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# MOSES RECALLS ISRAEL'S HISTORY

## LESSON 456

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them” (Deuteronomy 1:3).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 1:1-46.

**T**he book of Deuteronomy is the last of the first five

books of the Bible called PENTATEUCH. It was written by Moses the man of God (Deuteronomy 31:24-26). In this book, Moses recalled their experiences from the time they left Egypt till they encamped beside Jordan (chapters 1-11), the repetition of sundry<sup>1</sup> laws (chapters 12-26), the promises of God for the obedient, the punishment for the disobedient (chapters 27-30) and Moses' last prophetic blessings on all the tribes of Israel (chapters 31-34).

In our text, Moses spoke the word of God to all Israel (including boys and girls) and stressed the need for them to do “**according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them**” (verse 3). He further encouraged them to believe God's promises to give them the land He promised their fathers (verse 8). Hence, as God defeated Sihon the king of the Amorites and Og the king of Bashan, so would He do to the rest of their enemies. Moses said: “**The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes**” (Deuteronomy 1:30). Unfortunately, Moses recalled how unbelief caused the children of Israel to wander in the wilderness for forty years. What a lesson for us!

**INTRODUCTION TO THE LAST BOOK OF THE PENTATEUCH** (Deuteronomy 1:1-4; Exodus 19:7-9; Deuteronomy 4:9,11; 31:28-30; Nehemiah 8:1-12; Matthew 5:1,2; Acts 20:17-32; Colossians 1:28,29; Deuteronomy 28:1,2).

The opening verse in our text introduces us to the importance of the word of God. Moses, the prophet of God, had the responsibility of speaking or preaching the word of God to all the children of Israel. He did this effectively and efficiently as commanded by God. “**And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it**” (Deuteronomy 4:14). Today, God speaks through His Son Jesus Christ, the greatest Prophet. “**God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds**” (Hebrews 1:1,2). Also, as Moses spoke the word of God to the people, every

saved child of God has a duty to preach the gospel to the unsaved. **“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it”** (Psalms 68:11). To effectively perform this duty, every Christian youth needs to study and internalise the word of God.

**Question 1: *What should Christian youths do to effectively perform the duty of preaching the word of God?***

**“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”** (2 Timothy 2:15). To effectively discharge our duty of preaching the word, we must: (1) read and study the word regularly (Ezra 7:10); (2) retain the word of God into our hearts (Colossians 3:16); (3) believe and obey the word (Psalm 119:66); (4) meditate and apply the word to our situations and needs (Psalm 1:2); (5) desire to know more of God and His word (Luke 10:41,42); (6) ask purposeful questions when we do not understand difficult passages of the Bible (John 3:9-11); and (7) pray for God’s revelation of His word (Psalm 119:18,19).

**“And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them”** (Deuteronomy 1:3). It is the duty of every Christian minister to preach all the doctrines (teachings) of the Bible. The challenge from Paul, the apostle, to us is: **“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”** (Acts 20:27). From verse three of our text, the word of God is referred to as the **“commandment”**.

**Question 2: *What is the expectation of God from every Christian youth concerning His commandments?***

**“Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him”** (Deuteronomy 13:4). The expectation of God from every Christian youth is to walk in His ways, fear Him, keep and obey His word and serve Him in righteousness. **“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine”** (Exodus 19:5). There are numerous blessings for obeying the word of God. These include: (a) answers to prayers; (b) fulfilment of God’s promises (2 Samuel 7:25); (c) anointing for God’s service (Acts 5:32); (d) assurance of promotion and prosperity (Daniel 3:30; 6:28); (e) assurance of God’s protection (Daniel 6:22,23); (f) special preservation from evil (2 Timothy 4:17,18); (g) supply of heavenly provision (Philippians 4:19); (h) purposeful partnership; (i) wisdom and understanding (Daniel 1:17-20; 2 Timothy 2:7); and (j) at last, paradise with the Lord (John 14:1-3; Revelation 22:3,4). The example of the sons of Jonadab should motivate us to obey the words of our heavenly Father. God testified of them that they **“have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them”** (Jeremiah 35:16). Our prayer daily should be: **“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end”** (Psalm 119:33).

**INSTRUCTION TO MAKE LASTING PROGRESS** (Deuteronomy 1:5-18; 2:1-3; Joshua 13:1-8; 18:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Exodus 17:8-13; 18:13-26).

As the children of Israel encamped beside Jordan after wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the Lord, through Moses their leader, gave them various instructions and recalled their experiences in their dealing with God. **“On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying, The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount”** (Deuteronomy 1:5, 6). Judging by the programme of God, Israel had dwelt long at Horeb. He, therefore, challenged them to make progress to possess the land promised to them by God. He said: **“I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them”** (verse 8). God is loving and also faithful to His word. He thinks about our welfare and progress when we might not be doing so. **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end”** (Jeremiah 29:11). Later, when Joshua took over the leadership, he received the same challenge from the Lord (Joshua 13:1,2,7,8). This gave Joshua the courage and encouragement to do the same to the children of Israel at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1-3). The challenge to make progress was not limited to those in the Old Testament. Paul, the apostle, while on the evangelistic outreach at Corinth, received an encouragement from God to continue preaching because He had many souls to be saved. **“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city”** (Acts 18:9,10). Our God expects His people to make progress in every aspect of their lives, even in soulwinning.

**Question 3: *Mention specific areas God expects youths to make definite progress.***

**“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”** (Ephesians 1:3). Our progress should cover the following areas: (a) Spiritual – a sinner experiences a change of life through salvation, a saved youth becomes sanctified and Spirit-filled to win souls. (b) Academic - passing our examinations with good grades. (c) Social – improving our interpersonal relation with others. (d) Physical – maintaining good health by taking balanced diet and doing regular and moderate exercises. This is the pattern of life as seen in our Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 2:40,52).

In fulfilment to His promises, God increased the children of Israel **“as the stars of heaven for multitude”** (verse 10). Moses still prayed for more, saying: **“(The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)”** (verse 11). The same promise is given to us today. **“A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time”** (Isaiah 60:22). We should not despise the day of small beginning (Zechariah 4:10). However, as the fellowship is growing, the ministers must also grow. The

children of Israel had increased in number and Moses alone was not able to serve them. **“And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone: How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?”** (Deuteronomy 1:9,12). He needed the help of other ministers to support him. He, therefore, selected able men who were wise and had understanding to be rulers. Their duties and responsibilities were clearly stated (verses 13-17). Today, one man of God cannot preach the gospel to the whole world. We need all saved youths to join in rescuing the unsaved youths (Acts 5:20).

**Question 4: *What are the qualifications we must have before we can be involved in the work of the Lord?***

**“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens”** (Exodus 18:21). Christian service is a spiritual work. It is only those who possess spiritual qualifications that can be involved. To qualify, one must be saved, sanctified and Spirit-filled. It requires the knowledge of the scriptures, being prayerful and having the wisdom of God (Exodus 31:1-6; Acts 6:3,4). In addition, such a person must have a sustained vision, motivating spirit, modesty of approach, physical fitness, diligence and good ability to communicate (Acts 16:9; Nehemiah 2:20; Philippians 4:9; Exodus 18:21; 1 Corinthians 13:11).

As part of the instructions and command to workers that will be involved in the divine service, they were to judge righteously, having no respect of persons in judgement and pass the causes that were too hard for them to Moses (verse 17). The charge of God to His ministers is: **“... He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God”** (2 Samuel 23:3).

**INCALCULABLE LOSS OF DISOBEDIENT PEOPLE** (Deuteronomy 1:19-46; Numbers 13:1-33; 14:1-45; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12; Hebrews 3:12-19; 4:1,2).

The purpose and promise of God to the children of Israel was to give the promised land to them. To achieve this, He led them through the wilderness in accordance with His command (verse 19). Moses on his part said: **“Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged”** (Deuteronomy 1:22). However, instead of them to move and possess the land by faith, they requested from Moses to send men to spy the land. Twelve spies were sent to search out the land. They brought the fruits of the land and said **“It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us. Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God”** (verse 25). The report of the ten spies caused the whole congregation an incalculable<sup>1</sup> loss because of their disobedience, unbelief and murmuring. **“And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land**

**of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us”** (verse 27).

**Question 5: What was the punishment for rebelling against the commandment of God?**

**“And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swore to give unto your fathers”** (verses 34,35). The Lord, in His wrath, determined that the evil generation which refused to obey Him should not see the good land except their little ones which they thought should be preys (Numbers 14:26-38). Apart from this, they spent forty years in the wilderness instead of forty days to reach the land of promise (Numbers 14:34). They were also defeated in the battle between them and the Amorites (Deuteronomy 1:39-46; Numbers 14:39-45). God is able to fight for us when we are in the right relationship with Him. Due to sin in their midst, Moses’ encouragement did not produce good result. **“Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes”** (Deuteronomy 1:29,30).

**Question 6 (a): Mention two people of the twelve spies who entered the promised land. (b) Why did they enter?**

The only two spies that entered the promised land were Caleb and Joshua (verse 36,32; Numbers 32:12). These two men entered because: (1) they had faith in God and His word (Numbers 12:6-9). This is in confirmity with the word of God that says: **“...he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain”** (Isaiah 57:13). (2) They had determination and courage to overcome the temptation of joining other spies who brought evil report (Numbers 13:30-33; 14:10). They fully followed the Lord steadfastly to the end (Joshua 14:8,9). Today, our promised land is heaven (John 14:1-3). To enter, we must be free from outward and inward sin, have faith in the Lord and follow Him to the end without compromise (Luke 18:8).

**“Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in”** (verse 37). Moses himself was not allowed to enter because he spoke inadvertently<sup>1</sup> and smote the rock twice instead of speaking to it at the water of Meribah (Numbers 20:7-12). God asked him to encourage Joshua to lead Israel to inherit the land. **“But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it”** (verse 38).

Today, the challenge to get to heaven is great. Destruction is coming on this present world because of its evils. These should give us the challenge to prepare for heaven urgently and without any delay (Luke 17:26-30). Earthly things easily and quickly catch the attention and capture the hearts of those who are not serious with spiritual matters while eternal realities slip easily away from such people. Although we may suffer deprivations, troubles, trials, tests and persecutions here, they are nothing to be compared to the eternal sufferings, torments, pains and agony that await sinners and backsliders in hell. We must keep our eyes on **“a far more exceeding and eternal weight of**

**glory**” in heaven (2 Corinthians 4:17). As the children of Israel were journeying to their promised land, so also are we preparing for heaven. The only qualification that everyone must possess is: “**Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord**” (Hebrews 12:14).

### DAILY BIBLE READING

SUN	John	9:1-13	Eccl	1:1-8
MON	“	9:14-23	“	2:1-26
TUE	“	9:24-41	“	3:1-22
WED	“	10:1-8	“	4:1-16
THUR	“	10:9-21	“	5:1-20
FRI	“	10:22-30	“	6:1-12
SAT	“	10:31-42	“	7:1-29

# THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

## LESSON 457

MEMORY VERSE: “Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days” (**Deuteronomy 2:1**).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 2:1-37.

**I**n this study, we shall be considering the account of the Israelites’

journey through the wilderness, and the God’s instruction to them not to possess Seir and Ar because He has given them to the descendant of Esau and Lot respectively. Also, we shall look at the account of the battle with the king of Hebron.

**GOD’S CONCERN FOR ISRAEL’S PROGRESS** (Deuteronomy 2:1-4; Joshua 1:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:2, 3; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 3:15, 16; Ephesians 3:16-19; 4:13)

God dislikes stagnancy, so He commanded Moses to tell Israel to move ahead. **“Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward”** (Deuteronomy 2:3). Here, we learn one of the characteristics of God. The spiritual defect of man does not stop Him from executing His programmes. Though, those who sinned against Him must bear their judgments, He, however, continues with the faithful people. Disobedience to God’s command while Israelites journeyed towards the promised land always brought them setbacks. Had they learnt by experience how to simply obey God, they would have avoided all the problems and evils that befell them on their way.

**Question 2: State some of the similarities between some youths today and the children of Israel in our text.**

Similar to the children of Israel in our text are some youths who are rebellious against God’s commandments. They thought they own their lives and can spend it the way they want. Although many youths know there is judgment against sin but indulge in it. They engage themselves in evil act of fornication, smoking, lying, lesbianism, homosexuality, love of the world, cultism, slander, examination malpractices, deception, pride, backbiting and gossip, uncleanness, etc. They have been warned of the danger of hell fire but refused to change from their wicked ways. In this way, sins have brought setbacks into their lives! Some of these include: academic failures, sicknesses and incurable diseases. These youths are living daily a defeated life and are not making spiritual progress.

Today, Christians are in the wilderness of this world on their way to heaven. We must meet the condition of holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Any of the saved youths who err along the way still has hope. **“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the**

**propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world**" (1 John 2:1, 2). Instead of sopping in defeat, why not repent genuinely and begin again. The command of God for them is: **"ye have compassed this mountain long enough"** Move ahead, grow in your Christian faith and reach out for other spiritual experiences.

