorndike Barnhart World Book Dictionary (1993) defines gentleness as being mild, soothing, tender, calm and agreeable, not harsh nor violent. The fact is, we live in a harsh world and the tougher ones among us seem to get along in life. The crude reality is that, too often we see people neglecting the social graces; some people hardly say thanks, please, etc., anymore. In Galatians 5:22, Paul brought to the minds of the Believers that character building is an important aspect in the life of the Christian, as God expects His children not only to obey His laws but to make themselves socially acceptable in the world.

### THE LESSON

When we listen to Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:1 we can conclude that to use might and power aright, one has to be gentle. Jesus Christ, we all know, was powerful and mighty yet Paul described Him as being gentle. He was so gentle that when the disciples tried to turn away the children, He told them to allow them to come unto Him (Matthew 19:13-14).

The Apostle James informed us that the wisdom of this world is hostile but the wisdom from above, which is from the Holy Spirit, is gentle (James 3:17). It was little wonder then, that Paul taught that the servant of God must be gentle and ready to teach (2 Timothy 2:24). Read also Hebrews

5:1-2 & 1 Thessalonians 2:7. In 1 Peter 2:18, employees are admonished to be gentle to employers, even if they are crude and harsh. Look at 2 Peter 2:9-11, which tells us how angels are gentle in their conduct. Notice how gentle Jesus was to those who arrested, tried and crucified Him. As disciples of Christ, we will be tried and tested, but let us follow His examples and endeavour to be gentle at all times.

There is also much value in the admonition given by the wise man Solomon in Proverbs 15:1, that “A soft answer turneth away wrath...” It is very clear that God intends His people to be gentle even in their speech. We are further admonished in James 3:2 that Believers ought not to offend in words. How beautiful our speech would be if only it could be described as Solomon aptly puts it “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverbs 25:11).

At times Christians are tempted to get angry and to speak the hasty word but the good old-time saying “**count to ten before speaking**”, is still useful. Christians should also watch their actions in the pouting of the mouth, the “cutting” of the eye, etc, as these demonstrate a lack of gentleness. As Believers we should remember that we are the light/salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13 & 14).

**Let us not only pray for a world in which gentleness will be found but let us begin to practise gentleness.**

### ACTIVITY

Discuss how gentleness can enhance the Christian's life.

# LESSON 8

## MEEKNESS

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

#### For study participants to:

- i. understand / better understand the concept of meekness
- ii. recognize that someone who is meek can be assertive without losing the attribute.
- iii. realize that meekness yields great rewards and should therefore be pursued

**Scripture:** Matthew 21:1-11 | **Key Verse:** Psalm 149: 4

### INTRODUCTION

People often confuse meekness with weakness. Meekness as defined by the King James Study Bible, is “courtesy and consideration in one’s relations with others”. This trait is also closely linked to humility. Weakness, on the other hand could be considered as lacking in judgement and firmness of character.

This lesson seeks to enlighten Believers as to how they should demonstrate meekness in their Christian walk, as well as to highlight some Bible characters who displayed meekness, were not weaklings but were people who pioneered the cause of God without fear or favour.

### THE LESSON

According to Matthew 11: 29, Christ, the perfect example declares Himself as being meek. It goes without saying, therefore, that His followers should emulate such an attribute, and strive to be like Him. This also concurs with a writer’s emphasis in Redemption Song No.722, “Oh to be like Him... lowly in mind; More like to Jesus, day after day...” Although meekness (as a virtue), has its own rewards in this life (Psalm 147:6(a) & 149:4 (b)), the Psalmist highlights the greatest reward as that of helping to qualify

individuals for eternal life (Psalm 37:11). In addition, Jesus refers to the meek as being “BLESSED”.

Given its value, it is no surprise therefore, that in Paul’s writing he urges the believer to walk worthy of the Christian vocation with all lowliness and meekness...(Ephesians 4:1-2). R. Hope Robertson (1995) seems to have been echoing the words of Zephaniah in chapter 2:3 when he wrote that one would be wise to “seek the divine meekness of love before the judgement of the Lord falls upon the inhabitants of the earth”.

As examples of meekness the Bible highlights a number of persons who demonstrated this virtue in their lifetime. Consider for example, Moses who was regarded by God as the meekest man who ever lived upon the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3) and Isaac who willingly and humbly walked with his father Abraham to Mt Moriah, where he allowed himself to be bound and laid on the altar to become a potential sacrifice.

Given the point made earlier, that meekness does not imply weakness, there are biblical references to show that men of God may be identified with assertiveness when it is necessary, as in the experience of Peter who was told not to speak in Jesus’ Name, yet he defied and was found preaching in the temple and teaching from house to house (Acts 5:28 & 42). This is also true of Paul who replied very strongly to the high priest who had ordered that he be smitten (Acts 3: 2 & 3).

It is wise though, that we be guided by the wisdom/spirit of God as we work diligently in developing/maintaining this important virtue, and also realise that there will be many occurrences designed to test how well we demonstrate meekness.

When we are tested, it will certainly be a blessing, if we make the effort to try to be like Jesus who demonstrates the greatest example of being meek. Imagine the Saviour of the world being born in animal stable, had no house of His own, rode on donkey, allowed Himself to be disrespected by men, beaten by Roman soldiers, spat upon and crucified, yet did not retaliate!

Believers let us take the instructions given in 1 Peter 2:19-23 and strive to develop this attribute - MEEKNESS. Remember, the meek shall inherit the earth.

### **ACTIVITIES**

1. Identify persons from the Bible whom you consider to be meek. Give reasons for your answer.
2. Explain how meekness can be demonstrated in our lives.

# LESSON 9

## TEMPERANCE

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For participants to:

- i. understand/better understand what is meant by temperance
- ii. recognize the importance of being temperate

**Scripture:** 2 Peter 1:3-11 | **Key Verse:** 1 Cor. 9:25

### INTRODUCTION

It is often thought that temperance is related only to eating and drinking. It is to be noted, however, that in its broadest sense, temperance refers to the control of oneself in all things. The New Concise Compact Bible Dictionary, regards it as being synonymous with self-control. In this Lesson, we will examine more generally, how this virtue should impact Believers' lives.

