

**Adult
Bible Study in
Simplified
English**

Study Guide

***Created for
Relationships***



WRITER
Janet Roberts

BAPTISTWAY PRESS
Dallas, Texas
baptistwaypress.org

Adult Bible Study in Simplified English Study Guide

Created for Relationships

Copyright © 2015 by BAPTISTWAY PRESS®
All rights reserved.
First edition: May 2015

Permission is granted for a church to make as many copies of this publication as needed for use within its ministry. Copies of this publication are not to be sold, distributed, or used in any other manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations. For information, contact BAPTISTWAY PRESS, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 333 North Washington, Dallas, TX 75246-1798.

BAPTISTWAY PRESS® is registered in U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW LIFE Version, Copyright © 1969, 1976, 1978, 1983, 1986, Christian Literature International, P.O. Box 777, Canby, OR 97013. Used by permission. Identified by "N.L.V."

Adult Bible Study in Simplified English

is published by BaptistWay Press. These quarterly studies follow the same curriculum plan as the BaptistWay Adult Bible Study curriculum.

Teachers may wish to purchase BaptistWay Adult Bible Study materials as additional resources. These may be ordered through your church or directly:

Order online at: baptistwaypress.texasbaptists.org

Order by phone: (U.S. toll free): 1-866-249-1799

Mon—Fri, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (Central Time)

Order by email: baptistway@texasbaptists.org

Additional contact information:

BaptistWay Press
333 N. Washington
Dallas, TX 75246-1798
Phone: 214-828-5100
Fax: 214-828-5376

Cover image courtesy of Vichaya Kiatying-Angsulee at
FreeDigitalPhotos.net.

BAPTISTWAY PRESS®

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Executive Director

Baptist General Convention of Texas
David Hardage

Director, Church Ministry Resources
Chris Liebrum

Director, Bible Study/Discipleship Team
Phil Miller

Publisher, BAPTISTWAY PRESS®
Scott Stevens

LANGUAGE MATERIALS TEAM

Study Guide Writer

Created for Relationships
Janet Roberts, Prestonwood Baptist Church
Dallas, Texas

Study Guide Editor

Created for Relationships
Amy Barker, First Baptist Church, Belton, Texas
Cindy Dake, First Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas

Director

Office of Intercultural Ministries
Baptist General Convention of Texas
Patty Lane

*Made possible by your gifts to
the Mary Hill Davis Offering®
for Texas Missions*

Created for Relationships

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why you are here? Why has God placed you on the earth at this time? What is the purpose of your life? These are some big questions!

The Bible speaks to these questions through the words of Jesus. He reminds us what the Old Testament said about what is important in our life:

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest of the Laws.” The second is like it, “You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.” All the Laws and the writings of the early preachers depend on these two most important Laws.

(Matthew 22:37-40)

Jesus also told His followers why they are alive and what they should do:

All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go and make followers of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do all the things I have told you. And I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

(Matthew 28:18-20)

Loving God and loving our neighbors is a result of growing as followers of Jesus. It makes us want to go and help other people

know of Jesus’ love and forgiveness. One of the most important ideas in the Bible is *relationships*. God has created us for a relationship with Him through His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. He has also created us to be in relationship with others. In Genesis 2:18, God said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” From the beginning, we are created to be in relationship with God and people.

This study covers 13 important relationships, beginning with our relationship with God. More than ever, the outside world needs to see followers of Christ who love as Jesus loved. They need to see Christians who are guided by their relationship with God. As Christ followers, we have been given the work of telling and showing the world how God loves them. We are to tell how God no longer holds people’s sins against them:

So from now on, we do not think about what people are like by looking at them. We even thought about Christ that way one time. But we do not think of Him that way anymore. For if a man belongs to Christ, he is a new person. The old life is gone. New life has begun. All this comes from God. He is the One Who brought us to Himself when we hated Him. He did this through Christ. Then He gave us the work of bringing others to Him. God was in

Christ. He was working through Christ to bring the whole world back to Himself. God no longer held men's sins against them. And He gave us the work of telling and showing men this. We are Christ's missionaries. God is speaking to you through us. We are speaking for Christ and we ask you from our hearts to turn from your sins and come to God. Christ never sinned but God put our sin on Him. Then we are made right with God because of what Christ has done for us.
(2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

One of the most important ways to obey God is to help people find a loving relationship with Him. We start with our own relationship with God. We must know how much we are loved before we can love others.