**Question 3: What are God's provisions for our growth?**

**"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word ,that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"** (1 Peter 2:2, 3). Israel for fear of the unknown compassed mount Seir many days until the Lord spoke to them. There is no need for you to fear the unknown as long as you have the promises of God covering every area of your life. Salvation is an entering point into the riches of God's abundant blessings. God expects such to move to perfection and be filled with the fullness of God's Spirit (Ephesians 3:17-19).

**GRACIOUS PRONOUNCEMENT CONCERNING ESAU AND LOT'S POSTERITY** (Deuteronomy 2:5-23; Genesis 25:24, 25; Genesis 11:27; Lamentation 3:22; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4)

As God commanded the children of Israel to move ahead in readiness to battle the inhabitants of the land, He cautioned them concerning Esau's descendants. They were told: **"Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession"** (Deuteronomy 2:5). Although the Israelites must pass through their land, God also secured their protection by putting their fear in the hearts of Esau's descendants (verse 4). In the same way, God knows all the places and people we must come across in our journeys to heaven. We are also secured in Christ (Colossians 3:3). No youth in Christ should dread the wicked. God also told them: **"Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession"** (Deuteronomy 2:9). They were to buy of their water with money and any other necessary things. By implication, though we, Christians, are separated from the sinners spiritually and morally, yet, we need to interact with them on the course of necessary daily dealings with carefulness.

**Question 4: Why were the Israelites not to destroy the descendants of Esau in Seir and the Moabites?**

God gave reasons for not allowing the Israelites to meddle with the brethren of Esau and Lot. (1) God said they were brethren – Esau was the twin brother of Jacob now named Israel (Genesis 25:24, 25) and Lot was the nephew of Abraham (Genesis 11:27). (2) God's faithfulness – He was resolved to be gracious to Lot due to his relationship with Abraham. In His grace and faithfulness, He asked them to spare these nations and not possess their lands. This is the same grace and faithfulness of God that sinners are enjoying today. **"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness"** (Lamentation 3:22). This gracious provision of God should lead a sinner to repentance and faith in Christ.

**Question 5: How should sinning youths regard the grace of God?**

Sinning youths should appreciate God for His grace and faithfulness to have them saved. **“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:3, 4). They should also be thankful to God for being alive and hasten to surrender their lives to God. They should repent and turn from their evil ways now. Delay is dangerous!

**GREAT PUNISHMENT ON AMORITES FOR OBSTRUCTING ISRAELITES’ PASSAGE** (Deuteronomy 2:24-37; Genesis 15:16; Daniel 5:27; Joshua 10:12-14; Psalms 135:10-12; Proverbs 11:21; Jeremiah 12:12, 13; Jeremiah 46:25; 3 Corinthians 5:11)

**“This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee”** (Deuteronomy 2:25). God set the pace for the children of Israel and assured them of victory over the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Their dread was on them and they were already trembling in anguish. With this assurance, Moses sent messengers to Sihon king of Heshbon for permission to pass through their land. He explained: **“I will go along by the highway, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet; (As the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me;) until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the LORD our God giveth us”** (Deuteronomy 2:27-29).

**Question 6: *What lesson can youths learn from Israel seeking permission to pass through Heshbon?***

Youths should learn: one, to seek permission for the use of any item belonging to someone else. Two, explain vividly or clearly how they want to use and when to return it. Three, ensure they keep to the promise made concerning it. Four, they should not be offended when their requests are denied.

Sihon, the king of Heshbon, rejected Israel’s peaceful request which was also a testimony to their wickedness and continuous disobedience to God (Genesis 15:16). Notwithstanding after being attacked, Israel fought against them at God’s command. They had no personal or national motive for doing so. **“And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain”** (Deuteronomy 2: 33, 34). Today, the devil is the major enemy of Christian youths. Like the Amorites, he has been doomed for destruction. Christian youths should not be afraid of him, because **“the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly”** (Roman 16:20).

**Question 7: *How should Christian youths react towards the enemies of the Cross?***

Believers’ ministry is different from that of the children of Israel. We are given the ministry of reconciliation – to save lives and not to destroy them (2 Corinthians 5:18). We should be committed to this ministry. The Israelites carefully executed divine judgment on the Amorites and ensured it was done accordingly.

**“Only unto the land of the children of Ammon thou camest not, nor unto any place of the river Jabbok, nor unto the cities in the mountains, nor unto whatsoever the LORD our God forbade us”** (Deuteronomy 2:37). Also in our ministry of soul winning, we must be wise. The girls should endeavour to preach to the girls while boys should preach to the boys. No one should, in the zeal of evangelism, endanger his own soul.

In conclusion, the study shows the beginning of God’s power and faithfulness to give the children of Israel the land of promise. **“And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people”** (verse 33). Today, the Lord will fight and defend us. He will lead us safely to heaven (Luke 12:32).

### **DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	John 11:1-17	Eccl 8:1-17
MON	“ 11:18-29	“ 9:1-18
TUE	“ 11:30-36	“ 10:1-20
WED	“ 11:37-44	“ 11:1-10
THUR	“ 11:45-57	“ 12:1-14
FRI	“ 12:1-11	Songs of Sol: 1-17
SAT	“ 12:12-22	“ 2:1-17

# MOSES RECOUNTS EXPERIENCES

## LESSON 458

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest” (Deuteronomy 3:21).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 3:1-29.

**O**ur text is a continuation of the words of Moses to the children of Israel beside Jordan. The time for him to finally depart the world was at hand and so the Lord commanded him to speak to the children of Israel, recalling the various and divers experiences they passed through. Moses actually started his speech in chapter one of Deuteronomy. **“And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them”** (Deuteronomy 1:3).

**Question 1:** *Why did God command Moses to recount to the children of Israel their past experiences?*

Human beings are prone to forgetfulness. The Lord wanted them to remember His: (1) power and preservation; (2) provisions and presence; (3) punishments on those that sinned; and (4) precepts and promises. Moreover, the Lord wanted this present generation of the children of Israel to remember what befell the past generation (Deuteronomy 32:44-47). In this chapter, Moses recalled Israel’s victory over Og king of Bashan and their possession of the **“... land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto Hermon”** (verse 8) as well as the charge given to Joshua concerning leading the children of Israel to the promised land. Moses also prayed to God to allow him enter the promised land which was denied him by God.

**CONFLICT WITH KING OF BASHAN** (Deuteronomy 3:1-17; Numbers 21:33-35; Deuteronomy 29:7-9; Ephesians 6:10-12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 2 Chronicles 20:1-30)

Moses reminded the children of Israel of the conflict or war initiated by Og the king of Bashan. **“Then we turned and went up the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei”** (verse 1). This world is a place of war and conflict. Satan and his agents initiate conflicts against the people of God. Whether we, Christians, are prepared or not, the battle line is drawn and set in array, especially, when we are enlisted in the army of the Lord.

The children of Israel had no choice but to go ahead in combat with Og the enemy. The Lord encouraged them to fight the enemy. **“And the LORD said unto me, Fear not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land,**

**into thy hand: and thou shall do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon King of the Amorites which dwelt at Heshbon”** (verse 2). God wanted His people to courageously face the enemy, by assuring them of victory.

**Question 2: What form does the battles for New Testament believers take?**

What was physical in the Old Testament dispensation is spiritually implied in the New Testament era. Today, we do not engage in physical conflict or battle with flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), neither do we employ physical weapons like swords, spears and shields in fighting (2 Corinthians 10:3,4). The believer's warfare is a spiritual one. Our conflict is against Satan and sin. We fight Satan whose goal is to beguile a believer and take his heart away from God as he did to Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3). We, Christians, fight and strive against sin that wants to regain entrance in our mortal bodies (Hebrews 12:4, Romans 6:12-14). We fight against evil and satanic agents that want to dispossess us of our redemptive rights: physical and eternal inheritances in Christ (Luke 13:11-13, 16).

**“So the LORD delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining, and we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, three score cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan”** (verse 3). It is worthy of note that the Lord granted Israel a comprehensive victory. They exterminated<sup>1</sup> all the inhabitants and took possession of all their cities. In like manner, the will and the plan of God is for all believers to have complete victory over Satan and sin. The Scripture says: **“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof”** (Romans 6:12).

Moses went further to remind the children of Israel how they conquered Sihon king of the Amorites whose land was shared among the two and half tribes of Israel (verses 12-17).

**COMMITMENT TO THE BATTLE OF FAITH** (Deuteronomy 3:18-20; Numbers 32:20-33; 1 Samuel 17:40-51; Acts 4:15-20)

Moses had given the children of Gad, Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and Og the king of Bashan. He, however, commanded them to commit themselves to fighting the Lord's battles along with their brethren. **“And I commanded you at that time saying, the LORD your God hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war.”** (verse 18). He had earlier challenged them in Numbers 32:6 sayings: **“Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here.”** The Lord expects that each true believer be committed to His course. Today, each member of the living Church should be committed to the Lord's course and programme. We are to assist our brethren in possessing their eternal inheritances.

**Question 3: How can Christian youths be committed to the Lord's battle?**

Christian youths can take part in the battle to rescue sinners from the kingdom of Satan through the following: (1) By prayer of intercession and preaching to sinning youths. (2) Assisting weak Christians through encouragement, exhortation, admonition, counseling, and intercession. (3) Helping to restore backsliders.

The children of Gad, Reuben and half tribe of Manasseh actually pledged their commitment to go to war along with their brethren after Moses commanded them. **“And they came near unto him and said, we will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place ... We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance”** (Numbers 32:16-18). The Lord is expecting the same commitment from believers today. Our commitment should be to the Lord, His Church and towards the salvation of the lost.

**THE COMMAND AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO JOSHUA** (Deuteronomy 3:21-29; Numbers 27:12 – 23, 20:10 – 13; Deuteronomy 1:37, 38; 32:48 – 52; Psalm 106: 32, 33)

**“And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you”** (verses 21, 22). Here, Moses reminded the people of Joshua’s appointment and commission. It was clear to all the people that Joshua was to succeed him.

**Question 4: *What good qualities can you see in Joshua that might have led to his choice as Moses’ successor?***

Joshua had been consistent in following Moses without distraction. He was with Moses in the mountain for forty days and forty nights. He responded promptly when Moses appointed him to lead Israel to war with Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16). He was one of the twelve spies among whom he and Caleb distinguished themselves. God saw the life of purity, persistence, power and passion in him. God is looking for the same qualities in those He wants to use today. He can use you in your school, community and the church if He sees the same qualities.

Moses encouraged Joshua not to fear. **“But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see”** (verse 28). He used past victories as testimony to encourage Joshua. Testimonies of what God did in the past play great role in encouraging believers and lifting up their faith. We should cultivate the habit of sharing testimonies of God’s acts.

Moses had actually pleaded with the Lord to allow him entrance into the land of promise. **“And I besought the LORD at that time, saying, O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?”** (verses 23,24).The Lord had to discipline Moses because he stroke the rock twice contrary to God’s instruction

to speak to the rock (Numbers 20:8). The rock typified Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4) and since the rock had been smitten before (Exodus 17:5-7), signifying Christ's suffering and death (Isaiah 53:4-7), it would be scripturally wrong to smite the rock the second time. Christ suffered and died only once (Hebrew 7:26,27).

At this point, God was not happy with him. **“But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter”** (verse 26). He was commanded by God to get to the top of Pisgah to view the land but he should not go over Jordan. Christian youths should be careful and cautious in their walk with the Lord. We can only be allowed to enter heaven on the basis of living a holy and righteous life to the end. **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Hebrew 12:14).

### DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

EVENING

SUN	John 12:23-33		Songs of Sol. 3:1-11
MON	“ 12:34-41	“	4:1-16
TUE	“ 12:42-50	“	5:1-16
WED	“ 13:1-20	“	6:1-13
THUR	“ 13:21-30	“	7:1-13
FRI	“ 13:31-38	“	8:1-14
SAT	“ 14:1-7	Isaiah	1:1-20

# EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE

## LESSON 459

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

TEXT: Deuteronomy 4:1-49.

**M**oses had been doing the recount of the experiences

of the children of Israel since they left Egypt up till this time in our text. He reminded them of God’s care, love and the results of their past disobedience. He had also told them of the impartial nature of God, even when he disobeyed, God did not spare him. On that ground, he exhorted the children of Israel to obey the Lord. “**Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you**” (Deuteronomy 4:1).

In this study, we are going to consider how Moses admonished the children of Israel to obey God, with the attendant blessings. We are also going to consider what would be the consequences of disobedience to God. He particularly stressed the warning against idolatry and gave God’s provision for safety for manslayer who might kill another person unawares (Deuteronomy 4:42).

**REWARDS FOR COMPLETE OBEDIENCE** (Deuteronomy 4:1-24; 28:1-14; 5:29; Exodus 19:5; Jeremiah 7:23; Proverbs 30:5,6; Revelation 22:8,9; Matthew 7:21)

The recounts of Moses gave a good understanding to the children of Israel about what disobedience could cause them. That is why Moses said: “**Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you**” (Deuteronomy 4:1). He told them that those who cleave to the Lord were alive till this day (verse 4).