### THE LESSON

In Matthew 7:15-20, we are told that people are known by the fruits they bear. Using the analogy of a fruit-bearing tree, Jesus expressed the notion that those who express falsehood and perform evil deeds are likened to a tree which bears evil fruits, while those who do good, represent the tree which bears good fruits. It follows therefore, that characteristics portrayed by good people will be the things that please God; in this case, temperance is being considered.

As is brought out in the scriptures, temperance is one of the characteristics that a Christian Believer is expected to display daily. Such has been emphasized by Paul and Peter as they spoke of God's requirements for godly living.

In satisfying one's needs, the Believer should be careful not to over-indulge in food, drink, clothing, work, among other things. Moderation must also be exercised in the display of emotions, such as anger, joy and even

grief. Note too that even as Believers delight in the fact that they enjoy freedom of worship, they should be careful to exercise such freedom with due consideration for neighbours(not blasting the radio because it is a gospel song) or fellow congregants (not praying so loudly as to disturb others) among other things.

During his interaction with Governor Felix, concerning God's righteousness, Paul informed him that temperance was a significantly important virtue in a Believer's life (Acts 24:25). Paul also, in addressing the Galatians, stressed that the fruit of the Spirit, including temperance, must be borne out in Believer's lives, as it is a requisite of good Christian living.

With Believers operating under the leading of God's Spirit, Paul further maintained that the practice of being temperate is not an option, since Believers ought not to be otherwise minded (Gal. 5:16, 22-25, with emphasis on verse 23).

In another setting, Paul pointed out that regardless of the category to which one belongs, whether it be that of bishop, elder or any other senior person, as may be the case, the Believer is expected to practise temperance (Titus 1:7,8; 2:2-5). Notice the terms: **sober and discreet** (in Titus 2:4-5) which also embody the idea of temperance which should be taught to the younger Believers. Peter, likewise, emphasized that the Child of God would naturally add good virtues, including temperance, to the list of commitments necessary to acquire God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:4-6).

In addition to the various scriptures which speak to the need for temperance, we are further advised through the Key Verse (1 Corinthians 9:25) to be like the athlete who exercises temperance as a self-control method to aid in securing victory.



# LESSON 10

## LONGSUFFERING

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

#### For study participants to:

- i. better understand the whole concept of longsuffering;
- ii. realize that this virtue is important in character building and demonstrate it in their everyday life;
- iii. become aware that tribulations/hardships help to develop longsuffering.

**Scripture:** Job 1 | **Key Verse:** Hebrews 10:36

### INTRODUCTION

Longsuffering is the ability to suffer long. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as the ability to bear problems and provocation. The words patience, perseverance and endurance can be regarded as synonyms when used in the context of longsuffering.

This lesson is not so much geared to point out Bible characters who were exceptionally patient, but to highlight longsuffering as a component of the fruit of the spirit which the Child of God must possess.

### THE LESSON

Longsuffering, is important to the children of God in their relationship with Him and with their fellowmen (Hebrews 12:1 & Matthew 18:21-22). The successful Child of God should always be an example at home, at work, at church and elsewhere. This success, therefore, is dependent on how well the fruit of the spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22 - 23 is demonstrated in his/her life.

Job, the Old Testament character, is remembered here for his patience and is commended in the New Testament (James 5:11). He endured hardships and even when encouraged by his wife to curse God and die (put an end

to his suffering), stood firm and left some solid words to guide us as we face the struggles of life (Job 2:9 -10).

There is hardly anybody who wants to wait. We all need the “quick-fix”. At times, we think that God is too slow, especially when we see the ‘armies of Pharaoh closing in’. Many Believers have turned their backs on God simply because they could not hold out/ endure any longer. Christ, they may have thought, should not allow them to suffer. It is regrettable that they had not taken seriously Psalm 27:14 which states “Wait I say on the Lord”.

Jesus also assured us that only those who endure to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:12-13). Paul chimed in when he likened the Christian’s ‘walk’ to that of a long-distance race, which they should be prepared to ‘run’ with patience (Hebrews 12:1). The difficulties of life should not be a barrier. Do you not remember singing “Press along saints, press along...”?

The words suffering, tribulations and hardships all suggest negatives – things we could do without. Is it little wonder then, that we become impatient when we see things not going the way we planned, when we get sick, when we feel pain and when we face tribulations? The question as to why God does not intervene is asked in one way or another. Many, sometimes, find their own way – not wanting to wait on God.

Paul in his remarks to the Hebrews stated that after they had suffered, they would receive the promise (Hebrews 10:36). Remember too, he said they had need of patience. This is still applicable for us today. In Luke 21:19, Jesus told His followers to take possession of themselves, to control their temper, their impatience, etc, and begin to please God. Let the Child of God in the face of life’s trying times, focus on the better land and sing, “I am determined to hold out to the end.”

It must be understood that the Bible teaches that tribulation is a natural part of the Christian pathway. Jesus told Paul that he would have to suffer for Him – Acts 9:16. Paul in turn told his listeners that they too would suffer (Acts 14:22). John in the Isle of Patmos wrote that those who overcame and were clothed in white really endured severe tribulations (Revelation 7:14).

How much suffering have you gone through? Leave all things in the hand of God. Let us bear the hard sayings, even the insults and the talk that Jesus is not coming again, and as we suffer, let us be comforted by the words of Peter that after we have suffered a while, God will make us perfect and strengthen us (1 Peter 5:10).

### ACTIVITIES

1. Does one's intolerance of unpunctuality render him/her as lacking in *longsuffering*? (Discuss)
2. Recall ways in which Job displayed patience/longsuffering.
3. Discuss 2 Timothy 2:12

# LESSON 11

## PRACTISING THE THINGS WHICH ARE JUST

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

For those who study to take pride in doing things that are just

**Scripture:** Romans 12:10-21 | **Key Verse:** Micah 6:8

### INTRODUCTION

To practise things that are just, according to the Oxford Concise English Dictionary, means to act or do things that are morally right or fair.