Then we look at our relationships with other people. God has given us this work of loving others in His name. We need to understand more about our relationships with our spouse, children, parents, and other family members. These are sometimes hard relationships where we need to know about God's love so we can share it.

Our relationships with friends, enemies, neighbors, and others in our community are next. Should we treat our enemies differently than we treat our friends? How can we show love to our neighbors? What does God say about these relationships?

Then there are the relationships that have to do with leadership in our lives.

Employers, government, and church leaders are all a part of the life of a believer. What can we do if the leaders do not follow God's Word? Should we pray for the leaders of our government? What should our relationship with these leaders look like?

We close with two final lessons: one on our relationship with other believers and one with those who are not yet believers. How are these relationships different? How should we treat those who are not yet in the family of God? What does God say we should do? The answers to these and other questions will help us to live a love-filled and joy-filled life in Jesus.

About the Writer

Janet Roberts has taught ESL since 1976 and is now serving as a home missionary in Plano, Texas, where she trains teachers. She has taught English in China. She also co-teaches a Ladies International Bible Study at her church where she and her husband, Doug, are members. They have four children, three of whom are married, and two granddaughters.

Created for Relationships

Lesson Overview

Lesson 1	God	Genesis 1:26-31; Romans 5:1-11
Lesson 2	Self	1 Samuel 16:1-7; Psalm 139:1-18
Lesson 3	Husbands and Wives	Ephesians 5:21-33
Lesson 4	Children	Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:1-9
Lesson 5	Parents	Exodus 20:12; Luke 2:45-52; John 19:25-27
Lesson 6	Friends	Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1 Samuel 20:1-17, 27-42
Lesson 7	Enemies	Luke 6:27-36; Romans 12:17-21
Lesson 8	Neighbors/Community	Exodus 20:13-17; Leviticus 19:16-18; Zechariah 7:8-10; Matthew 5:13-16
Lesson 9	Employer	Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-25; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-11
Lesson 10	Government	Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4
Lesson 11	Church Leaders	Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17-18
Lesson 12	Christians	Acts 4:32-37; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 6:9-10; Hebrews 10:24-25
Lesson 13	All People Everywhere	2 Corinthians 5:11-21; 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 4:2-6

Created for Relationships

Word List

Lesson 1

confused: not thought about in a clear way; not able to make a clear choice or to understand

created: to make or form something; to cause something new to exist

creation: the act of making or producing something that did not exist before; something that has been *created*

decision: what a person chooses to think, say, or do; a choice

universe: everything that is seen or not seen and was created by God, the planets and stars and everything in and around them.

Lesson 2

Messiah: A person who is expected to save people from a very bad situation; Christians believe Jesus was the Messiah told about by Old Testament prophets. Jews today are still waiting for the Messiah to be sent by God.

popular: liked by many people

prophet: one who speaks to others for God

purpose: the reason something is done; an aim or goal

sovereignty: unlimited power; knowing and controlling everything

Lesson 3

command: to tell others what to do

commitment: a promise to be loyal

divorce: to end a marriage

responds: to do something in answer to something else that has or is being done

sacrificially: making a sacrifice; willingly giving up something important for a greater purpose

submit: to agree to obey; to yield to another

Lesson 4

assume: to believe to be true without asking or knowing for sure

encourage: give courage, hope or help to keep going and to keep getting better

graduate: to finish well enough to go on to something else, for example from one level of school to another.

journey: a trip from one place to another or from one part of life to another

launch: to send up into space as in a ship that goes up; to send children out of the home

outer space: what is beyond the earth's air, where the other planets and stars are