**Question 1: Mention how we should obey God and state some benefits of obeying Him.**

Obedience is very crucial to living a fulfilled and happy life. When we obey the word of God, He will give us promotion, success, prosperity and victory over our enemies in life. He was very clear about what type of obedience God

required from them, in order to enjoy the blessings, complete obedience. All of God's words, without any choice, must be obeyed. **"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you"** (Deuteronomy 4:2). Any alteration to the word of God render it less than the word of God.

Furthermore, Moses was commanded to teach the people all the counsel of God so they might do it (verse 14). Preachers and teachers of the word of God do a lot of harm to their congregations when they do not teach the whole truth. Their congregations do not have the word to obey. They themselves and their congregations will be denied the opportunity of entering God's Kingdom. It is those who obey all of God's word that will enter the Kingdom of God. **"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 7:21). This is made clearer in the way God dealt with Moses. He did not fully obey God as he related with the Israelites at the water of Meribah. Hence, God said he should die and not enter the land of promise. That is why he warned the people to obey God and not drift into disobedience and idolatry.

**Question 2: *In what specific areas are we expected to demonstrate obedience?***

The specific areas God expects obedience from us are: one, obedience to our parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). God demands that we obey our parents in all godly ways. Two, obedience to the Church leaders (Hebrews 7:7). Our leaders are doing their best to serve us spiritually and they will give account of our souls to God. Our obedience will encourage them to do more. Three, God demands obedience to constituted authorities (Romans 13:1-7). Above all, we are to obey all our elderly people (1Peter 5:5). The consequence of disobedience is not pleasant. However, obedience to God's word attracts His blessings.

**RESTORATION FROM CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE** (Deuteronomy 4: 25-40; 28: 15, 16; Psalm 107: 17-20; John 3: 14-17; Isaiah 55: 6, 7)

Moses could see the backsliding tendency in the children of Israel and its consequences many years to come.

**Question 3: *What are the consequences of disobedience?***

He said: **"When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger"** (Deuteronomy 4:25). He told them that their disobedience would incur God's wrath upon them and that would lead to many calamities. In particular, he mentioned premature death, destruction, devastation, depopulation and bondage to strange gods. The scripture says: **"...if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt**

**thou be in the field**" (Deuteronomy 28:15, 16). A curse is a pronouncement of evil on an individual and it can bring unhappiness, disappointment, sicknesses, afflictions, plagues, defeat, failures, etc., to a man's life.

**Question 4: *What is the way out of disobedience and its consequences?***

However, Moses showed them the way out of their foreseen danger. **"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice"** (Deuteronomy 4:29, 30). He declared that the only remedy for disobedience and the consequent affliction was repentance. **"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"** (Isaiah 55:6,7). When the children of Israel displeased God and He sent fiery serpents to destroy them, the only remedy for them was to look on the brazen serpent which God told Moses to make for them so they could live. That, to us, is a symbol of repentance from sin in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the remedy for both present and eternal consequences of our sins. **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** (John 3:14-16).

**Question 5: *Is there any hope for a backslider?***

Furthermore, he reminded them of the fact that it was a privilege for them to be owned and loved by God. No nation had been taken by God as a personal inheritance. Hence, if they backslid at any time, they should quickly repent and return to Him. When we consider how much we enjoy from God, we cannot afford to be far away from Him. So, as Moses appealed to the children of Israel, saying: **"turn to the LORD thy God"**. God is appealing to all backsliders, through His ministers, to return to Him. **"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"** (Ezekiel 33:11).

**RESCUE FROM THE CRUEL AVENGER OF BLOOD** Deuteronomy 4: 41-49; Colossians 1: 13,14; Numbers 35: 6, 9-13; Hebrews 6:18-20; Ephesians 1:7)

The children of Israel had been instructed that they should give of their cities (six cities) as the cities of refuge for the rescue of the man who killed another person by accident (Numbers 35:6, 9-13). Now, Moses separated three cities on this side Jordan for the tribe of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. These were for their cities of refuge. He chose Bezer for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites and Golan in Bashan for the half tribe of Manasseh.

**Question 6: What provision has God made for our rescue from the coming judgement?**

God has made provision for our rescue, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we should not face the consequences of our past sins. This takes effect the moment we come to Christ through repentance, faith in Christ and consistent Christian living. **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”** (Ephesians 1:7). As long as we remain in Christ, we are saved and secured from vengeance that God would take against sinners. **“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people”** (Hebrews 10:30).

Finally, Moses began to summarise his instructions with the testimony of victory that the children of Israel had over Og king of Bashan. They possessed all his lands. **“From Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto mount Sion, which is Hermon, And all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah”** (Deuteronomy 4:48, 49).

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	John 14:8-21	Isaiah 1:21-31
MON	“ 14:22-31	“ 2:1-22
TUE	“ 15:1-11	“ 3:1-4:6
WED	“ 15:12-17	“ 5:1-30
THUR	“ 15:18-27	“ 6:1-13
FRI	“ 16:1-15	“ 7:1-25
SAT	“ 16:16-24	“ 8:1-22

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS RESTATED

## LESSON 460

MEMORY VERSE: “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

**TEXT: Deuteronomy 5: 1-33.**

The book of Deuteronomy contains instructions and

commandments by God through Moses to the children of Israel as they approached the promised land. In this chapter, Moses recalled the love of God for them in choosing them to be His inheritance. He restated the Ten Commandments and encouraged them to obey the word of God. In response to the pledged loyalty to God, he expressed to them how God wanted His people to obey Him. **“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”** (verse 29).

**MOSES RECOUNTS THE LOVE OF GOD** (Deuteronomy 5: 1–5; Exodus 3: 1; 17: 1–6; Deuteronomy 7: 6–9; Romans 5: 5–8; 39; 1 John 3: 16; 4: 9)

Moses, standing before the children of Israel as a prophet, teacher, leader and mentor, recounted the goodness and the love of God to them. He refreshed their minds with God’s unwavering and unfailing love which had made them to be selected as His people in spite of their seeming unworthiness. Moses reminded them that: **“The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day”** (Deuteronomy 5:3).

The journey of the children of Israel is characterised by different acts of God’s love and mercy. They had been in slavery and bondage in Egypt but when they cried to God for help, He sent Moses, their deliverer. Through their journey, God’s hand was upon them, delivering them from several dangers, wars and crisis which would have destroyed them. The mighty hand of God upon Israel was what made Balaam say: **“God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn... How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied”** (Numbers 23:8, 22).

**Question 1: What are some notable things that happened to the children of Israel at Horeb?**

As Moses reviewed the events, he also remembered Horeb. Horeb was where God met Moses by the burning bush and commissioned him to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. It was also the place where the Lord commanded Moses to strike the rock in the presence of the elders of Israel to give them water when the people complained of thirst.

However, they remained in Horeb after the miracles and the fellowship with God, reluctant to move on until the Lord said to them: “... **Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, ... Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them**” (Deuteronomy 1: 6 - 8). God then led them through to the borders of the promised land where they now stood.

“**The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire**” (verse 4). He recounted how the children of Israel received the ten commandments from mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16-24; 20:1-17). The children of Israel could not withstand the presence of the Lord but sent Moses to receive the laws on their behalf.

### **Question 2: *How does God manifest His love to men today?***

Today, God still manifests His love to all men, though man does not merit His love. God manifests His love by giving breath of life, provision, protection and preservation. God gives every man the opportunity to live and the choice to decide to have fellowship with Him. For the unsaved souls, God manifests His love through the death of Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary for their salvation. “**But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**” (Romans 5:8). For saved youths, God manifests His love by giving the saints supernatural provisions, protection, preservation, promotion, prosperity and promise of eternal bliss.

**MOSES RESTATES THE LAWS OF GOD** (Deuteronomy 5: 6–21; Exodus 20: 3–17; Joshua 1: 8; Psalm 119: 1–4; Romans 10: 17; Hebrews 10: 12)

Moses was led by the Spirit of God to restate the Ten Commandments with clarifications and explanations to the children of Israel. God directed Moses to restate those words to let the children of Israel know the importance of the commandments to them as they entered into their possession. Israel was not to forget God and His words. They were expected to hear, keep, write the word in their hearts and teach their children and strangers who came into their land.

The laws given by God was to moderate their relationships with God and man. While God was interested in the way His people should have fellowship with Him, He was also interested in how they should relate with one another. There were ten laws. The first four were related to the fellowship of Israelites with God while the last six relates to how they were expected to relate with their neighbours. The first four laws relates to polytheism<sup>1</sup>, idolatry, profanity and worship on the Sabbath day. The six other laws which relates to inter-personal relationships includes the law against parental dishonour, murder, adultery, stealing, false witness and covetousness.

### **Question 3: *How should youths treat the word of God today?***

The word of God is His law. Although we are not under the law but under grace, the ten commandments are still important and gives guidelines to how youths are expected to walk with God and fellow men. **“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law”** (Romans 3:31). A faithful and committed youth is the one whose **“...delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night”** (Psalms 1:2). The word of God refreshes, revives and restores. His word is powerful and changes every negative situation.

**MOSES RE-EMPHASISES LOYALTY TO GOD** (Deuteronomy 5: 22 – 33; Exodus 19:3-20; 1 Corinthians 15:58)

As Moses completed this phase of his speech, he reminded the children of Israel what was expected from them in terms of loyalty to God for His mercies. Moses reminded them how they had strayed and went against the commands and instructions of the Lord which led to great sorrow and calamity in the camp as they started dying. He recalled how they pleaded that Moses should be a mediator between them and God, so that they could live and not die by the unparallel glory. **“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever”** (Deuteronomy 5:29). God demanded from the children of Israel a heart that fears Him and upholds the instructions given, so that it would be well with them. Furthermore, God wanted them to teach their children to live for Him. Moses concluded this assignment by saying: **“Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess”** (Deuteronomy 5:33). Youths should be interested in the service of the Lord and do all they can to spend their time and resources for Him.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**  
MORNING                      EVENING

SUN	John 16:25-33	Isaiah 9:1-21
MON	“ 17:1-5	“ 10:1-19
TUE	“ 17:6-19	“ 10:20-34
WED	“ 17:20-26	“ 11:1-12:6
THUR	“ 18:1-11	“ 13:1-22
FRI	“ 18:12-23	“ 14:1-23
SAT	“ 18:24-40	“ 14:24-32

# THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

## LESSON 461

MEMORY VERSE: “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37).

TEXT: Acts 8:26-40.

**A**s the persecution of the early Church intensified, the disciples, who were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the gospel. Philip, the evangelist, did great exploits at Samaria and by the power of the Holy Spirit, he brought immeasurable **“joy in that city”** as mighty miracles were wrought through him. The apostles at Jerusalem acted promptly by sending Peter and John for a follow-up.

Today, we shall be examining how an angel spoke to Philip the evangelist to **“go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert”** (Acts 8:26), and meet an Ethiopian Eunuch and preach to him. He obeyed and used the very scriptures the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading to win him to Christ and afterwards enjoyed the supernatural transportation to Azotus where he continued his ministerial work.

**PHILIP’S SENSITIVITY TO THE SPIRIT’S LEADING** (Acts 8:26-3; 10:19-21; 11:11-15; Roman 18:14; Genesis 6:11-14; Mathew 1:20; Luke 19:1-10; Romans 10:13-15)

**“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert”** (Acts 8:26). Philip had been faithful and committed to the ministry of evangelism which he received from the Lord. We previously learnt how he solely<sup>1</sup> went to Samaria and preached the gospel of Christ converting many souls to Him. The Lord confirmed His word through marvellous signs and wonders.

### **Question 1: Who was this Philip?**

Philip was one of the **“seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom”** (Acts 6:3), appointed over the business of daily ministrations to the Grecians’ widows (Acts 6:1). He had been able through personal consecration and spiritual development, commit himself to the ministry of soul-winning. This is a challenge to Christian youths of today. They should endeavour to stir up the gift of God in them (2 Timothy 1:6). Like the servant that was given five talents and traded with them to gain five more (Mathew 25:16), in the same way Christian youths are expected by the Lord to grow in their spiritual life and ministry. It is

worth noting that Philip was the only disciple in the Bible called the evangelist (Acts 21:8). His love for the Saviour was clearly seen in his assiduous<sup>1</sup> commitment to preaching Jesus in a relentless<sup>2</sup> manner.

Philip like Christ was committed to doing the will of Him that sent him. One outstanding thing about Philip was his sensitivity to the Spirit of God and the unarguable manner in which he responded promptly. From the testimonies he had in Samaria, there should be no doubt that God led him there to preach and again **“the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither...”** (verse 29,30). Philip is not like some believing youths who have been ignoring the voice of the Holy Spirit whenever He asks them to preach to their fellow youths, whose responses have been; “I’ll do it later!” It is dangerous for the believing youth to disobey whenever the Spirit speaks to them.