The cry for a just society is heard everywhere, although not everyone fully understands what is meant by being just. Of importance, therefore, is the need for persons to realise that to have a just society, people must adhere to the principles of God as outlined in the Bible.

### THE LESSON

The plan which God had for human beings was 'derailed' by Satan, and this brought about all kind of unjust behaviours. However, through Jesus, God has implemented a plan to rectify this by preparing a people who would follow His just ways and would one day be part of a new system where righteousness prevails.

It is in keeping with this expectation that Paul, in admonishing the church in Philippi, urged the members to think on the things which are just (Phil. 4:8). He further urged the members of the Church to have a mind-set which would make them different from the man of the world.

Being just should be a way of life for the Believer and should hopefully have a rippling effect on others, causing them to want to pattern correct behaviours. People would no longer cherish bad thoughts, defraud people in business nor be inclined to render evil for evil among other negative behaviours.

REMEMBER THAT JUST THOUGHTS ENGENDER JUST ACTIONS!

### ACTIVITIES

Consider the following scriptures in promoting just behaviours

1. Matt. 5: 11, 12 & 44; Romans 12:14 – treatment of enemies and persecutors
2. Romans 12:17-19 – revengeful behaviour condemned
3. Romans 12:21 – operating in the face of evil

# LESSON 12

## WHOLESOME THINKING...PURITY OF HEART

**KEY VERSE:** Titus 1:15

*“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”*

**Purity of heart means holiness!** There is a prescribed path that a believer must take in pursuit of purity of heart – a constant effort to embrace wholesome thoughts. As we seek to grow closer to God, and to maintain a close relationship with Him we must rely on Jesus every day to empower us to preserve this state.

Today’s lesson is geared towards guiding the Believers into understanding the harm that can befall them when they allow themselves to become involved in things that are untrue, dishonourable, and wrong. One popular way of expressing this harm is “garbage in, garbage out”. In other words, if on a regular basis, we put into our minds things that are evil and immoral, we will eventually begin to live out some of these influences.

The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 3:16-17 states that the body is the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells; and that if anyone destroys this temple, God will destroy him. The question may be asked therefore, how can we, who are sinful by nature, hope to be a temple fit for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? Philippians 4:8-9 is key in responding to this question “... *whatsoever things are pure...think on these things*”.

Matthew in chapter 15 verses 18-19, reminds, among other things, that the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean’. In support of this, the Apostle Paul warns against allowing anything to draw us away from God.

There is little wonder, therefore, that Christ in His sermon on the mount, pronounced a blessing on, and extended a promise to those who are pure in heart (Matt 5:8).

As Believers who strive to please God, it would serve us well to walk after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4-9); set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1-2), and steer away from thoughts that are untrue, dishonourable, impure, and of bad repute.

In our pursuit of holiness, let us consider the following passages:

1. Gen. 39:9b
2. 2 Tim. 2:22
3. Eph. 4:29

***Food for Thought:***

*“Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness is evidence that His spirit is moving upon our hearts.”*

***Anon.***

***(Bible Readings for the Home Vol 2)***

# LESSON 13

## ATTITUDE TO WORK

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. have a better understanding of the Bible's perspective of work attitude.
- ii. recognize the attitude displayed by some Bible characters towards their work
- iii. highlight some benefits that can be derived from work

**SCRIPTURE:** Proverbs 6:6 -11 | **KEY VERSE:** Colossians 3:23

### INTRODUCTION

Work is as old as creation. Based on the history of this earth as we know it, it had its genesis when God created the world. However, servile work began only after man sinned. For a definition of work, the Concise Oxford Dictionary (9<sup>th</sup> Edition) explains work as the application of mental or physical effort to a purpose.

### THE LESSON

*‘...God ended His work... He had rested from all His work...’*

What better way to teach us: leading by example. In the first chapter of Genesis, our Lord and Master went to work, creating this whole universe. He was well organized, and He put His plan into action, accomplishing His task of creating heaven and earth within six days (Genesis 2:1) This provides an example of the attitude we should possess in our approach to work.

The first employee on earth was Adam; he was given the task to dress and keep the Garden of Eden as well as to name all the animals (Genesis 2:15 & 19). It would be reasonable to assume that the right attitude was displayed since at that time sin had not entered in the heart of man.



Having the mind to perform a task will stimulate the appropriate feeling towards accomplishing it. The account given of the people in Nehemiah 4:6 showed that they had the zeal to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and although they were faced with opposition, they were determined to finish building the wall. Therefore, they developed strategies which would cause them to overcome their opposition, thereby finishing their task (Nehemiah 4:15-23).

Jesus likewise was focused on accomplishing His mission. In Luke 2:49 He reminded His loved ones that He had to be about His father's business. At the age of twelve He had the correct mindset regarding the work He was sent to perform.

It is important that whatever we do, we put our all in it; 'do it with thy might', to ensure that we maximize on the returns. We should also endeavour to avoid procrastinating since there will come a time when we are unable to work (Ecclesiastes 9:10). It is considered to be very important as 2 Thessalonians 3:10 instructs us that '...if any would not work, neither should he eat'. Likewise, the words in Proverbs 6:6-11 encourage us to be industrious and as such we should therefore develop the proper disposition to act on the task being carried out.

Developing the correct attitude towards work will result in positive outputs which will impact success. Some of the advantages of work are:

- a. helps to keep your mind active
- b. provides one with needed income
- c. helps to prevent boredom
- d. can provide physical exercise, and;
- e. has its own reward/satisfaction

Martin Luther King once said that if a man is called to be a street sweeper, "he should sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well".

Therefore, whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, and not for men.

# LESSON 14

## ATTITUDE TO BUSINESS

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

For participants to develop/maintain proper attitude towards business.