Lesson 5

loyalty: showing constant support to someone or something; being faithful

provide: to give what is needed

selfish: caring too much about oneself with little or no thought or care for others

volunteers: people who work without pay

Lesson 6

available: present and with someone; willing to talk with, listen to, or help someone

benefits: those things that help or give good

jealous: feeling an unhappy desire for what someone else has or can do

protection: to stop or keep from hurt or danger

support: to provide for in a way that helps

Created for Relationships

Word List

Lesson 7

directions: commands, or orders in what or how to do something

generously: giving freely; sharing a lot, not little

lend: to let someone use something of yours

treat: to act toward in a good, bad or other way

treatment: the way you are treated

Lesson 8

connect: to join two or more things together

encouraged: to give hope or help

warned: to tell of danger before it happens

Lesson 9

attitude: a feeling or way of thinking that affects your actions

principle: a rule or belief that helps you know what is right or wrong

work ethic: the way a person does his job—by doing it very well or by doing it in a lazy way

Lesson 10

citizenship: the rights and duties of a person who lives in a community, state, or country

crime: doing something that breaks the law

politics: anything to do with government

Lesson 11

attacked: to try to hurt or destroy someone or something

explains: to make something clear or easy to understand

responsibility: a duty or task you are expected to do

result: something that happens because of something else that was done before

Lesson 12

nickname: a name that is different from your real name; usually what family or friends call you

persecution: to treat someone in a cruel way because of race or religious/political beliefs

sacrifice: giving up something for someone else

selfless: showing great concern for other people but little concern for self

Lesson 13

deserve: used to say that someone should have or be given something

gratitude: a feeling of thanks; thankfulness

passion: a strong liking or excitement about something

persuade: to talk someone into doing something or believing something

Created for Relationships

Memory Verses

Lesson 1

“But God showed His love to us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
(Romans 5:8)

Lesson 2

“Your eyes saw me before I was put together. And all the days of my life were written in Your book before any of them came to be.”
(Psalm 139:16)

Lesson 3

“Be willing to help and care for each other because of Christ. By doing this, you honor Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21)

Lesson 4

“Be willing to help and care for each other because of Christ. By doing this, you honor Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21)

Lesson 5

“Honor your father and your mother, so your life may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you.” (Exodus 20:12)

Lesson 6

“A man who has friends must be a friend, but there is a friend who stays nearer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24)

Lesson 7

“Do for other people what you would like to have them do for you.” (Luke 6:31)

Lesson 8

“Let your light shine in front of men. Then they will see the good things you do and will honor your Father Who is in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:16)

Lesson 9

“Be happy as you work. Do your work as for the Lord, not for men.” (Ephesians 6:7)

Lesson 10

“Pray for kings and all others who are in power over us so we might live quiet God-like lives in peace.” (1 Timothy 2:2)

Lesson 11

“We are to grow up and be more like Christ. He is the leader of the church.” (Ephesians 4:15)

Lesson 12

“Because of this, we should do good to everyone. For sure, we should do good to those who belong to Christ.” (Galatians 6:10)

Lesson 13

“Be wise in the way you live around those who are not Christians. Make good use of your time.” (Colossians 4:5)

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 1: God

Bible Text

Genesis 1:26-31; Romans 5:1-11

Memory Verse

"But God showed His love to us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Word List

confused: not thought about in a clear way; not able to make a clear choice or to understand

created: to make or form something; to cause something new to exist

creation: the act of making or producing something that did not exist before; something that has been *created*

decision: what a person chooses to think, say, or do; a choice

universe: everything that is seen or not seen and was created by God, the planets and stars and everything in and around them.

I went to China to teach English one summer. I taught my students about English and answered their questions about God. One student wanted to know more. She had made a **decision** to learn more about God. I was happy to help answer her questions.

Many people have never heard about the one true God who loves them and wants to be known and loved. Some have heard but are **confused** about who God is.