**Question 2: *What is the danger of not being sensitive to the Spirit leading?***

**“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”** (Romans 8:14). Constantly disobeying the Holy Spirit will grieve Him and definitely cause Him to leave. It amounts to sin; which is very dangerous. It will affect the individual that God is leading us to preach to. If Philip had not obeyed the angel, who knows if that man would go through that way again in his life time. This should remind Christian youths of the urgency of the task of soul-winning. The sinners we see today might not have more days to live. This was the reason Christ said; **“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest”** (John 4:35). Now is the day of salvation, now is the accepted time! Therefore, preach while it is called today for the night comes when no one can work.

**Question 3: *What other area of life is a youth expected to respond to the Spirit leading?***

Obedience to the leading of the Spirit of God is not limited to evangelism. In the area of career, marriage, friendship, taking a job, daily decision making, etc. Christian youths should endeavour to obey God’s leading (Roman 8:14).

**THE PLACE OF SCRIPTURES IN SOUL-WINNING** (Acts 8:31- 40; 17:1 -4; 18:28; Romans 10:8-13; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2; Jeremiah 1:9, 10)

**“The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth”** (verses 32, 33). It was stated earlier that Philip was one of the men full of wisdom chosen to serve table. This was also displayed in the approach he used in preaching to the Ethiopian Eunuch. The Bible recorded that he **“began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus”** (Acts 8:35). He was a systematic preacher of God’s word. He knew the right interpretation of God’s word. He preached Jesus to him. He did not exalt himself. The exploits at Samaria was not mentioned but Jesus only. A songwriter said: **“Jesus only is our message”**. He emphasised Jesus as the Lamb of God that took away the sins of the world. In his message, he guided the Ethiopian Eunuch into making the right decision for Christ.

**Question 4: What should be the guiding principles whenever a saved youth is preaching to an unsaved youth?**

From the preaching of Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch, we can see that his message was illuminating; it gave a true light to the Ethiopian Eunuch and all the obscurity<sup>1</sup> and confusion was cleared. It was revealing. Christ, as the Saviour of the world, was his focus. Also, it was penetrating; even the very heart of the wealthy Ethiopian Eunuch was made contrite and his spirit broken. It was convicting; it led him to believe all that was written of Christ and without wasting time, he surrendered all Christ. His message was also conclusive - at the end, the Ethiopian Eunuch submitted himself to water baptism.

The contents of Philip's message revealed: (i) Christ's humiliation. He was humbled that we might be exalted from the slavery of sin into salvation and freedom of the children of God (Romans 5:11). (ii) Christ judgment - Christ was wrongly judged and condemned that we might be freely justified and reconciled to God (Romans 3:23, 24; 5:1, 10). Therefore, all believers are to use various situations as opportunities to reach the lost youths and bring them to the saving knowledge of Christ. Youths in need of academic assistance could be led to the Lord after rendering such assistance to them. Whenever a Christian youth is asked to explain a portion of the Bible, he can, with the same scripture, reveal to the audience the message of salvation. A youth reading the Bible, a track or Christian magazine, can be wisely approached and led to Christ. There are other situations when the hearts of people are generally opened and willing to listen to religious issues. Such situations are good opportunities to lead sinning youths to Christ.

**Question 5: Who is qualified to preach the gospel?**

From the encounter of Philip with the Ethiopian Eunuch, we can see that he that must preach the word of God must be born-again and acquainted with the word of God. In addition, he must be sanctified and Spirit-filled. He must also be responsive to the Spirit leading.

**THE POWER OF THE SUPERNATURAL FOR SOUL-WINNERS** (Acts 8:39, 40; 1 Kings 17:1-6; 18:7-12; Acts 8:4, 25; 15:35, 36; 1 Corinthians 9:16, 17; Romans 1:14-16; Daniel 12:3)

**“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing”** (Acts 8:39). Immediately Philip finished with the Ethiopian Eunuch, the Spirit of God supernaturally took him away. What a miracle! The servants of God who obey Him always enjoy God's mighty power, providence and presence. Elijah experienced supernatural provisions in his earthly ministry: ravens brought heavenly prepared bread and flesh both morning and evening to feed him (1 Kings 17:5, 6) and drank water from the brook when there was famine in Samaria. The angel of God also brought him cake twice when he was discouraged, after he was threatened by Jezebel. He afterwards received strength that sustained him for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:4-8).

**Question 6: Can you give another instance of supernatural provision to other Bible characters?**

Our Lord Jesus also received strengthening of the angel when agonising alone before His arrest (Luke 22:43). Paul also, when he was in a storm in the sea, an angel ministered to him assuring him of their safety (Acts 27:21-23). Today, if youths can be committed to the ministry of preaching, they will also have the presence, power, providence and protection of God. You can be assured of the supernatural power of God today when you obey the great commission. **“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen”** (Matthew 28:19,20).

### **DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Acts 4:32-37	Isaiah 37:1-21
MON	“ 5:1-11	“ 37:22-38
TUE	“ 5:12-16	“ 38:1-22
WED	“ 5:17-32	“ 39:1-8
THUR	“ 5:33-42	“ 40:1-31
FRI	“ 6:1-8	“ 41:1-29
SAT	“ 6:9-15	“ 42:1-25

# THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

## LESSON 462

MEMORY VERSE: “And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5).

TEXT: Acts 9:1-31.

**T**he conversion of Saul was a remarkable and unforgettable

encounter that stood out among the events in the early Church. His life and ministry marked him out as one of the greatest followers of Jesus Christ the world has ever known. He was used of God to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world. Himself said: **“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting”** (1 Timothy 1:16).

### **Question 1: Who was this Saul?**

**“I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day”** (Acts 22:3). Saul whose name was changed to Paul (Acts 13:9) was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia (Acts 21:39). He was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37,38; 22:25-28) and studied under Gamaliel who was a Pharisee and a Doctor of the Law (Acts 5:34). Saul was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6; Philippians 3:5) and persecutor of saints (Acts 22:4; Philippians 3:6; 1 Timothy 1:13). Later after conversion, he became a prayerful saint (Acts 9:11; Romans 1:9,10), a preacher of the Saviour (Acts 9:20; Colossians 1:28), a prisoner of the Saviour (Ephesians 4:1), persevering soldier (2 Timothy 2:3,4) and a pastor of the Saviour’s Church (Colossians 1:23). He was a disciplined, diligent, dedicated, devoted and dependable soldier of Christ. He wrote thirteen books out of twenty-seven books of the New Testament. In our study today, we shall see how the power of God’s grace changed his life.

**SAUL: THE PERSECUTOR OF THE CHURCH, FORGIVEN BY CHRIST** (Acts 9:1-9; 8:1-3; 22:3-11; 26:9-15; Galatians 1:13-16; Philippians 3:3-6; 1 Timothy 1:13-16).

**“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem”** (Acts 9:1,2). Saul was one of an arrogant persecutor of Christians. He is pictured as the sworn enemy of the Church, who persecuted the Church and wasted it beyond measure. **“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it”** (Galatians 1:13). He was present at the stoning of Stephen and consenting to his death (Acts

7:57-59; 8:1; 22:20). In our text, he breathes out threatening and in readiness to slaughter the disciples of the Lord. This he did with the support of the high priest.

**“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven”** (Acts 9:3). As Saul was journeying to Damascus, a great light from heaven shone round about him and a voice asked him a question that brought deep conviction and total submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Question 2: *In reality, whom did Saul persecute?***

**“And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”** (Acts 9:4). From our text, we see a strong relationship between Jesus and His Church. Twice did Jesus state that Saul was persecuting Him and not the disciples (Acts 9:4,5). Hence, any persecution to Christ’s disciples is seen as persecution directed to the Lord Jesus personally. However, a mighty change took place as the persecutor was ready to accept the Lord’s offer of His mercy and goodness.

**Question 3: *What should be the attitude when the Lord is calling a sinning youth?***

**“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”** (Acts 9:6). At the revelation and utterance of the voice, Saul made a total surrender of his life to the Lord. He said: **“Who art thou, Lord?”** **“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”** This showed the depth of his conviction and experience with the Lord. He called Jesus “Lord”, depicting Christ’s divine ownership and absolute control of his life. He became the property of Jesus. In his unforgettable encounter with the Lord, Paul surrendered to Christ and willingly submitted himself to the Lord’s hands, ready to do His bidding. When we genuinely repent of our sins and believe in Christ as our Lord and Saviour, there will be absolute commitment to Christ as the Lord of our lives. At salvation, we submit to the Lordship of Jesus and affirm our faith in His name, atonement, death and His will becomes our command. His words become the guiding principle of our lives, conduct and taste. This is truly the result of conversion.

**Question 4: *What do you understand by the word “conversion” in Christ?***

**“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”** (2 Corinthians 5:17). Conversion means the resigning of trust in self to the Saviour who died for your sins. It means the surrendering of self guidance or self management to the Saviour’s guidance and control. Conversion is a change of heart, thought, life, direction and destiny. The conversion of Saul was proved by a change of life and the fruits he possessed. He gave himself unreservedly to the Lord. Are you converted?

**“And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink”** (Acts 9:8,9). Humbled, purged and penitent, **“Saul arose from the earth”** temporarily blind. For three days, he was without sight, food and drink. This was the most crucial moment in his life. Yes, he had to be blind to the values he had lived for all his life no matter how materially profitable they were (Philippians 3:7,8). He was a

persecutor of the Church but pardoned by Christ. He needed to be purged of his cherished traditions as a Jew. His solitary moment and private personal fellowship with the Lord laid a solid foundations for his new life in Christ and ministry.

**SAUL: THE PRAYERFUL CONVERT, CHOSEN BY CHRIST** (Acts 9:10-19; 22:16-18; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:9,10; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; Haggai 2:23).

After the direct revelation through a light from heaven, fellowship with fellow men was necessary. Ananias was the disciple God used to establish the new convert of Christ. He was wholly available for the Lord to use him. **“And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord”** (verse 10). Also, Ananias must have been in close and deep relationship with the Lord because a man must be deeply spiritual before God will use him for the direction of another.

**“And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth”** (Acts 9:11). Ananias was apprehensive<sup>1</sup> because the fame of Saul had spread throughout the region. His persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem had scattered the disciples through Judea and Samaria except the apostles (Acts 8:1). Saul’s trip to Damascus was the first time to press the persecution to non-Jewish cities. From Ananias’ reply, he had received information concerning Saul’s authority from the high priest to bind and imprison the saints in Damascus. **“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name”** (verse 13,14). After the Lord’s explanation to Ananias, he believed and obeyed without any further argument.

While Ananias was coming to Saul, he (Saul) was fervently praying to God. What a challenge to all youths today. Jesus said: **“... men ought always to pray, and not to faint”** (Luke 18:1).

#### **Question 5: *What is the importance of prayer in the life a Christian?***

As air is essential to life, so is prayer to a Christian. A new convert should develop this habit from the time he receives Christ. Saul prayed, he got saved, sanctified and Spirit filled (Acts 9:17). Also, Christian youths must cultivate the habit of praying regularly (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should also pray for new converts to be steadfast in Christ.

**“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”** (Acts 9:15,16). Jesus affirmed to Ananias that there was a divine purpose for Saul. He was calling him into a special service to take the gospel to the Gentile world.

#### **Question 6: *What does it mean to be “a chosen vessel” for the Lord?***

**“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”** (1 Peter 2:9). Today, every believer is a chosen vessel. Everyone who has had an encounter with the Lord is a chosen

vessel and sent forth to preach the gospel and bear fruits. The Lord gave the word to the whole Church to take to the whole world. We are saved to serve.

Following the instruction of the Lord, Ananias went to Saul in the house of Judas along the street called Straight. He laid his hands on him and he recovered his sight and Saul was filled with the Holy Ghost. He was immediately baptised in water and this brought a permanent change in him. He would henceforth live no more for self but for his Saviour. He later declared: **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”** (Galatians 2:20). He began to have a fruitful fellowship with others in the church. There was a change of association and companion. What about you?

**SAUL: THE PROCLAIMER OF THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST** (Acts 9:20-31; 22:17-21; 26:16-20; 1 Timothy 1:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Romans 1:14-16; 1 Corinthians 2:1,2; 9:16,17).

**“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God”** (Acts 9:20). Immediately Saul was strengthened, he began to preach and proclaim the crucified Christ in Damascus; the faith which he once destroyed. The effect of his preaching was remarkable. People were amazed and said **“Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?”** (verse 21). He had a supernatural change of life and conduct through the grace of God.

**Question 7: What are the benefits of sharing the gospel with others by a new convert?**

**“But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ”** (verse 22). Saul grew in strength and power. His preaching became more persuasive in presentation and this confused and dismayed the unconverted Jews the more. When a new convert shares the gospel with others, he will be strengthened in faith and obtain power to overcome temptation and persecutions.

**“And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him”** (verse 23,24). However, the result of his preaching from those who did not accept and believe the gospel was persecution. The Jews took counsel to kill him but the disciples **“let him down by the wall in a basket”** by night. That was caring and protection of a fellow soldier of the cross. The persecution of Saul should not surprise anyone. During the discussion between the Lord and Ananias, the Lord said he will **“bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”** (verse 15,16). Therefore, the persecution was a fulfilment of the word of the Lord. The persecution did not make him lose his faith in the Lord. Rather, his disciplined attitude displayed an unbroken perseverance and unquenchable courage with determination to serve the Lord.