**Scripture:** Luke 19:12-26 | **Key Verse:** Romans 12:11

### INTRODUCTION

In our daily lives, we are aware of different levels of business activities. From the vendor plying his wares on the street to the multi-national corporations employing thousands of workers, business is taking place. There are also those in business who offer goods for sale while others provide services. In the simplest form, individuals meeting to discuss a matter can be considered as being involved in business.

Luke 19:13 suggests that believers should find meaningful and productive ways of occupying their time while they await the return of Christ. In doing so, there is a great chance that we will get involved in some kind of business activity. Whatever form of business we undertake, there are principles which must be followed if the venture is to meet God's approval.

### THE LESSON

The description of the merchant or businessman found in Hosea 12:7 seems to be the one commonly held by many persons. This, however, should never be true of any Believer involved in business. The Bible tells us that those involved in business should deal fairly and honestly (Lev.19:35&36). For example, if one were to be involved in a business venture, one should exercise care to see that matters are dealt with promptly and amicably. Such would include:

- i. Giving the correct weight/measurement** (Lev 19: 35-36)
  - Believers should be honest when dealing with customers/clients.

## **ii. Repaying what is borrowed (Psalm 37:21)**

- Believers should endeavour to honour agreements relating to loans and re-payment schedule(s)

## **iii. Submitting relevant government taxes and submit deductions taken from employee's salaries to the relevant authorities (Matt 22: 18-21)**

- there are many who try to evade taxes to increase their profits. Although there may be reasons to find fault with how taxes are spent by the government, they must still be paid. Christians should by no means participate in tax evasion.

## **iv. Prompt payment of salaries/wages (Lev 19:13)**

- The scripture instructs that significant effort should be made to make payments on time. If more businesses were following this directive, there would be less strife at the places of work.

While we occupy our time in some form of business, God must be given His rightful share of our resources. Tithes from business earnings must therefore be paid, as He has commanded (Mal 3:10; Matt. 23:23).

The cares of business should not so consume us that we are affected spiritually as was the case of the rich man recorded in Luke 12:16-20. Instead, we should set aside time for service to God. While carrying out our business activities, we should be preparing our souls to meet Him when He returns (Luke 21:34).

## **ACTIVITIES**

1. Discuss the attitude displayed by the characters referred to in Matthew 18:23-35.
2. Recall some other lessons learnt from today's study.

# LESSON 15

## ATTITUDE TO DIFFICULTIES

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. realize that difficulties in life are inevitable;
- ii. use this lesson as a medium by which they can evaluate their attitude towards difficulties;
- iii. realize that failure or success could be as a result of one's attitude towards difficulties.

**Scripture:** Job 1 | **Key Verse:** James 1:2

### INTRODUCTION

In the poem entitled 'IF', Rudyard Kipling stated that one should treat disaster just as one does triumph. The person who has succeeded will in turn possess the world, and even more, be looked upon as having attained maturity. Difficulties referred to in this Lesson, are seen as things which are negative, and which bring on distress, frustration, hardships and disappointments.

### THE LESSON

The evidence is almost everywhere that failure or success is to a great extent dependent on attitude. Consider the examples given below, which highlight various characters in the Bible who experienced difficulties and how they reacted.

- **Moses:** The saying, "If at first you do not succeed, try, try, try again", speaks of perseverance that aptly epitomizes Moses in his struggle with Pharaoh. Moses made many appearances (no fewer than ten times) before Pharaoh, requesting that he let the Israelites go. All, but one of the requests, were refused. This man of God stuck to the task even when the people whom he was trying to release from slavery, turned against him (Ex. 5:20-22, Ex. 14:11-12) and even

when he was threatened with death by the king himself (Ex.10:28).

- **The widow mentioned in 2 Kings 4:1-7:** This woman approached Elisha and told him of her predicament. She had no money, and the creditors were about to take her sons as slaves. All she possessed was a little oil, but with faith in God and following the instructions of the man of God she was able to pay all her creditors and make a livelihood from that oil that had miraculously increased.
- **Esther:** The book of Esther deals with the Jews facing annihilation. At the centre of the struggle, to save Israel, were Morcedai and Esther. The words of Esther showed courage in the time of crisis, "...if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16 &17).
- **Job:** He suffered the loss of his children and his wealth and was even afflicted with a serious health problem insomuch that his wife told him that it would be better to curse God and die. It is remarkable that this man still worshipped God, retained his integrity and was able to tell his wife that she was not speaking sensibly (Job 1:20; 2: 9-10)
- **Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:** These men were faced with certain death if they did not bow and worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. The young men were told that their fate would be the fiery furnace if they did not comply. They never relented one iota but told the king that their God was able to deliver and that even if He did not, they would not bow to and worship an idol (Dan. 3:15-18).
- **Jesus:** He too faced difficulties and problems. At times He was hungry, and without money (Mark 11:11 -12 & Matt. 17:27). He never always had things His way. Look at His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, "...not as I will but as Thou wilt..." (Matt 26:39). Note that Jesus made the same prayer three times (v. 44).
- **The great Apostle Paul:** He seemed to have had a serious ailment which he referred to as a thorn in the flesh. He said that he sought help from God on three occasions, but only to be told by God that his grace was sufficient. Paul then concluded, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12: 7:9).

## Conclusion

The lesson has not exhausted all the men/women of God who have successfully dealt with difficulties in whichever way they came upon them. There are many others and you at this time are thinking of some.

The important thing though, is, how did all these men/women succeed? As one reflects, it becomes apparent that it has to do somehow with their confidence and trust in God along with their willingness to allow Him to lead and direct. It also brings into sharp focus Solomon's statement, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6).

Those who overcame were willing to leave things to God. They never served Him an ultimatum. Even if they did not know the words of 1 Peter 5:6-7 they certainly practised what it said and left the 'worrying' to God. It is indeed a tall order but that is where Believers of today ought to reach if they are to make a success of this walk.

Job in the book bearing his name said in Chapter 14, that man who is born of a woman has a short time to live and that, such time is trouble-filled. No one will be without trouble or difficulties. The words of God further admonish that the children of God are not to think it strange but should rejoice when they meet upon difficulties (1 Pet. 4:12 & 13).