"You mean God can understand Chinese?" another young friend asked me. I had given her a Bible and a Bible study written in Chinese. I told her that God understands every language. God **created** languages (Genesis 11). She had been praying in English because she had learned about God from an English teacher. The God she knew about was like her teacher. But God is so much greater than any person.

People were created by God. People were created to be like God. But God is so much greater. We could study about God for all of our lives and never understand everything there is to know about Him.

God is Greater than People (Gen. 1:26-31)

Genesis is the first book in the Bible. Many ideas in this part of Genesis help us understand the 66 books of the Bible. We learn that God created the **universe**. God created the animals on earth. Then God decided to make people on the earth. People were special. God talked to people, not to animals. God walked and talked with the first two people, Adam and Eve.

God is greater than people. In Genesis 1:26, God says "Let Us make man like Us...."

Why does God say “Us”? Because God is one but more than one. There are many places in the Bible that describe God as more than one (we, ours, us). The word the Bible uses in Genesis 1:1 is a Hebrew word that means God is more than one (Hebrew word: *Elohim*, pronounced “el-o-heem”).

This is very hard to understand. But it is very important because the Bible uses that same Hebrew word more than 4,000 times to describe God. The Bible tells us clearly that “the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). We learn in the rest of the Bible that God is Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit.* God is all three. God is one. God is greater than our minds can understand. God is God.

The English language does not have a good word to use to talk about God. We use the word *He*. Many other languages have a better word. God is like us—because we were made in His image. God made us male or female. But He is not limited by being male or female Himself, as people are. God is greater than people. God is greater than our minds can understand. God is God.

People: God’s Greatest Creation (Genesis 1:26-31)

These verses tell us about people, too. God created people “in His own likeness”

*See *Matthew 28:18-20; John 8:58; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6* for more examples.

(v. 27). This means we are like God, but we are not God. How are people like God? We know what is right and what is wrong. We can make things. We can think about life and many ideas. People can rule over animals and take care of plants. There are many things we can do that are like God. People were the only beings created in God’s likeness.

God made people to have a relationship with Him. This is an important reason that God made us. Some people have a good relationship with God. Some people hate God. Other people do not know God.

God talked to Adam and Eve. He told them He wanted good things for them. He told them to have children. Those children would have more children. God wanted the whole earth to be full of people.

God gave them work to do. God told them to rule over the animals and take care of the plants. He wanted them to care for the world He created.

God created people and asked us to have a relationship with Him. We are able to know what God wants us to be and do. We are able to obey God. And sometimes we don’t obey God.

Here is what we have learned about God in this lesson so far:

- God has always been alive and always will be alive. He is forever.

- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all part of our one Lord.
- God created people to have relationships. We are to have a relationship with God and with each other.
- God wants us to care for each other and His creation.
- When God saw all that He had created, He said that it was very good.

The Answer to Our Brokenness (Romans 5:1-11)

At the end of Genesis 2, creation was perfect. God, people, and all of creation lived together in a perfect relationship. However, in Genesis 3, everything changed. Adam and Eve disobeyed God. To disobey God in any way is to sin.

Their sin broke the perfect relationship they had with God. It was not the same after they sinned. They could no longer live in the perfect garden that God had made for them. Life became very hard for them.

Things to Think About

1. Do you know a good word for God that does not mean a male person? Can you explain it? What do you use this word for other than for God?
2. How are people like God?
3. How is God greater than people?
4. What do these verses in Genesis and Romans tell us about God?
5. What do they tell us about people?
6. What is your relationship with God like? How does it look to your family and friends?

In Romans 5:1-11, a follower of Jesus named Paul wrote about God’s plan for fixing the brokenness that started with Adam and Eve. God still wanted a perfect relationship with His people. He made a plan to save us (John 3:16). His plan would pay for the sins of every person. His plan meant that Jesus would come to earth and live a life without sin. Then Jesus would die to pay for all our sins. God gave Himself—through His Son Jesus—as the perfect, sinless payment for our sins.

On the third day after Jesus died on a cruel Roman cross, He came to life again. Jesus fixed the relationship between God and people. “The Son gave His own life so we could be clean from all sin” (Hebrews 1:1-4). This plan is God’s gift to us.