**“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple”** (verse 26). At Jerusalem, the brethren were scared of Saul for fear that his conversion might not be real. The first disciple to accept him was Barnabas, a man who constantly demonstrated a trusting and consoling spirit. We therefore see

the necessity of promptly, gladly and trustfully giving our hands of fellowship to the repentant while forgetting the past. The moment Jesus pardons, receives and begins to use one who had long profaned His name, we must also pardon and receive such as “**a brother beloved**”, and welcome such also as a fellow-labourer (Philemon 16). After a brief ministry in Jerusalem, he went to Caesarea and from there he sailed to Tarsus, his hometown.

**“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied”** (Acts 9:31). The churches had rest and were edified in the Lord. They were also walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Spirit. In the early Church, there was both spiritual and numerical growth. Their manner of life, conduct and conversion were worthy of the gospel of Christ.

In conclusion, the call and challenge to conversion is not only to Saul of Tarsus but to all unsaved youths in this generation. To the saved youths, God is looking for soul winners to take the gospel to the dying youths in this generation. Such youths must be saved, sanctified and Spirit-filled. They should also be saturated with the knowledge of scriptures. Will you accept the challenge? However, a genuinely saved youth, who has not got other Christian experiences of sanctification and the Spirit baptism, is expected to preach the gospel also.

### **DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	John 20:26-31	Isaiah 24:1-23
MON	“ 21:1-14	“ 25:1-12
TUE	“ 21:15-25	“ 26:1-21
WED	Acts 1:1-14	“ 27:1-13
THUR	“ 1:15-26	“ 28:1-29
FRI	“ 2:1-28	“ 29:1-24
SAT	“ 2:29-41	“ 30:1-21

# DORCAS RAISED FROM DEATH

## LESSON 463

MEMORY VERSE: “But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up” (Acts 9:40, 41).

**TEXT: Acts 9:32-43.**

In our last lesson, we saw Saul’s conversion, consecration and commission by Christ to preach the gospel. Today’s lesson is on the account of Apostle Peter’s visitation to churches and the miracles wrought by him in the name of Jesus while on duty. In this lesson, we shall have a look on the restoration of good health back to Aeneas, the restoration of Dorcas to life from the dead and the power of signs and wonders in the confirmation of the gospel in converting souls.

**DUTIFUL PETER RESTORED HEALTH TO AENEAS** (Acts 9:32-35; John 21:15-17; Romans 12:11; Isaiah 8:18; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 10:17)

“**And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda**” (Acts 9:32). Apostle Peter continued with his exploits by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have seen in the past lessons how after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, he preached a message and about three thousand souls were converted (Acts 2:37-40). At the gate called Beautiful was a lame man begging for alms. He became whole after the ministration of Peter and John to him in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6-9). Peter went on preaching and continued “**daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ**” (Acts 5:42). He was a fervent and fearless preacher of the word of God. This should be emulated by every Christian youth. As he continued in obedience to the responsibility given to him by Jesus to feed His lambs and sheep, God confirmed His word with signs and wonders (John 21:15, 16, Mark 16:15-18).

“**And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately**” (verse 33,34). It was on the course of his devotion to duty, he met the sick Aeneas who has been sick of palsy for eight years. This was one of the cases of long standing problems in the Bible. Yet, by the power in the name of Jesus Christ, he was healed.

**Question 1: Mention other cases of long standing problems which were solved by God?**

Some other cases of long standing problems include the Centurion’s servant who was sick of palsy (Matthew 8:5-13), two blind men (Matthew 9:27-29), a woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34), a lunatic boy (Matthew 17:14-21), a woman with the spirit of infirmity for eighteen years (Luke 13:11-17), a man who

was sick for thirty-eight years (John 5:5-9) and a lame man at the Beautiful gate (Acts 3:1-10). These should be encouragement to youths who have difficult cases of sicknesses or infirmity. They should trust God and His word to perform the miracle after prayer. Jesus said: **"...Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"** (Matthew 21:21,22).

It is God's decision that His children are for signs and wonders (Isaiah 8:18). The power to work signs and wonders was not limited to the early apostles. The Lord's mandate for us is: **"...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover"** (Mark 16:15-18). However, some youths seek for power to perform miracle in the wrong way.

**Question 2: Mention some of the things done by some youths to get the power to do signs and wonders?**

Many youths, in their attempt to acquire power to perform miracle by all means, get involved in: fasting for days, going to the mountain top to pray, etc. Most times, instead of having this power, they encounter personal physical and spiritual problems such as getting possessed with evil spirit, madness, sicknesses, etc. From the healing encountered by Aeneas, it was a confirmation of the power of God in His children, and a hope for the sick among us today. Christ, though not physically present, still heals. Whether a sick individual goes to Him directly in prayer of faith, or to our leaders or members and prayer is offered to God on his behalf, when he exercises faith, he shall be healed (Isaiah 53:3; James 5:14).

**DEVOTED DORCAS RESTORED TO LIFE.** (Acts 9:36-41; 2 Kings 4:32-36; Luke 8:49-56; Luke 7:2-10; John 11:14-46; 5:28, 29; Job 29: 14-16; Galatians 6:2).

**"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did"** (verse 36). In Joppa was a woman named Tabitha (Dorcas), a disciple of Christ **"full of good works and almsdeeds"**. She was a woman, yet a disciple of Christ, who shared her substances with other believers. She was not selfish but sacrificial in given. She gave her time to ensure believers' needs were met through her. How many boys and girls can do this today? Some young believers, and even the old ones, are not consecrated enough to be able to share their possession, talents and time. In their days, women were not allowed to speak in the Church (1 Corinthians 14:35) but she sought for a way to minister to the needs of the people of God through good works and alms-deeds. Thank God for those youths serving God without hindrance in one area of work or the other. It is commendable and rewardable. Know that more lives can easily be touched and transformed through good works and almsdeeds. Take the ministry of Christ for example, He was able to penetrate into men's hearts through good works. What would His ministry have been without the unmerited healings, deliverances, feeding and even giving alms to the poor (Mark 14:5). In our time, good works and

almsgiving compliment preaching and they will go a long way to bring more souls into the Kingdom (James 1:27).

**Question 3: *Mention some good works a believing youth should be committed to in order to win souls into the Kingdom of God.***

**“And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful”** (Titus 3:14). Believing youths should be committed to these winsome characters: respecting, helping those who need help, giving money and other materials to other boys and girls in need, teaching co-students difficult subjects they find easy to understand before examination period, praying for those with problems and being very humble. Humility has a way of attracting others to Christ. It should be with right motive of winning souls for Christ. Tabitha, though with good works, became sick and eventually died. Youths should know that being good in the Lord does not stop someone from falling sick. A believer full of good works and alms deeds can also die. God knows the best and His will for His children is far better than that of men. Therefore in everything, give thanks. In Tabitha’s case, the Church did something by sending for Peter who was at Joppa at this time, who came to raised her up.

Peter had been with Jesus. He was there when He raised several people from dead. He experienced Jesus raising Jairus’ daughter from death (Mark 5:35-42), the widow of Nain’s only son (Luke 7:11-18) and the raising of Lazarus (John 11:2:43). He had known of Christ’s power and was now strong and full of faith. With the knowledge of Christ’s personality, power and possibility, he went in and prayed for her to come alive again. God’s ability is beyond human understanding. Only those boys and girls that know their God **“shall be strong, and do exploits”** (Daniel 11:32). The raising of Tabitha from the dead through Peter followed Christ pattern (Mark 5:35-42). In praying for the dead to come alive, caution must be taken. Therefore, we must follow God’s leading.

**DYNAMISM OF SIGNS AND WONDERS IN CHURCH GROWTH** (Acts 9:42, 43; 2 Kings 5:15; Exodus 14:18-22; Joshua 2:10, 11; Acts 8:6-8).

**“And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord”** (Acts 9:42). The raising of Tabitha from the dead spread like a wildfire throughout Joppa. The miracles of healings, deliverances and manifestation of His power over the devil and the destruction of yokes, afflictions, and bondages are all meant to reveal to man the power of God. The aim is to bring them back to God. The signs and wonders did not only attract people to Christ but arouse their convictions about Him as the Saviour of the world. The success of the early church in the ministry of reconciliation and even the church today can be attributed to the manifestation of Christ’s power and wonders.

**Question 4: *What are the impacts of signs and wonders in the Church of Christ today?***

**“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation”** (Romans 15:18-

20). It is one of the strong factors for the rapid Church growth. Miracles confirm the authority and power of Christ aid the conviction of sinners and establish the ministries of the men of God.

### **DAILY BIBLE READING**

		MORNING	EVENING
Sun	Acts 2:42 - 47	Isaiah 30:22 - 33	
Mon	" 3:1 - 11	" 31:1 - 9	
Tue	" 3:12 - 16	" 32:1- 20	
Wed	" 3:17 - 26	" 33:1- 24	
Thur	" 4:1 - 12	" 34:1- 17	
Fri	" 4:13-22	" 35:1- 10	
Sat	" 4:23-31	" 36:1- 22	

# THE VISIONS OF CORNELIUS AND PETER

## LESSON 464

**MEMORY VERSE:** “**And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common**” (Acts 10:15).

TEXT: Acts 10:1-22.

**C**ornelius was a centurion (Roman Officer), who was devoted, feared God, shared his resources with others and prayed always. In response to his sincerity in seeking his Creator, God sent an angel to assure him that his prayers and good deeds were a memorial before Him. He was instructed by the angel to send for Peter at Joppa to preach the gospel to him.

While Cornelius was sending men to Joppa, the Lord also revealed to Peter in a vision three times, how the Gentiles would be accepted into the Kingdom and the Church through faith in Christ. As Peter thought on the vision, “... **the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them**” (verses 19,20).

### **Question 1: What is a vision?**

A vision is one of the ways God reveals His plan and purpose to man. A biblical vision will lead to the salvation of souls (Habakkuk 2:2,3; Acts 9:10,17-19; 16:9,10). However, there are also false visions. Therefore, any vision that does not conform to the word of God is false and should be rejected. “**To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them**” (Isaiah 8:20).

**DIVINE REVELATION TO SINCERE SEEKERS** (Acts 10:1-8; Isaiah 64:6-9; Romans 10:13-15; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 4:1-5)

Cornelius was a soldier in charge of the Italian band. He was from the Gentile nation which was mainly an idolatrous people. Also, soldiers in those days were rough, difficult and wicked. They maltreated the people and often caused great damage. They were dreaded by the people of the land (Luke 3:14). But Cornelius was different from his contemporaries. He had a sincere interest in God. Other people who sought God sincerely include Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-9), the Greeks who came to worship at the feast in Jerusalem (John 12:20-22), Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:6,7) and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:27-39). Cornelius had a good testimony and report from God and men (Acts 10:4,22).

### **Question 2: What was God’s testimony concerning Cornelius?**

**“A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway”** (Acts 10:2). He was a devoted man, who feared God with his household (including his children), gave alms to the needy and prayed always. Also, he was a just man and had good report of the Jews (verse 22). With these qualities, God said: **“Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God”** (verse 4).

**Question 3: What steps should a sinner take to receive salvation?**

**“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel”** (Mark 1:14,15). The way out of sin and evil is repentance and faith in Christ. A sinner must accept his sinfulness and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. **“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Romans 10:9,10).

In this vision to Cornelius, he was directed to send for Peter who was staying with Simon the tanner at Joppa. God gave full details on how to get Peter. God is not the Author of confusion. When He leads and directs, He is clear in His leading (Exodus 4:10-14,27; 1 Samuel 9:15-17). Believe Him to direct and lead you in every matter of your life. **“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death”** (Psalms 48:14). Immediately the angel departed, Cornelius sent two of his servants to Joppa to call Peter.

**Question 4: Why did God direct Cornelius to send for Peter?**

God directed Cornelius to send for Peter because **“he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do”** and **“to hear words of”** God (verse 6,22). That is, Peter would preach Christ to him and his household for them to be saved through faith in Christ and not just to be a religious and moral set of people. This is where the preaching of the gospel is a noble work. Angels are not allowed now to preach the gospel. Gospel preaching is only for those who are saved from their sins through the blood of Christ. The Lord is calling on all saved youths to be devoted soul winners.

**DIVINE REMOVAL OF SEGREGATION BY THE SAVIOUR** (Acts 10:9-16; Luke 18:1; Leviticus 11:1-4; 20:22-26; Deuteronomy 14:1-7; Romans 3:21-31; Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:11-22)

**“On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:”** (Acts 10:9). The servants of Cornelius reached the city where Peter was staying on the next day of their journey. Meanwhile, Peter went to pray at about the sixth hour (about 12 noon). Peter was a man of prayer (Acts 1:12-14; 3:1; 4:19-24; 6:4; 9:32-34, 40,41; 10:9). This is the secret of spiritual freshness and success in spiritual service. Today, we can pray if we depend and claim God’s promise that says: **“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications:...”** (Zechariah 12:10).