If Believers can realise that others have already faced and overcome the temptations/difficulties they now face, that should motivate them to endure and to leave things to God (1 Cor. 10:13). The key verse really suggests things which are extra-ordinary – count it all joy when you face difficulties. The Believer should therefore not go blaming, passing remarks, hiding away, or ceasing to assemble in the house of God. Instead, they should try to overcome difficulties as they develop and draw on Bible verses to console them in times of trouble.

In addition, the Child of God must pray through all situations, including the problematic ones. Remember Asaph the Psalmist. He realised that God would see him through his difficulties only when he had gone back to seeking God (Psalm 73).

## ACTIVITIES

1. State some difficulties Believers often experience and the correct attitude to be displayed when faced with these difficulties.
2. In light of the Lesson discuss the following:
  - a. “All things work together for good...” (Romans 8:28)
  - b. “In everything give thanks...” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

# **LESSON 16**

## **ATTITUDE TO SUCCESS**

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

*For participants to be aware of how they should treat with success*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As individuals grow and aspire to become good citizens, there is always the tendency to want to excel. In striving for this excellence, persons would pursue education or get involved in business ventures or other legitimate activities which result in success, even to the extent where they outdo their peers.

This lesson seeks to highlight the importance of the positive attitude one should exercise if success is achieved.

### **THE LESSON**

In this technological age, as individuals seek to use every available opportunity to improve their skills, there will be levels of success in various aspects of their lives. For example, one could excel as a soloist, a musician, or an athlete, receive national honours or achieve academic honours at a prestigious university.

It is the tendency of some individuals to boast in their successes rather than giving the glory to God. However, we should heed the warning given to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 6, to not forget God during times of success. Highlighted below, are some Bible characters who achieved some level of success, the attitude they displayed and what happened to them as a result of that attitude:



BIBLE CHARACTERS	COMMENTS
<b>Joseph</b> Genesis 39:2-4	God allowed Joseph to be successful in all his endeavours. He served God well and stood up for Him even in adverse circumstances.
<b>Nebuchadnezzar</b> Daniel 4:29-31	Nebuchadnezzar boasted in the glory of Babylon and attributed all the success to himself. God was displeased, and as Nebuchadnezzar spoke, the Lord told him that his kingdom would be taken from him, and it was fulfilled immediately.
<b>Herod</b> Acts 12:21-23	After giving a rousing speech, Herod was likened to a god by the people. Immediately, the angel of the Lord smote him, because he failed to give God the glory.
<b>Paul</b> Acts 22:3 & Phil. 3:7-8	Paul was educated in Jerusalem under the supervision of Gamaliel. In his letter to the Phillipians, he demonstrated how he regarded whatever success he had as nothing, compared to the excellency of Christ. He eventually regarded everything as 'dung' that he may win Christ.

It is of utmost importance that Believers, as well as others who are successful at any level recognize that success comes from God and use such to bring glory to God. Too often as Nebuchadnezzar did, individuals attribute their success or achievement to themselves and not to God. Others may, like Herod, when praise is given, silently accept and revel in the glory rather than giving it to God.

There have been times when persons who are diligently serving the Lord, deviate from the path once they achieve some level of academic success. In addition, there are those who have acquired assets such as motor cars or houses or even promotions at work but forget the Lord who assisted them in the process. On the other hand, there are many who have received similar blessings yet continue to serve the Lord as faithful as ever.

An important point to note is that in whatever area we enjoy success, our attitude towards such should not be to "lord it over" others who have not experienced similar achievements; but accept it with great humility and use it in the work of the Lord to benefit others.

## **ACTIVITIES**

Cite any other instance from the scriptures where individuals prospered and either gave or refused to give glory to God.

Discuss ways in which one can use his/her success to bring glory to God.

# LESSON 17

## ATTITUDE TO WORSHIP

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to:

- i. understand what is meant by worship
- ii. know that worship is an integral part of the believer's life
- iii. develop an awareness of the attitude one should have towards worship

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 100 | **KEY VERSES:** John 4:23 & 24

### INTRODUCTION

One broad definition for worship is “an extreme form of love and adoration directed towards someone or something”. Within the religious context, **worship** is defined as an act of devotion usually directed towards a deity. Many Christian Theologians have defined humanity as ‘homos adorans’ that is the ‘worshipping man’ and thus the worship of God is at the very core of what it means to be human.

There is an important aspect of worship that must be borne in mind. Deut 12:29-32 states that God's people should not copy the ways the heathen worship their gods and worship Him in like manner; instead, the instructions in John 4:24, should be heeded.

### THE LESSON

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God. Simply put, God expects that worship is to be given to Him only (Ex. 34:14). Since the Christian's life is supposed to be one of continuous worship, this lesson will concentrate on what can be called public worship. This is usually carried out by either a small or large gathering and involves Bible reading, prayers, singing among other activities. This type of worship may be extended to include formal ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and baptisms.

Whatever the format, however, public worship should form an integral part of a believer's life. In Hebrews 10:25, we are admonished that we should not fail to assemble ourselves together as this act is a means of strengthening each other.

In Psalm 100:4, we are encouraged to "enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise". This suggests that worship services should never be considered boring nor should the true worshipper experience boredom in worship. There should be no need to propel the true believer/worshipper to worship. Simply rehearsing, whether mentally or verbally, the goodness of the Lord should be enough to egg on the believer.

All therefore should come making a joyful noise, albeit conforming to some order as we are reminded in 1 Cor. 14:33 that God is not the author of confusion. In reverence to God therefore, it ought not to be that while a specific order is set, individuals are participating in activities to the contrary. For example, while someone is preaching others should not be singing, talking nor sleeping. Care should also be taken as to when one enters or exits the sanctuary during worship services.

A Believer's involvement in worship should not be dependent on who is playing the leading role. The Believer should be totally involved in the worship as he/she is offering same to God and not unto man. If a child is set to lead, due respect (as would be given to an adult in that same position), should be shown to that child.

So, Believers, as we approach worship, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22).