We have to accept this gift to be forgiven and free from the power of sin. When we trust in Jesus and His work on the cross, God no longer sees us as guilty of sin. This is because of what He has done, not what we do (Ephesians 2:8-9). Accept Jesus as the only one who can save you from your sins, and you will live with Him forever in heaven one day!

Our relationship with God can be made new. However, we still live in a broken world. There is still much hurt and pain. There is still sin and brokenness. We have peace with God, but we still have trouble around us and sometimes in our own lives. Bad things will happen. However, God can use the hard and

troubled times for our good. During those troubled times, we can show God's love and shining-greatness to others. We can learn more about God and about ourselves during those times. We can be an example to others when life is hard.

Jesus was sent by God to save people from their sins. The God who created us loves us and wants us to be with Him forever. Sin does not have power over those who trust Him. People are able to have a wonderful relationship with God, their Creator. When we accept this, we will want to tell others this good news!

Genesis 1:26-31

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man like Us and let him be head over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every thing that moves on the ground."

27 And God made man in His own likeness. In the likeness of God He made him. He made both male and female.

28 And God wanted good to come to them, saying, "Give birth to many. Grow in number. Fill the earth and rule over it. Rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

29 Then God said, "See, I have given you every plant that gives seeds that is on the earth, and every tree that has fruit that gives seeds. They will be food for you.

30 I have given every green plant for food to every animal of the earth, and to every bird of the

sky, and to every thing that moves on the earth that has life." And it was so.

31 God saw all that He had made and it was very good. There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Romans 5:1-11

1 Now that we have been made right with God by putting our trust in Him, we have peace with Him. It is because of what our Lord Jesus Christ did for us.

2 By putting our trust in God, He has given us His loving-favor and has received us. We are happy for the hope we have of sharing the shining-greatness of God.

3 We are glad for our troubles also. We know that troubles help us learn not to give up.

4 When we have learned not to give up, it shows we have stood the test. When we have stood the test, it gives us hope.

5 Hope never makes us ashamed because the love of God has come into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who was given to us.

6 We were weak and could not help ourselves. Then Christ came at the right time and gave His life for all sinners.

7 No one is willing to die for another person, but for a good man someone might be willing to die.

8 But God showed His love to us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Now that we have been saved from the punishment of sin by the blood of Christ, He will save us from God's anger also.

10 We hated God. But we were saved from the punishment of sin by the death of Christ. He has brought us back to God and we will be saved by His life.

11 Not only that, we give thanks to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have been brought back to God.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 2: Self

Bible Text

1 Samuel 16:1-7; Psalm 139:1-18

Memory Verse

“Your eyes saw me before I was put together.
And all the days of my life were written in Your
book before any of them came to be.”
(Psalm 139:16)

Word List

Messiah: A person who is expected to save people from a very bad situation; Christians believe Jesus was the Messiah told about by Old Testament prophets. Jews today are still waiting for the Messiah to be sent by God.

popular: liked by many people

prophet: one who speaks to others for God

purpose: the reason something is done; an aim or goal

sovereignty: unlimited power; knowing and controlling everything

“Don’t judge a book by its cover” is a **popular** saying in the United States. It means that you should not look only at the outside of something. If you do, you may miss something good that is on the inside. You might not choose well if you pick a book

without opening it. You may miss finding good friends or employees if you reject people because of how they look.

How something looks is important. But some much more important things cannot be seen so quickly. This is true of many things, but very true of people. How do you judge people? How much do looks matter to you?

Look Inside, not Outside (1 Sam. 16:1-7)

Samuel, the **prophet**, knew King Saul well. Saul was the first King of Israel. God had told Samuel to put oil on Saul when he was a young man. Putting oil on Saul’s head was a way to show that he was the king.

But after a while, Saul was not a good king. He could become angry very quickly. He would yell and throw things when he was angry. God decided Israel needed a new king.