It was during this prayer session that God opened heaven and revealed to Peter all manner of four-footed beasts, wild beasts, creeping things and fowls of the air. Peter was commanded by God to kill and eat but he refused and called it common or unclean food. This was done thrice and the vessel was taken to heaven. In response to Peter's refusal, God said: **"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common"** (verse 15).

**Question 5: Why did Peter refuse to eat?**

**"Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you"** (Leviticus 11:4). The Old Testament laws forbid the children of Israel to eat unclean animals. However, these were part of the ceremonial laws that were done away in Christ. **"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:"** (Romans 3:21,22).

Also, in those days, there was racial segregation (isolation) between the Jews and the Gentiles. Later in our text, Peter confirmed this policy. **"And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean"** (Acts 10:28). Furthermore, when Peter came to Jerusalem after his divinely directed mission to Cornelius, the apostles and the brethren contended with him and said: **"...Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them"** (Acts 11:3). It was this racial segregation and partition that God our Saviour (1 Timothy 2:3-6) was removing through the vision to Peter. Therefore, in Christ Jesus, there is no discrimination. **"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God"** (1 Corinthians 1:24). **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"** (Galatians 3:28). Therefore, all those who have been forgiven of their sins through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are not unclean any more (2 Corinthians 5:17).

**Question 6: Answer TRUE or FALSE:**

- (a) The salvation of boys is better than the salvation of girls.
- (b) The salvation of children born in our church is superior to the salvation of children born in other churches or religions.
- (c) The salvation of youths from communities where traditions does not recognise them to be free born of the land is valid in the sight of God.
- (d) In Christ, all who are saved are one and are going to the same heaven.
- (e) In Christ, we are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace between saved boys and girls.

**DIVINE RE-ASSURANCE BY THE SPIRIT TO HIS SERVANT** (Acts 10:17-22; 11:12; 15:6-11,13-21; Joshua 1:8)

**“While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee”** (Acts 10:19). As Peter was considering the meaning of the vision, the servants of Cornelius were at the gate of the house where he stayed. When God reveal things to us and there is doubt in our minds, we should pray and patiently listen to Him to clear the doubt through His Scriptures and Spirit.

**Question 7: How did God reassure Peter to clear his doubt?**

**“Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them”** (verse 20). Peter after the confirmation of the vision by the Spirit of God, complied fully with God’s instruction. He had his personal opinion and plan as a Jew, but he preferred to obey God’s directive. What a lesson for us today! God demands our total and complete obedience to His word. We should be consecrated to the Lord and be willing to do His bidding always. This is the path to usefulness and rewards from Him. Peter’s obedience, commitment and his mission to Cornelius’ house yielded a fruitful result. This mission became a major milestone in the life of the early Church. Later, the Church utilized this vision to explain to the elders in Jerusalem of God’s requirements from the Gentiles. The trade mark of true discipleship is obedience. The Song writer says:

“Just as God who reigns on high,  
Spake to men in days gone by;  
So the Lord is calling men today;  
And, my brother, this is true,  
Whatso’er He says to you,  
There is but one thing to do-  
Just obey.

*Just obey ..., Just obey ...,  
Is the way ..., God’s way ...,  
When His message comes to you,  
There is but one thing to do:  
Just obey ..., Just obey”.*

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>	<b>EVENING</b>
SUN	Acts 4:32-37	Isaiah 37:1-21
MON	“ 5:1-11	“ 37:22-38
TUE	“ 5:12-16	“ 38:1-22
WED	“ 5:17-32	“ 39:1-8
THUR	“ 5:33-42	“ 40:1-31
FRI	“ 6:1-8	“ 41:1-29
SAT	“ 6:9-15	“ 42:1-25

# CORNELIUS AND HIS HOUSEHOLD RECEIVE CHRIST

## LESSON 465

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).

TEXT: ACTS 10:23-48.

**I**n our last lesson, the angel of the Lord had appeared to

Cornelius while he was praying and said to him, “...**Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do**” (verse 4). Complying with the instruction from the Lord, Cornelius sent men to Joppa to go and call Peter. While the men drew nearer to where Peter was, God had started preparing his heart so he could follow the men to Caesarea, where Cornelius was. Eventually, Peter met Cornelius in his house where he had gathered his entire household, kinsmen and near friends to hear the word of God.

This week, we are going to see how the Lord used the obedience of Peter to mark the beginning of the Gospel preaching to the Gentiles and how he, through a radiant Gospel message, led the house of Cornelius to Christ. Besides, God confirmed that He sent Peter there because “**While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word**” (verse 44).

**CALL TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION**(Acts 10: 23-33; 15: 6-9; Romans 3: 29, 30; 10: 11-13; Genesis 28:14; Ephesians 2: 12-19)

Some years back, when Jesus Christ sent His disciples on mission, He told them plainly, “... **Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not**” (Matthew 10:5). No doubt, many of the disciples might not fully understand God’s plan about the salvation of the Gentiles. This restraint might have confused and misled them. Hence, their mindset towards preaching to the Gentiles was very cold though Jesus had told them that they would preach to the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). In order to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles, God ministered to Apostle Peter to go with those servants of Cornelius. Strangely though, Peter (a Jew) called them in and lodged them till the second day when they were set for the journey. “**And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him**” (verse 25). However, Peter refused to be worshipped and said he was like him.

***Question 1: What was the mindset of a Jew about the Gentiles?***

He reminded them of “... **how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation...**” but said that “...**God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean**” (verse 28). A Jew considered the Gentiles so sinful that they never had anything to do with them neither did they believe that they were in God’s plan of salvation. But this action of Peter marked the beginning of gospel preaching to the Gentiles publicly. Later, when Paul began his evangelistic outreaches to the Gentiles, some Jewish Christians kicked against it. But it was this case that was used to justify that God had turned to the Gentiles. Jesus died for them too and had made no difference between them and the Jews.

***Question 2: What should be our attitude towards people who are sinners in our community?***

People who are considered chronic sinners can also enjoy God’s pardon just like any of us. An example is the thief on the cross (Luke 23: 39-43). Therefore, we should have a positive attitude of reaching them with the Gospel message.

Cornelius began to narrate his experience with the angel to Peter. He told Peter how he was praying and fasting, speaking to the Lord until he received divine instruction to send for Peter. Cornelius with an open heart declared to Peter that they were ready for all he had to say. **“Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God”** (Acts 10:33).

**CONTENT OF A SALVATION MESSAGE** (Acts 10: 34-43; Ecclesiastes 12: 13; Matthew 6: 33; 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4; Acts 2: 38)

When Peter got to the house of Cornelius, the first thing he acknowledged was “... **that God is no respecter of persons**” (Acts 10:34). He was surprised by how God captured this high military officer and made him curious about the gospel. Also, he was surprised that God had no problem with him being a Gentile as long as he (Cornelius) was ready to serve Him. Then he began to preach the word of God.

***Question 3: What were the contents of Peter’s preaching to Cornelius household?***

The first message he gave was on the need to fear God and live a righteous life. **“But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him”** (verse 35). After that, he talked about peace through Jesus Christ (verse 36). In addition, he spoke of the healing and deliverance in the Lord Jesus (verse 38); the suffering, death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (verses 39, 40); warning on the coming judgement by Jesus (verse 42) and the remission of sins through His name (verse 43).

***Question 4: What should be the major content of our message to the sinners?***

When we preach to sinners, we should plant into them the fear of God and the need to please Him by living a righteous life. We should tell them that this will only be possible if they make peace with Him. Besides, Jesus had suffered and died to make all these benefits attainable. We are to warn the sinners that refusal attracts a very serious judgement whereas remission awaits those who accept the Gospel. **“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”** (Acts 2:38).

As Peter was preaching, he stressed the need for remission of sins. This is possible through repentance and faith in Christ. Repentance is the central theme of the gospel. Repentance is a conscious turning away from evil and sins to God by faith. As soulwinners, we must emphasize the need for sinners to repent from sin and have faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This is important because the forgiveness of sins is available only to those who repent and believe in Christ. Repentance opens the way and makes us to receive the grace of God, pardon from God, peace from God and brings an inward change in the heart. This is the basis of being a Christian.

**COMMITMENT TO MATURING CONVERTS IN CHRIST** (Acts 10: 44-48; 15: 8, 9; Matthew 28: 18-20; Acts 14: 21-23; 15: 36)

Cornelius and his household listened with rapt attention to Peter. While Peter was preaching, **“...God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”** (Acts 15:8). This salvation experience of the Gentiles was miraculous to the Jewish Christians who followed Peter. **“And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost”** (verse 45). Immediately, Peter commanded that they should be baptized in the name (His authority) of the Lord. He did not leave the people immediately as he was asked by the people to tarry for some more days.

***Question 5: How can we bring up our converts to maturity in Christian living?***

Preaching to a sinner is not the end in itself but a means to an end. When you have converts, you are to disciple them until they become matured in Christ. Arrange to conduct water baptism for them and take them through a series of teaching. **“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of**

**the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen”** (Matthew 28:18-20). This will also include a process of visitation where you teach them the rudiments of the Christian living. These would lead to the establishment of the converts in the life of the Gospel.

#### DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Acts 7:1-10	Isaiah 43:1-28
MON	“ 7:11-28	“ 44:1-28
TUE	“ 7:29-43	“ 45:1-25
WED	“ 7:44-60	“ 46:1-13
THUR	“ 8:1-13	“ 47:1-15
FRI	“ 8:14-25	“ 48:1-22
SAT	“ 8:26-40	“ 49:1-26

# PERSONAL EVANGELISM

## LESSON 466

**MEMORY VERSE:** “He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41).

**TEXT:** John 1:35-51.

The major focus of the text we are considering is the

practical demonstration of an effective, easy and exemplary soulwinning strategy. Following the John the Baptist’s concise introduction of the Saviour – “**Behold the Lamb of God**”, five different souls, who later became strong followers of Christ, were systematically won to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Andrew, one of the first two disciples who heard John’s timely declaration and became a follower of Christ, was able to convince his own brother (Peter) to come and see the Messiah. He later joined him in the decision to become a disciple of the Great Teacher. Interestingly and instructively, Christ Himself was not left out in the application of this reliable strategy. The next day, after Andrew had brought Peter to Him, He won the heart of Philip almost effortlessly. Filled with a strong conviction and overwhelming joy, Philip also was able to convince Nathaniel who was initially reluctant to heed the invitation. The uniqueness of this string of conversions lies in the peculiarity of the procedure, the simplicity, the effectiveness and the enduring nature of the work done. Although it is relatively easy, the quality of the fruit produced is simply unsurpassable. These basic features make personal evangelism an effective, vital and indispensable method of soul-winning for every believer today.

**PERSONAL EVANGELISM: MEANING AND MANDATE** (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; John 15:16; Acts 1:8; John 4:35; 9:4; Ezekiel 3:17-21, 11; Matthew 24:14).

**“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15).

**Question 1: What does personal evangelism mean?**

Personal evangelism is the person-to-person sharing of the good news of salvation, with the aim of leading a sinner to repentance and turning him wholly to God through Jesus Christ. It is the easiest, cheapest and most effective method of evangelism. It cannot be outlawed by the bans on public preaching and proclamation that may affect mass form of evangelism. Through it, the seeker’s personal attention is gained, doubts are cleared and the decision made becomes solid and strong. It is the fastest and easiest way of quickly multiplying disciples and reaching any category of individuals in the community.

Personal evangelism is Christ's mandate to every believer. While on earth, His main focus was to seek and save those who were lost in sin. This was His primary preoccupation, purpose and passion. **"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work"** (John 4:34). Having paid the greatest price and sacrifice to redeem lost humanity from the bondage of sin and Satan, His parting charge and challenge to every believer is: **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"** (Mark 16:15). The manner and tone of the charge reveals its urgent, compelling<sup>1</sup> and mandatory<sup>2</sup> nature. Thus, the disciples who heard Jesus giving this charge lived to fulfil it (Mark 16:20). The individual members of the early church also continued in the discharge of this responsibility (Acts 8:4,30-36). Today, all Christian youths should not undermine this important task.

### ***Question 2: What should our message to sinners contain?***

Obedience to the Great Commission is demonstrated when individual believer reaches out to sinners with the gospel message on a person-to-person basis. This foundational method of soul winning is the attempt on the part of a Christian youth to show a sinner, from the word of God, his true state and need of the Saviour (Romans 3:10-23; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10); the truth of God's judgement and punishment (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 1:32; Revelation 20:15), God's love resulting in the provision of the Saviour in the person of Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 1:29; Titus 2:11-14) and the requirement of repentance towards God and faith in Christ on the part of the sinner in order to be saved (Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:2,3; Acts 3:19; 17:30; Romans 10:9,10; John 3:15). This must be wisely concluded with a deliberate effort of leading the sinner to repentance and acceptance of Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour (John 1:46-51; Acts 8:35-39).

### ***Question 3: Why should every believer have burning sense of urgency for the salvation of the lost?***

There is a great and urgent need today for consecrated Christian youths to give themselves to this task of personal evangelism. The pitiable conditions and descriptions of the sinners' plight demand that every believer should have an insatiable<sup>1</sup> desire for the salvation of souls. The fact and the reality of hell as a place of agonizing, torment and everlasting punishment in unquenchable fire makes it necessary that soulwinning should be carried out daily, seriously and diligently (Mark 9:43-47; Luke 16:23; 2 Corinthians 5:11). The value of a soul surpasses all the riches of the whole world put together (Matthew 16:26). The precious blood of Christ was shed to secure its redemption (1 Peter 1:18,19).