## **ACTIVITIES**

In light of:

- John 4:23-24, what does it mean to worship God in spirit and truth?
- Hebrews 10:25, what do you think of persons who frequently absent themselves from the services of the church; and those who stay away for long periods without contacting the Church.

# LESSON 18

## FOOD

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

- i. To establish the fact that God is particular about what His people eat/drink
- ii. To show that certain things were not intended for human consumption
- iii. For believers to be made stronger in their convictions about what they consume

**SCRIPTURE:** Leviticus 11:1-23 | **KEY VERSES:** Acts 10:14 & Proverbs 20:1

### INTRODUCTION

According to the Oxford Concise English Dictionary (9th Ed.), Food is defined as a nutritious substance especially solid in form, that can be taken into an animal or a plant to maintain life and growth. Another source expands this definition to include liquid as a form of food.

For the purpose of this Lesson, food will be taken to mean anything that is consumed by human beings to sustain growth and life.

### THE LESSON

God, as creator, has given guidelines as to what His people should or should not eat. The instructions to Adam and Eve included the eating of fruits, herbs and vegetables (Gen. 1:29 & Gen. 2:16). It would seem that this diet was followed, up to the time of 'Noah's Flood'. Animal meat seems to have been added after the flood, as the fruit trees and herbs were destroyed (Gen. 7:23). Prior to the flood, God had told Noah to gather clean and unclean animals (Genesis 7:2&3).

It is important to note that from the beginning God had made them clean and unclean. It is obvious then that when God told man what kind of animal flesh was to be eaten, He was referring to clean animals, as can be deduced from the fact that clean animals were taken into the ark by

groups of seven as against unclean by pairs. And even when He told them what kind should be eaten, He commanded them not to eat the blood (Gen. 9:3 &4). Man was further instructed, according to Leviticus 3:17, not to consume animal fat.

This principle of clean and unclean foods was carried over into the New Testament era, as is clear from the statement of Peter in Acts 10:14. It is very evident then, that Jesus and the disciples upheld the laws of clean and unclean meats/food. A broad outline of clean and unclean meats is given in Leviticus 11 which can be broken down as follows:

- Leviticus 11:1-8 (four-footed beasts/animals)
- Leviticus 11:9-12 (fish)
- Leviticus 11:13-23 (birds/fowls)

When Jesus stated that the things which defile a man are those which come out of the man, He was not speaking of clean or unclean food, instead, He was addressing the matter of eating with washed/clean hands or unwashed/dirty hands (Mark 7:2-3 & 15).

The main debate on drinks has to do mostly with non-alcoholic or alcoholic beverages. To a lesser extent there are debates as to whether drinks containing caffeine such as coffee and tea should be consumed by Christians. While the Bible may not be as explicit on drinks as it is on meats there are guidelines given as to how to choose drinks. One such is in Proverbs 20:1. In continuing, Solomon in Proverbs 23:21 & 31-32, warned of the dangers or negative effects of consuming alcoholic beverages. However, in the New Testament Paul said that a little wine could be taken as a remedy for some ailments (1 Timothy 5:23).

Nothing it would seem was said about caffeine, but research has shown where coffee was used in medication for cancer patients. Caffeine can also be used as a stimulant, so one should therefore be careful how it is consumed.

Whether food or drink, God's people are to think on how these can impact them and the effects they have on the body. A case in point is the Novel Corona Virus which was said by many scientists to have been

transmitted to human beings from an animal known as pangolin. The features of this animal do not correspond with those outlined in the Bible as being fit for human consumption. Care should also be exercised when taking medication and endeavour to read the ingredients as some may be made from unclean animals.

God's plan for mankind with respect to what he consumes is that man should eat wholesome foods. Some animals because of their functions (scavengers) are not fit for human consumption. They will only add to the health problems.

The following are some frequently misinterpreted scripture passages, for which the explanation is provided.

i. Acts 10:11-15

- It is often felt that these verses suggest that one can consume anything. On the contrary, however, the passage speaks to a vision that Peter had in which God revealed to him that all men are equal before Him; and therefore, he should not refer to other nationalities as being common nor unclean (Acts 10:28)

ii. 1 Timothy 4:3-5

- It is often felt that these verses suggest that everything can be consumed as long as one prays over it. However, the verse should not be viewed in isolation, but should be understood against the background that God had already outlined what should be consumed by mankind (as outlined in the Lesson); see also Job 14:4.

iii. 1 Cor 10:25-28

- These verses are often taken to mean that one should eat whatever is served without questioning. It should be noted, however, that this interpretation cannot be upheld since God had already instructed mankind concerning what is clean versus what is unclean.

## ACTIVITIES

- i. State the differences between:
  - a) clean and unclean beasts
  - b) clean and unclean birds
  - c) clean and unclean fish



# LESSON 19

## ADORNMENT/DRESS

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

For those who study to:

- i. understand what the Bible teaches about dressing
- ii. be aware of the manner in which Believers should adorn themselves
- iii. develop a sense of pride in the way they dress

**Scripture:** 1Timothy 2:9-10 | **Key Verse:** 1 Peter 2:9

### INTRODUCTION

If one thinks that the trend of dressing of today is decent, that one might just find this lesson very controversial. Whereas dressing is considered to be clothing, for the purpose of this study, consideration will be given to everything worn.

The debate about dress has often taken centre stage, as debaters bring to the fore, their beliefs which very often contain little or none of what the Bible teaches. However, this lesson gives the Biblical perspective of how Believers should attire themselves.

### THE LESSON

A guiding passage to this study is 1Corinthians 14:40 which states that all things must be done decently and orderly. In 1Timothy 2:9-10, God instructed that women should dress with shamefacedness and with modesty. Every type of dress therefore, that Christian women wear should bring out these two ideals. The wearing of make-up (eye shadow, nail polish, eyeliner, lipstick etc) has been an issue which has caused much debate, yet this custom should not be adopted by Christian women. The practice was associated with the Old Testament character - Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30). According to Jeremiah 4:30 and Ezekiel 23:40, the practise of using make-up was linked to prostitutes.