Samuel did not want to obey God when God told him to put oil on a new king for Israel. Samuel was afraid of Saul. He feared what Saul would do to him if he put oil on a new king. But God answered Samuel’s fear with a plan.

God sent Samuel to Jesse’s family in Bethlehem. Jesse was from the family of Judah, a special family from which the Jews believed the **Messiah** would come. God told Samuel to take a cow with him as a gift to the Lord. Everyone would be happy to see the prophet had brought a gift.

Samuel obeyed God. Samuel told the leaders in Bethlehem that he came in peace. While he was giving the gift, he met Jesse and one of Jesse's sons. Samuel knew God had chosen one of his sons to be the new king. After meeting them, he thought God would choose Jesse's oldest son, Eliab. He liked what he saw of that son.

God answered Samuel with one of the most important sentences in the Bible. He told Samuel that He does not judge by looking at the outside, the way people do. Instead, God looks at a person's heart.

In Samuel's day—and our day—many people think only about how people look. They think looking good is the same as being good. God does not do this. Believers in Jesus should think like God. We should not think about how popular, rich, or powerful someone is. These things do not last over time.

We are people made in the likeness of God. Our value is not decided by what we look like or what we have. Our worth is not tied to what we do or how many people like us. We are God's creation, His children. What matters is what God thinks about us. He looks at the heart. He does not care what kind of car we drive or what size our house is. He wants our love and loyalty. Our hearts are most important to God.

Samuel put oil on Jesse's youngest son, David, as the next king of Israel. He became a

great leader. Later people would call Jesus “the Son of David” in praise (Matthew 21:9). David was the example for all future kings to follow. God said, “David, Jesse's son, will please My heart. He will do all I want done” (Acts 13:22).

A Personal God (Psalm 139:1-6)

David was a poet, music person, and a writer. The Book of Psalms has helped people worship God since it was written. It includes hymns, prayers, prophecies, and poems. It has 150 psalms, and David wrote over 70 of them.

David wrote Psalm 139. The first four verses teach us that God is a personal God. He knows everything about every person's life. He knows when we sit down and stand up. He knows our thoughts before we think them. He knows when we travel and when we are lying down. He knows what we will say before the words leave our lips. God cares about every part of our lives, and He is always with us. God knows us better than we know ourselves. The words *know* or *known* are used five times in these verses. Our God knows us!

An All-Powerful God (Psalm 139:7-12)

Next, David writes about God's **sovereignty** over all of the universe. God knows all and is in control of everything. David says he can never get away from God

at any time. God is everywhere, all the time. Even when we feel that the darkness will be too much for us, God is with us.

To God, there is no difference between night and day. He can see our lives as they are, and He leads us. He can see in the dark when we cannot. Everything in our lives is in God's loving hand. This powerful truth can give comfort and peace to God's children. He is always with us. He helps us.

God's personal knowledge of our lives points to His loving concern for us. We are important to God. He cares deeply about us. Our lives are changed when we search for worth and find it in God. Too often we look to our world and popular people for truth. We need to know the truth about how God sees us and how much we matter to Him. He does not look at our riches, our popularity, or our sinful past. God loves and cares for us.

Created for a Purpose (Psalm 139:13-18)

God's sovereignty is working for us

Things to Think About

1. Why is it important to know that God looks at the heart and not the outside?
2. How have you judged people by looking at them? How have you been judged when people look at you?
3. What does the world say about a person's worth? Why do you think the world sees some people as worth more than others?
4. What does this psalm teach you about your worth?

inside our mothers before we are born. No person is an accident. God is the Creator of our souls and bodies. He is the Life-giver. His wonderful creation is seen in the heavens as well as inside a mother (Psalm 19:1).

David writes of the greatness of how God made us. He says this truth brings fear. The word *fear* is often found in the Old Testament. We read in Proverbs that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of much learning" (Proverbs 1:7). In this instance, *fear* means "respect, wonder, or great and holy love." We wonder over a God who creates us with such greatness and detail.