The time left for this job of eternal consequence is short (1 Corinthians 7:29-31). Human souls are the battle ground between God and the Devil. Sad enough, Satan seems to be gaining more ground in these last days through the proliferation<sup>2</sup> of false religions and prophets who are speedily and zealously attracting ignorant souls into their nets; making them two-fold children of hell. Besides, there are millions of sinners and backsliders, who neither attend church nor any Christian programmes. Many of these die daily and go to hell. Unfortunately, some of them reside in our neighbourhoods, while others attend the same schools or lessons with us.

We cannot depend on mass evangelism method alone to win these people to the Lord. The seriousness and great concern of God to save sinners from the wrecking influences of sin and its damning consequences is revealed by His solemn charge (2 Timothy 4:1,2; Mark 16:15; Ezekiel 33:11-19) and His involvement in directing soulwinners to souls (Acts 8:26-29; 10:9-20; 16:9). The Lord Jesus Christ gave time and attention to win Philip, Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, the thief on the cross and others. His desire to save souls made Him die for the sins of the world (John 1:43; 4:7-28; Luke 19:1-10; 23:39-43; John 3:16).

***Question 4: How can the Church leadership motivate members to be diligently involved in personal evangelism?***

Commitment to personal soulwinning is lacking today in most of our congregations. It is, therefore, pertinent<sup>1</sup> that the Church should aim at raising an army of Christian youths who will be committed to personal evangelism. To achieve this, the leadership of the local church should take the lead and be an example to the flock in this great task (1 Peter 5:3). They should train the people through systematic pulpit teachings, specially organised weekend evangelism seminars and through workshops at both workers' and general retreats. Apart from these, deliberate efforts should be made to challenge the believers to soulwinning by organising weekend evangelism outreaches at Church level, pairing of believers as evangelism partners in the house fellowship level, the use of Operation Andrew cards periodically and through organised outreaches of evangelism teams. To evaluate the efforts, believers can be made to bring their converts to a specially organised 'Converts Rally Day' where each believer will show his convert, and such convert will further be encouraged to continue in the Christian race.

**THE LIFESTYLE AND EFFECTIVE METHODS OF SOULWINNERS** (2 Timothy 2:4-6; Matthew 15:14; Isaiah 52:11; John 15:1-7; I Corinthians 9:19-23; John 4:7-29; Acts 8:30-35; John 3:1-3).

***Question 5: What should be the lifestyle of the effective soulwinner?***

It is essential to note that effective soulwinning has a lot to do with the soulwinner's life. The blind cannot lead the blind (Matthew 15:14). This underscores<sup>1</sup>, first, the necessity of genuine conversion and salvation from sins for anyone who wants to be involved in personal evangelism (2 Timothy 2:6). The soulwinner must be free from spots, blemishes and evil reports so as not to constitute an offence to seekers. As God's channel of the water of life, he must be clean, not rusted or corroded within. Having been saved and purified, therefore, the soulwinner must see himself as an ambassador of Christ, with an unshakeable conviction that personal evangelism is a debt and not an option (2 Corinthians 5:20; Romans 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:16). Also, he must be properly connected to the Source of fruitfulness in soulwinning through prayers and fellowship (John 15:1-7). Besides, he must be knowledgeable and skilled in the right application of the scriptures (Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; Hosea 4:6). Like an ignorant advocate cannot defend his client in the court of law, a soulwinner who lacks the knowledge of God's word cannot convince a sinner to

accept Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. He must also have a strong conviction about God, the Bible, the indispensability of salvation, the significance of Christ's death and His resurrection, and the consequences of neglecting the call to salvation.

***Question 6: Mention various methods of personal evangelism. As a believer, which of them have you effectively employed?***

Methods or approaches employed in personal evangelism differ from one person to the other. There is the direct approach. This is the sudden introduction of the vital issue of salvation to sinner. It is generally done when the soulwinner observes he does not have much time to spend with the sinner. The method involves a direct question about the issue of the sinner's soul, his relationship with God or his readiness to meet God. Philip used this method (Acts 8:30). Jesus did the same (John 3:3). The indirect method focuses on reaching the sinner's heart by starting a normal conversation which diverts into spiritual and eternal truths. It is generally conversational. Jesus used this method with the woman at the well (John 4:7-29). Friendship method of evangelism involves cultivating a relationship with someone of the same gender with an aim of winning him/her for Jesus. The price to pay includes sacrificial giving, self-denial, hard work and prayer. Literature method seeks to reach a sinner through the printed word. A Christian tract, magazine, comic or book given out prayerfully, purposefully and passionately can turn a soul to Christ faster than we think. The after-fellowship approach is most appropriate when we want to lead first-timers in our Church, Youth Home Success Fellowship and School Fellowship to the Lord. It involves expanding on the message he had just heard, applying it and calling him to decision.

**LEADING THE SINNER TO DECISION FOR CHRIST** (Acts 8:26-39; Luke 24:27).

Once the door of soulwinning has been opened, and the most suitable approach decided, the next urgent task of the soulwinner is the presentation of the gospel. He must reach the intellect, affect the will, stir the emotion, arouse the conscience and bring the unsaved man to the point of decision and yieldedness to Christ.

***Question 7: What pitfalls must be avoided when leading a soul to the Lord?***

However, there are things to avoid in the course of dealing with a soul. Do not exalt self above the sinner, or condemn denominations<sup>1</sup>. Avoid acting victorious or proud when you have scored a point (Matthew 11:29) and do not tell sad stories, but point to Christ (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9). Do not multiply texts and illustrations, never be in a hurry, and deal not with more than one at a time. There is need for care when dealing with the opposite sex. Avoid getting into an argument with the seeker. Do not lose your self-control and emotion. Do not tell seekers to think it over; bring him to a decision at once where possible. Do not be discouraged by apparent failure. Often, you are simply another link in the chain of grace that will bring the sinner to Christ (John 4:37,38). As for

outlook, do not have bad breath or body odour. As a further help, the soul winner needs to be familiar with scriptures that deal with various categories of sinners. This is necessary to meet the sinner at his actual area of need, and to successfully penetrate his heart with the gospel.

**Efforts made in soul winning will not yield much fruit if follow-up is neglected or relegated to the background. The soul winner must make efforts to take the convert through series of convert studies and integrate him to the fellowship of the local Church. He should also help him to be baptized in water and make him go through a discipleship training to further establish him in the faith and doctrines of the Christian faith. The young convert also needs to be shielded and protected from false teachers through the soul winner's constant prayers and visitation. He must be loved and cared for during persecutions, difficulties and discouragement so that he does not backslide. Above all, the soul winner must be willing to sacrifice both his money and material, where necessary, for both the spiritual and physical welfare of the convert (2 Corinthians 12:15; Acts 9:27-30; 10:25, 26; 14:21,22). Great rewards await a dedicated soul winner in heaven. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).**

### **DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Acts 9:1-9	Isaiah 50:1-11
MON	" 9:10-19	" 51:1-23
TUE	" 9:20-31	" 52:1-15
WED	" 9:32-43	" 53:1-12
THUR	" 10:1-8	" 54:1-17
FRI	" 10:9-22	" 55:1-13
SAT	" 10:23-32	" 56:1-12

# WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS

## LESSON 467

MEMORY VERSE: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1, 2).

TEXT: 1 John 2:15-17.

**T**he world and the Church are parallel to each other.

The Church is the invisible assembly of all redeemed souls, whose lifestyle, conduct, character, disposition and taste, are fully dictated by Christ. On the other side is the world, the pervasive evil system controlled by the devil and easily detected in the taste, lifestyle, character, disposition, language, dressing, amusements and recreation of its followers. The world is a system with changing values and fashions. The believer is expected to live a life of non-conformity to the world. **“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Romans 12:2).

### ***Question 1: What is worldliness and worldly amusements?***

Worldliness is any act or attitude that is in line with the evil system, practices, dressing or adornments of this world. Worldly amusement is the provision or enjoyment of worldly entertainments such as worldly music, dancing, parties, drinking, smoking, etc. Worldliness pollutes and is evil. There is no meeting point between the evils of this world and the Church; hence, they are two opposing systems. The evil practices of the world must not be allowed to come into the Church; but where they have crept in unnoticed, they must be flushed out. Christ is coming for a pure Church without spot, wrinkle or any such thing. The Church and her entire membership have to be completely free from evil and wrong worldly values and traditions. This is why the Bible says: **“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him”** (1 John 2:15).

**DESCRIPTION OF WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS** (1John 2:15-17; Isaiah 3:16-24; Matthew 24:37 -39; Luke 17:26-30)

**“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”** (1 John 2:15-17). The Bible draws a picture of the world in its true colour. But

more than that, it declares, in many ways and in many places, that it is sensual, devilish, doomed and distorting.

***Question 2: How does worldliness begin?***

Worldliness begins in the heart. It is a secret, inward liking and, later, a craving for the fancies and fashions of the world which are contrary to the standards of the word of God. It finally begins to show forth in the lifestyle of its victim. One becomes worldly: (1) when the people of the world (your ungodly friends, colleagues, relations, neighbours, etc) dictate and determine your taste in dressing. (2) When your heart begins to yearn after the sinful trends and contemporary fashions in the world. (3) When Christian marriage attracts all the traditions, styles, conducts and showy spirit seen in the marriage of sinners. The Scripture says: **“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”** (James 4:4). Neither the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ nor the epistles of the Apostles give licence for the Christian to be worldly, or to associate in any form with the world. The believer who has made heaven his goal must separate himself from the ungodly world practices and worldly amusements.

***Question 3: Mention some common ways worldliness and worldly amusements manifest itself.***

Dressing is one area where worldliness in the heart speaks loudly and clearly. Christian youths are not to dress like the sinful youths in the world do. The spirit that dictates the fashion of the world is that of the devil. It thrives on sinful passions or vices that do not rest until they set the opposite genders lusting and making them to commit sin. This spirit and the fashions or designs dictate a continual constant digression from God, holiness and righteousness. However, a good personal appearance characterised by cleanliness and neatness is all a believer needs. At all times and in all places, decency and modesty of dress should be our basic standard.

Adornments copied from the world, which reflect the pride of life, and the cravings of a carnal spirit are worldly and must, like a plague, be avoided. These include the use of beads as those worn by the heathens, ear rings, face powder, perfumes, and artificial hair either as wigs or “attachments” in weaving, etc. The spirit that is surely behind all these was the one that motivated Jezebel. The Scripture says: **“And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window”** (2 Kings 9:30).

Worldliness is also seen in ceremonies. When a marriage is attended by all that goes on in the world – borrowing or hiring of dresses, excessive spending, which leads to indebtedness, immodest dressing and public dancing – it is worldly. The guiding principle of a Christian is modesty and lowliness. **“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand”** (Philippians 4:5).

Besides the above, there are some assemblies or gatherings that are essentially worldly and sinful. When meetings are held to foster the carnal desires of the flesh, inflame the mind and make it to ‘wash’ off godly sorrows

that are necessary in preparing the heart for the word of God, a Christian youth must keep away. Whether it is outright disco gatherings or its religious equivalent called “praisco”, it is worldly.

A pilgrim to heaven has no business with going to places of games, jokes and tribal meetings. Sincere and serious Christian youths should keep off from such gatherings. The environment of such meetings is a fertile ground for the flesh to thrive on. Trendy fashions, unspoken competitive social outlook, lust of the eyes and pride of life thrive in these meetings. It blows ‘cool air’ in the heart of the Christian youths and quenches the ‘flame’ in the young believer. The Christian youths must also stay clear from worldly conversation, pursuit and ambition (Ephesians 5:3,4; 1 Samuel 8:19,20). The command of the Lord is: **“Abstain from all appearance of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

**DANGERS OF WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS** (1 John 2:15-17; Isaiah 3:16-24; Zephaniah 1:8; James 3:15; 4:4)

Some Christian youths want to have the better of two worlds. They want all the privileges of the God’s kingdom, while they simultaneously hunger after all the glamour of the world. Such believers rationalize worldliness. They explain off fundamental truths and principles coming from the word of God. These are those who remove ancient landmarks and take away from the word of God (Revelation 22:18,19).

**Question 4: *How do these ‘modern Christian youths’ rationalize worldliness?***

Those who indulge and persist in worldly dressing and adornment, even after they have come to the knowledge of the truth, say their immodest dressing is designed to expand the Kingdom of God. They claim that they join sinners in their worldly styles in the process of inviting them into the Kingdom of God. They eloquently say: “Join them to win them”. To these, we answer according to the Scripture which says: **“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Romans 12:2). Moreover, some say that what they put on does not matter since salvation is in their hearts. If our hearts are saved and conformed to the Lord, our outward comportment will definitely follow suit.