Likewise, Christian men are expected to be equally modest in terms of grooming. Hair should be at reasonable height/length. The man's hair should never be plaited nor twisted, there should be no shavings of geometric designs. The appearance should never be in similitude to men of other religions (rastafarians, muslims, etc.). Clothes should fit appropriately not too tight or loose fitting. Pants should be worn at waist, not revealing the undergarment. As it relates to jewelry, only a wedding band or wristwatch is allowed.

People will do almost anything to 'look good'. 1 Peter 3:3 & 4 cautions individuals against devoting all the time and effort to outward appearance when that is of lesser significance in the eyes of God. God promises in Psalm 149:4 that He will beautify the meek with salvation and that real beauty is on the inside -*THE HEART*.

The term "unisex" is often used now-a-days to refer to garments worn by both male and female. Think of this in terms of Deut. 22:5 which tells that men should wear garments proper to males, and women, garments proper to females. Fads and fashions change but what is male or female has not changed. How appropriate would it be for a Christian man to wear a dress?

God is even very specific as it relates to how men and women should appear before Him for worship. In 1 Corinthians 11: 4 & 5 women are told to cover their heads while men are instructed against doing so. It follows therefore that women are to wear head covering in church while the men should go without.

Despite the preceding argument for modesty, there is nowhere in the Bible where one was expected to be shabbily dressed, except where a special lesson was being taught or where people were involved in excessive mourning and lamenting for sins. Israel of old, at times clothed themselves in sackcloth and ashes. It is important to note, however, that God did not use this practice to suggest that believers should look drab generally, neither did He recommend it as a way of showing that one is a Believer or that one's sins were forgiven. In fact, He said in referring to the tattered garments that they sometimes wore, that they should rend their hearts and not their garments (Joel 2:13).

As observed in the preceding discussion, it may be concluded that, Believers, God's representatives in the world, should normally be clean and decently attired, though not according to the customs of the world.

### **ACTIVITY**

In light of the Lesson, what can we deduce from Genesis 35:1-4?

# LESSON 20

## PAGAN FESTIVAL – EASTER

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

- i. to educate participants on the origin of this pagan festival – Easter
- ii. to provide participants with Biblical proof that this celebration is not of God.

**Scriptures:** Matthew 26:1-22 & 28:1-6 | **Key Verse:** Rev.18:4

### INTRODUCTION

After asking, “And what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6: 14 b) Paul continued in verses 16 & 17, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

The foregoing statement is suggesting that as called of God, His people should be able to make the clear distinction between darkness and light and follow only what His words teach and demand.

Why do we believe and do the things we do? Christendom today, has been steeped in many traditions and customs of the world, some which are right, some which seem right and even some, which according to the Bible, are plain wrong.

The lesson being studied, will seek to point out the true meaning of Easter.

### THE LESSON

Every year, between February and April, professing and non-professing Christians alike reflect on the events leading up to the commemoration of Easter, which they regard as the time when Jesus was crucified and resurrected.

The true meaning of Easter, however, is of pagan origin. It is merely a slight change in the English spelling of the name of an Assyrian and Babylonian goddess Eostre. Early Christian churches adopted the pagan celebration of Easter, since it coincided with the Jewish Passover an Old Testament Feast which was celebrated at the time that Christ was crucified.

Easter, as we know it today is preceded by a period called Lent, which is observed over a 40-day period and is supposed to lead up to the crucifixion of Christ. It is said to be a time when persons engage themselves in a season of cleansing, to get ready for the Easter celebrations. It is important to note, however that this Lenten period was never celebrated by the Apostles but was adopted from pagan cultures in honour of their gods and goddesses - Tamuz being one such god. Interestingly too, is the fact that the period of Lent today, is still being observed by the Yezidis – devil – worshippers of Kurdistan, located in northern Iraq.

How then did Christians come to accept this Easter tradition? The word Easter is mentioned only once in the Bible (Acts 12:4). Some have used this to justify their belief that this practice is of God, under the pretext of celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Nothing can be further from the truth, however, since if one carefully considers the context in which the word Easter was used, it would be clearly seen that this period was a celebration of one of the seven festivals/feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23, which were observed by the Jewish people. It was in fact the Passover (Matt. 26:17, Mark 14:1, Luke 22:1, Acts 12:3).

Because Jesus' crucifixion around the time of the Passover, coincided with the period when the pagans celebrated Easter, it made it easier for this pagan festival to be adopted into Christianity and linked to Jesus Christ. The absurdity of this tradition is further complicated in the way it is being celebrated today; as many of the practices have nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Let us now follow the path, which according to the Bible – God's words, led to Jesus' Crucifixion:

- In Daniel 9:27 (b), even before the birth of Christ, it was prophesied that the sacrifice and oblation (killing of rams, turtledoves etc.) to remit sins would cease in the midst of the week, thus making way for

the remission of sins through another medium – which as we know, is the shedding of Jesus' blood.

- Then in John 2:19-21, Jesus referring to His body as a temple, told the Jews that after it was destroyed, He would rebuild it in three days.
- Also, in Matt 12:40, Jesus said that the period He would spend in the grave would be similar to the time Jonah spent in the whale's belly.

According to our calendar, the middle of a seven-day week is Wednesday. Jesus having been crucified on Wednesday, gave up the ghost at the ninth hour, and was buried shortly after (Matthew 27:45-46). When the Marys went to the sepulchre (sepulcher) in the end of the Sabbath (after 3 days and 3 nights), He was already risen (Matt. 28:1-6). This gives credence to the fact that He spent three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The following calculations verify the time Jesus spent in the grave and also when He was resurrected, according to His words:

**Wednesday night to Thursday** = *1 night and 1 day*

**Thursday night to Friday** = *1 night and 1 day*

**Friday night to Saturday (Sabbath)** = *1 night and 1 day*

**Total** = *3 nights and 3 days*

The teaching therefore that the crucifixion took place on what is commonly called 'Good Friday' and the resurrection occurred on what is referred to as 'Easter Sunday' is contradictory to the prophecy which states that Jesus would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. There is no way that one could calculate three days and three nights from Friday evening to Sunday morning. Hence, this custom is BASELESS!