God shows holy love and respect for every life. He is so interested in each of us that He is in every part of our lives. He is part of every baby growing inside its mother's body. God made each person different from any other person. It is a great and powerful work.

David also talks about God's **purpose** and plan for every person. God has written our days in His book before they happen. He created us for a purpose. He wants us to love Him, to know Him, and to serve Him. God is wonderfully able to create. He works in all parts of life. God's ways and thoughts are too many for us to count or to understand.

God's thoughts are important to us. Each one of us is of great worth to God. How others think of us does not matter. We must see ourselves as God sees us.

1 Samuel 16:1-7

1 The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you be filled with sorrow because of Saul, since I have turned away from him being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse of Bethlehem. For I have chosen a king for Myself among his sons.”

2 But Samuel said, “How can I go? Saul will kill me when he hears about it.” The Lord said, “Take a young cow with you, and say, ‘I have come to give a gift to the Lord.’”

3 Ask Jesse to come when you give the gift, and I will show you what you should do. You will choose for Me the one I name to you.”

4 So Samuel did what the Lord said, and came to Bethlehem. The leaders of the city came shaking with fear to meet him. They said, “Do you come in peace?”

5 Samuel said, “I have come in peace to give a gift to the Lord. Make yourselves holy and come with me as I give the gift.” He set apart Jesse and his sons also, and asked them to come to the gift-giving.

6 When they had come, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, “For sure he is the Lord’s chosen one who is standing before Him.”

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at the way he looks on the outside or how tall he is, because I have not chosen him. For the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. A man looks at the outside of a person, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

Psalm 139:1-18

1 O Lord, You have looked through me and have known me.

2 You know when I sit down and when I get up. You understand my thoughts from far away.

3 You look over my path and my lying down. You know all my ways very well.

4 Even before I speak a word, O Lord, You know it all.

5 You have closed me in from behind and in front. And You have laid Your hand upon me.

6 All You know is too great for me. It is too much for me to understand.

7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I run away from where You are?

8 If I go up to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in the place of the dead, You are there!

9 If I take the wings of the morning or live in the farthest part of the sea,

10 even there Your hand will lead me and Your right hand will hold me.

11 If I say, “For sure the darkness will cover me and the light around me will be night,”

12 even the darkness is not dark to You. And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are the same to You.

13 For You made the parts inside me. You put me together inside my mother.

14 I will give thanks to You, for the greatness of the way I was made brings fear. Your works are great and my soul knows it very well.

15 My bones were not hidden from You when I was made in secret and put together with care in the deep part of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw me before I was put together. And all the days of my life were written in Your book before any of them came to be.

17 Your thoughts are of great worth to me, O God. How many there are!

18 If I could number them, there would be more than the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 3: Husbands and Wives

Bible Text

Ephesians 5:21-33

Memory Verse

"Be willing to help and care for each other because of Christ. By doing this, you honor Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)

Word List

command: to tell others what to do

commitment: a promise to be loyal

divorce: to end a marriage

responds: to do something in answer to something else that has or is being done

sacrificially: making a sacrifice; willingly giving up something important for a greater purpose

submit: to agree to obey; to yield to another

Almost everything in a wedding has a special name. The man getting married is called the groom. The woman getting married is called the bride. The promise they make to each other is called their wedding vow.

The vow often includes these words: "I, (name), take you, (name), for my lawful wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for

poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part."

The bride and groom then give each other rings. They make promises as they place the rings on their fingers. The leader of the church blesses them. He is the first to call them husband and wife. He then states that what God has joined together, no one should divide. A wedding is a wonderful time. Two people in love make the promise of a life-long **commitment** to each other.

What happens after the wedding? Most people take a vacation trip called a honeymoon. They take time to get to know each other. They spend time alone together.

After the honeymoon comes the marriage. Many people are not sure how to be a husband or wife. Paul wrote a letter to the people in Ephesus. His letter tells believers how to be better husbands and wives.