Worse still, some, seeking desperately for a pretext and excuse to be like the world, assent that their role models are worldly gospel artistes or Western Christianity who live in Hollywood style, deck up in jewels and pride. They have forgotten that Jesus taught that we should be like Him, not like any man (Luke 14:26,27).

Modern technology, idleness of mind and a careless rush for money at the expense of the soul have filled our cities with all sorts of amusements and time-killers. The modern computer games and internet, snookers, television games, etc., are devices invented to amuse the mind, and turn it away from weighty, serious issues of eternal consequence. This is a dangerous trend. Christian youths must beware!

**Question 5: What inherent dangers does worldliness pose to the individual Christian and the church at large?**

Worldliness is not only dangerous but deadly. Its effects are described in very negative terms in the Bible. First, the worldly Christian is described as an enemy of God and a friend of the world (James 4:4). Second, worldliness leads to backsliding and compromise. One of the early signs of backsliding is a tendency towards the world (2 Timothy 4:10). Third, it leads to loss of conviction on serious Biblical matters. Fourth, it corrupts the mind of the children of God. Fifth, the presence and power of God would diminish or even disappear in the Church. Sixth, worldliness disallows the building of godly homes. Seventh, worldly amusements bring about carnal competition in the church. Eighth, worldliness incurs the wrath of God. Ninth, worldly amusements weaken the church and individual life as people spend precious time on trifles and vanities. When the membership of a church is given to amusements, little or no time is left for evangelism, visitation, follow-up and other services that have eternal value. Tenth, worldliness destroys the future of the church and makes nominal Christians her membership. It must, therefore, be avoided like poison.

**DECISION AGAINST WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS** (1 John 2:15-17; Genesis 35:1-4; Deuteronomy 18:9; 22:5; Jeremiah 10:1,2; Romans 12:2)

Christian youths are in the world but not of the world. **“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”** (John 17:14).

**Question 6: What should be Christian youth’s attitude to worldliness and worldly amusements?**

**“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”** (Colossians 3:1). Our attitudes should be: (1) we must be separated and distinct from things and those whose affections and desires are worldly.

(2) We must stay clear from carnal festivities that are abomination to God (1 Corinthians 10:7). (3) We are to please God in all things we do. **“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”** (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Pray today and be totally free from worldliness and worldly amusements. Remember, without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Acts 10:33-43	Isaiah 57:1-21
MON	“ 10:44-48	“ 58:1-14
TUE	“ 11:1-18	“ 59:1-21
WED	“ 11:19-30	“ 60:1-22
THUR	“ 12:1-10	“ 61:1-11
FRI	“ 12:11-19	“ 62:1-12
SAT	“ 12:20-25	“ 63:1-19

# MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE OF CHRISTIANS

## LESSON 468

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

**TEXT:** Matthew 19:3-12; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 5:22-33.

The study before us today is one of the important institutions in life. Marriage is a holy union. It is a precious relationship that needs tender care. The marriage institution is the idea of God. **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”** (Matthew 19:6). Therefore, marriage is part of God’s plan for human race. Through this, Christians can raise godly seeds (Malachi 2:14-16).

### ***Question 1: What is marriage?***

**“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”** (Matthew 19:4, 5). Marriage is the joining together of a man (not a boy) and a woman (not a girl) in a holy wed-lock which signals the beginning of family life until death parts the couples. Christian teaching on marriage can only be accepted and practised by faith. Christian marriage must be guided by the word of God. Wherever the teaching of God’s doctrine on marriage is neglected or modified, the consequence is painful. It is sad today to observe that the guiding scriptural principles of marriage are deliberately neglected by the young people in the Church and the Bible’s position on family life has been relegated<sup>1</sup> to the background. This has resulted into great spiritual losses, humiliation, frustration, sorrow and painful separation for even couples joined in the church.

As growing boys and girls, it is important to know that marriage is for life. The Bible does not permit divorce, separation or re-marriage. **“For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously”** (Malachi 2:16). This is why a clear unmistakable teaching on marriage and family life is very significant. It is for the health and spiritual wholeness of the Church. The questions for us are: Why did God establish marriage? What are the necessary preparations for marriage? Are there pitfalls to avoid while preparing for marriage? What will be the

consequences if we do not take care? Is courtship necessary? How should we conduct our engagement and wedding? What are the biblical standards for family life after wedding? These are some of the issues that will be addressed in this study.

**PURPOSE AND PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE** (Matthew 19:4-6; Genesis 2:18,21-25; Ephesians 5:31-33; Psalm 32:8,9; Isaiah 30:18-21).

**“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”** (Genesis 2:18). From the Scripture, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ gave approval to marriage. Hence, we learn over the years through experience, observation and scriptures the reasons for marriage.

**Question 2: Give scriptural reasons why God instituted marriage and family life.**

**“And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”** (Matthew 19:5,6). The purpose of marriage and family life include: one, plan and provision of God for man (Genesis 2:18). Two, preservation of purity and holiness in the Church and community. **“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband”** (1 Corinthians 7:2). Three, procreation – Marriage complements the work of God on procreation<sup>1</sup> to fill the earth (Genesis 1:27,28; Psalm 128: 3). Four, Partnership – Marriage provides the needed fellowship, comfort, companionship and partnership. **“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?”** (Ecclesiastes 4:9-11). A man and a woman are mutually dependent for: **“neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 11:11). Five, pleasures (Proverbs 5:15-20). Six, power and victory in life (Deuteronomy 32:29,30).

**“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”** (Genesis 2:24). Marriage journey begins with a desire of the need for a partner with whom you will share your heart intimately. Maturity and an inner urge (or a compelling overwhelming feeling) inform this need. As part of the preparation and maturity for marriage, we must be ready spiritually, physically, academically, financially, emotionally, socially and psychologically. The need to marry can be met through prayer. As we will

pray earnestly, sincerely and expectantly, God, through one or several ways, would communicate with our hearts.

**Question 3: *Mention some ways through which God reveals His will in marriage to us.***

**“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant”. “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye”** (Psalms 25:14; 32:8). Some of the ways through which God reveals His will to us are His word (Psalm 119:105,130), the inner voice of the Holy Spirit-prompting, directing, influencing or checking us (John 10:4,5,27), direct revelation (Job 33:14-18), or special, God-given love that cannot be quenched by temporal and contrary circumstances. As an individual Christian, learn and know how God, your Father, speaks to you in your daily events. Whatever channel God chooses to communicate with us, two things are clear: one, the channel will be consistent with His usual regular method through which He has been speaking to you in your day to day decisions. Two, it must be consistent with the written word of God. If any revelation we receive contradicts the scriptures in any way, we must reject the revelation, vision or dream. To be sure of God’s leading, there are four principles of testing God’s will in marriage. One, promise test – you should see whether your decision is based on faith or assumption, feeling or presumption. Does the promise of God cover the revealed will? Two, purpose test- will the prospective partner help you to fulfill the purpose and objective of God for your life? Three, peace test – does the decision give you peace of mind? Four, Pastor’s test – tell your Pastor of your decision. Our attitude as Christians should be to **“prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Romans 12:2).

**PITFALLS AND PROBLEMS TO AVOID BEFORE MARRIAGE** (Deuteronomy 18:9; Jeremiah 10:1,2; Exodus 34:12-16; Leviticus 18:1-30; Deuteronomy 7:1-6; Ezra 9:1,2; Nehemiah 13:23-28; Malachi 2:14-17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Proverbs 31:30; Judges 14:1-3).

**“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations”** (Deuteronomy 18:9). As we seek to know the will of God in marriage, there are some pitfalls to avoid.

**Question 4: *What are the pitfalls to avoid in seeking to know the will of God in marriage?***

The Holy Bible is the final authority in every matter for heaven-bound youths. Therefore, let everyone take heed not to turn to the right or to the

left, as we discover God's will in marriage. Some of the pitfalls are: (1) do not walk by sight (Genesis 6:2-5). To go by what you see such as material possession and secular position of a believer is to walk by sight. It is the possession of a godly heart that makes a good home. (2) Remove every idol from your heart. Your idol may not be God's will for you (Ezekiel 14:3, 4, 7). (3) Do not marry an unbeliever. God does not allow unequal yoke in marriage (2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 6:15, 16). (4) Avoid the carnal practice of those who allow others to pick partners for them. (5) Do not choose a life partner based on infatuation<sup>1</sup> (Genesis 34:1-4).

**“For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously”** (Malachi 2:16). It is necessary to be guided by God in such an important issue of life as marriage. However, where some refuse to follow the word of God in this area of marriage, the consequences can be unbearable. The problems of disobeying God include disappointment, dissatisfaction, disgrace or even divorce and premature death. **“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”** (Proverbs 29:1).

**PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE TO FOLLOW BEFORE MARRIAGE** (Genesis 24:49-52; Proverbs 24:27; Philippians 4:4,5; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Corinthians 10 31; Psalm 128:1-4; Proverbs 31:10-31; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-8).

After knowing the will of God, the first step to take is to see your local Pastor who will direct you on the other necessary scriptural guidelines for a happy marriage. He will direct you to appointed leaders in the Church charged with the responsibility of guiding young brethren in marriage. This group of leaders in our Church is called the Marriage Committee. The Marriage Committee is not for only the workers and it is to assist couple-to-be to do things **“decently and in order”**. Parents' consent is vital and needs to be obtained. It gives the Church the authority to allow the intending couple to begin courtship.

***Question 5: What is courtship and why is it necessary?***

Courtship is a period for the intending couples to learn and know each other through regular discussions which prepares the couple towards their future family life. During the courtship, holiness must be the watchword. Openness needs to be their mutual<sup>1</sup> principles. Prayers should be made the centre of the period. Problems, mountains and oppositions are dissolved through prayers. Also, provisions are brought down from heaven through prayers. During the courtship, each of the intending couple should have his/her expectations guided and moderated. Neither of the two should impose his or her ideas and make

the other the dumping ground of thoughts. If a difficult problem is discovered, seek counselling from your Pastor; mature, dependable Christian family; or the Marriage Committee. Do not cover sin or evil because you want to marry by all means. Remember, a broken courtship is better than a broken marriage.

To ensure courtship period is free from sin, here are some scriptural helps on how to keep you pure. One, the place of meeting must be open, where other people can see you. Where it becomes necessary to discuss anything outside the schedule period or to travel together, always involve a matured third party. Two, the posture of the intending couple must not be one that can play on your partner's emotion. Three, plan and prepare for the things you would like to discuss in your meeting. Four, purity of heart and life should be your watchword. **"Abstain from all appearance of evil"** (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Five, prayer should be given the right place during courtship. Six, there should be complete dressing.

After courtship, Christian engagement and wedding follow. These two occasions should be delightful and desirable but should not turn into a place of displaying worldliness. **"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand"** (Philippians 4:4,5). At our engagements and weddings, no form of deception should be allowed. We must also avoid compromise in the areas of what we do or give as part of the engagement requirements. Anything that has to do with idolatry must be avoided. During these events, worldly adornments, practices and dressing should also be avoided. **"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"** (1 Corinthians 10:31).

After the wedding, family life begins. It is a learning experience that can only be terminated by death. There is need for adjustments by both husband and wife. These initial adjustments will work only in an environment of humility, love, patience and temperance. Fellowship and affection in the family can be kept alive through the following: (1) Fervent love for one another (1 John 3:11-18); (2) Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25); (3) Kindness to each other (Ephesians 4:32); (5) Peace for each other; (6) Comfort for each other (1 Thessalonians 4:18); (7) Praying for each other (James 5:16); (8) Forgiving each other (Colossians 3:13); (9) Bearing each other's burdens (Galatians (6:2); (10) Submitting to each other (Ephesians 5:21); (11) Speaking no evil against each other (James 4:11); (12) Grudging not against each other (James 5:9) etc. Remember little things matter and little things hurt.

There are many areas of conflicts in the home. Some of them are: giving place to the devil through the third parties, worldliness, carnal comparison, lack of love and affection, childlessness, lack of submission by the wife and lack of money. Whatever the problems are in the family, the word of God has solutions. God instituted marriage and He has adequately provided for the happiness in our families. God's will for every family is that they live the days of heaven here on earth. This is

attainable if we will allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and prayerfully commit ourselves to work towards a happy, healthy and holy home. As young boys and girls, we should prepare, pray and be patient till we are matured for marriage. Be ready to obey God, learn to hear from Him now and your family will be blessed.

**Question 6: In the light of today's study, answer TRUE or FALSE:**

- a). Boys and girls should stop going to school but plan for marriage now.
- b). Girlfriend and boyfriend relationship should be encouraged since there is intention to marry one another.
- c). Christian youths should pray for God's guidance before choosing a life partner in the future.
- d). The Bible does not encourage Christians to marry unbelievers.
- e). God has a good plan, purpose and promise for every Christian youth concerning marriage.

**"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"** (John 13:17).

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Acts 13:1-13	Isaiah 64:1-12
MON	" 13:14-25	" 65:1-25
TUE	" 13:26-43	" 66:1-24
WED	" 13:44-50	Jer 1:1-19
THUR	" 14:1-10	" 2:1-20
FRI	" 14:11-20	" 2:21-37
SAT	" 14:21-28	" 3:1-25