## ACTIVITY

1. To which Sabbath does John 19:31 refer?
2. State how this Lesson has impacted your understanding of the topic

# LESSON 21

## PAGAN FESTIVAL – CHRISTMAS

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY:

For those who study to

- i. understand the origin of Christmas
- ii. know why people observe this holiday.
- iii. know what the Bible has to say about this custom.

**Scriptures:** Jeremiah 10:1-5 & Rev. 18:1-5 | **Key Verse:** Jeremiah 10:2

*‘Only ..... more shopping days till Christmas... But wait a minute, have you ever stopped to think why Christmas is celebrated? Does the Bible endorse this festival? By nature we tend to follow the crowd whether right or wrong as the sheep follow others even to the slaughter. Humans ought to check up where they are going, and who they follow.’*

### INTRODUCTION

For many persons in our world today, Christmas is the most important religious and commercial season of the year. But exactly what does Christmas and its various features have to do with the birth of Jesus? The word Christmas means “Mass of Christ”, or Christ-Mass”. It comes to Christians and non-Christians from paganism but was not among the earliest festivals of the true church, nor was it instituted by Christ or the Apostles. In fact the celebration of Christmas was introduced to the Christian church somewhere during the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD when there was an influx of paganism in the church.

The real origin of Christmas goes back to ancient Babylon. It was always believed that the son of Isis (Egyptian name for “Queen of Heaven”) was born December 25. Pagans celebrated this famous birthday over most of the known world for centuries before the birth of Christ (Examine Matthew 15:9).

## THE LESSON

Jesus was not born in the winter season! Winter is normally a cold rainy season not permitting people especially shepherds to stay in the open field, more so at nights. It was an ancient custom among shepherds of those days to keep their sheep in the fields and desserts about the time of the Passover and bring them home at commencement of the first rain, which would show the start of the winter season (Songs of Solomon 2:11, Ezra 10:9, 13) At the time of Jesus' birth "there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8).

Sheep were kept out in the open country during the summer and since these shepherds were still in the fields it is a presumptive argument that winter had not yet commenced which indicates that Jesus was not born in winter and therefore not on December 25.

The Apostles and early true Church never celebrated Christ's birthday at any time. There is no command or instruction in the Bible to indicate that we should celebrate it, neither is there any mention of a feast being kept or a banquet held in honour of our Lord's birthday. The Bible though, makes mention of celebration to commemorate the Lord's death, the New Testament Covenant, which some people call Lord's Supper, among other names. As observed, there is not even one request mentioned in the Bible to celebrate Jesus' birth.

The exact date of Jesus' birth is entirely unknown. If God had wished us to observe and celebrate Jesus' birthday, He would have revealed it. Just imagine how people shy away from observing the Sabbath which the Bible clearly states should be observed, and strain to celebrate Christmas (See again Matthew 15:9).

Many will argue that even though the exact date of Jesus' birth is unknown, we should select some date to celebrate His birthday. Even if this were to be so, how then should it be done? Certainly not the way it is done today. (John 4:24)



Consistent with the key verse, “... learn not the way of the heathen...” there are certain symbols associated with Christmas which are used year after year. Some of these and their origins are as follows:

<b>SYMBOLS</b>	<b>ORIGINS</b>
MISTLETOE	Among the ancient pagans this was used at festivals of the winter solstice and was considered sacred to the sun, because of its supposed miraculous healing power.
HOLLY BERRIES	These were berries considered sacred to the sun-god.
YULE LOG	The Yule Log, otherwise known as the “sun-log”, is one of the customs originated among pagan tribes in Germany. This is a piece of a tree trunk, which was set on fire in mid-winter, supposedly to entice the return of the sun (the rebirth of the sun). Pope Julius I linked it with the birth of Jesus and since then it has been used to commemorate same.
SANTA CLAUS	St Nicholas was the name of a bishop of Myra who was honoured by the Greeks on December 6. Later in history he was called Santa Claus and linked to Christmas.
CHRISTMAS TREE	<p>The origin of the Christmas tree is linked to Nimrod the son of Cush, son of Ham - hence Noah’s great grandson (Gen10:1, 6, 8-10). Nimrod was a great hunter who was supposedly opposed to God as was inferred from his involvement in the building of the Tower of Babel.</p> <p>It is believed that after his death, his mother – Semiramis (who was also his wife), said he was a god and claimed that a full-grown evergreen tree sprang up out of a dead tree stump signifying the rebirth of Nimrod.</p> <p>She further claimed that on each anniversary of Nimrod’s birth (December 25), he would visit the green tree and leave gifts there.</p>

Suppose someone you love has a birthday, would you buy lavish gifts for everyone else and ignore the person whose birthday you are celebrating? There are, however, many people over the world who spend exorbitant

sums purchasing gifts for friends, yet they spend little or none of their substance in honouring the one whose birthday they claim to be celebrating.

The scripture which speaks of the birth of Jesus Christ never indicated that gifts were given to the parents or exchanged among the wise men, but that Jesus only was given the gifts (Matt. 2:1-11). These were not given as birthday gifts but in conformity with the old Eastern tradition which was observed when visiting with kings and great personages. Another example was that of the Queen of Sheba (2 Chron. 9:1&9).

Christmas has become a commercial season. Colourful costumes, twinkling lights, decorated trees, the burning of yule log, hanging of mistletoe, holly berries and stockings, the exchanging of gifts, merry making and carolling are all part of the Christmas festival. Only a limited number of hours is spent by a few persons in giving to Jesus on 'His birthday'. The Saviour who came to us in a lowly manner certainly would not want His birthday to be celebrated in this way. Jesus will not accept that kind of worship, even though intended in His honour.

The 'Christmas spirit' is created each year, not to honour Christ, but to sell merchandise! Billions of dollars are spent in this merchandising spree every year, while the cause of Christ suffers! The Bible warns us regarding these pagan customs. ***Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins!*** (Rev. 18:4).