After the Honeymoon (Ephesians 5:21-25)

In the Greek language that Paul used, verse 21 ends a long sentence that starts in verse 18. Here is the whole section translated into English, separated into several sentences:

Do not get drunk with wine. That leads to wild living. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit. Tell of your joy to each other by singing the Songs of David and church songs. Sing in your heart to the Lord. Always give thanks for all things to

God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be willing to help and care for each other because of Christ. By doing this, you honor Christ.

(Ephesians 5:18-21)

These **commands** all fit together. They tell us how to live a life that pleases God. They are a good beginning to what comes next about how husbands and wives should treat each other.

Paul called on us to be filled with the Spirit. Spirit-filled believers will tell of our joy. We will sing out-loud and sing in our hearts. We will give thanks for all things. Spirit-filled believers help and care for others. We do these things to honor Jesus. We honor Jesus so that others may know Him.

Paul talked about marriage between believers. Husbands and wives start by caring for each other. They help one another. Paul then told wives to “lean toward” their own husbands. Verse 22 does not translate easily from Greek to English. The verse says, “Wives, obey your own husbands,” in English. But in Greek, the word *obey* is not used. Instead, the command in verse 21 to “help and care for each other” carries on to verse 22. The text could read, “Be willing to help and care for each other because of Christ ... wives to your own husbands as to the Lord.” Christian wives help and care for their husbands to show their love for Christ.

In this passage, Paul used the word *church* to mean all Christians through the ages. He did not mean simply a church building where believers meet. Paul used the picture of Jesus and the church as an example for marriage. Jesus is loving and kind. He is gentle as head of the church. He saves the church. The followers of Jesus choose to obey Him because they know they are deeply loved. A husband is the head of his wife in the same way. Husbands should lead as loving servants. The wife **responds** by choosing to obey because she knows she is safe and loved by her husband.

Ephesians 5:25 was a new command for husbands in Paul’s time. Husbands did not always love their wives. Many did not make promises to stay away from other women. Paul told Christian husbands to be different and better. They must love their wives as Christ loves His church.

Here Paul used the Greek word *agape* (ah-GAH-pay) for love. This means “perfect love.” It is love that has no “ifs.” “If you do this or that, I will love you.” *Agape* is used throughout the New Testament to talk about God’s love. Paul commanded Christian husbands to show *agape* love to their wives. They should follow Christ’s example. He had perfect love. He gave up His life for others.

In verse 25, Paul said that Christ sacrificed His life for the church. Paul

pictured Christ as a groom or husband. He served the church **sacrificially**. Christian husbands are to love in the same way. They should be willing to make sacrifices in love for their wives.

Marriage is a partnership between a husband and a wife. Husbands are not bosses. They are leaders. But wives also lead in marriage. Each person brings different strengths to their life together. They learn to use their strengths together when they submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21). They help one another. The husband does not lead in the home to win battles. He does not press his own will. Instead, he leads gently, following the example of Christ.

Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:26-33)

In verses 26-27, Paul used part of a very old church song. Paul's readers may have known this song well. Paul told about

Jesus and the church. Jesus has made the people of His church clean. He is making us ready for our future with Him in heaven.

Jesus shares a deep relationship with His church. Jesus calls us to grow close to Him. He wants us to share His heart and mind. We are to become like Him and to be one with Him. In the same way, husbands and wives grow together in marriage. Two people become one.

Husbands and wives become one in body. God designed this togetherness for married couples only. But this bond is about more than two bodies coming together. It includes every part of their lives. Husbands and wives are joined together deeply. This bond is hard to understand. It is like no other relationship. Two lives come together in marriage. The spirits, emotions, and bodies come together. Marriage is a beautiful picture of togetherness. It reflects the relationship that Christ has with the church.

The relationship between Christ and the church is also like God's relationship with Israel in the Old Testament. Sometimes God talked about Himself as a Groom (Isaiah 54:4). He also called Israel His bride (Isaiah 62:5). This picture helps us to understand God's love for His people. Husbands and wives follow Christ's example when they bring this deep love into their marriages.

Things to Think About

1. What would you say marriages are like today in this country? What about in other countries?
2. What makes marriage difficult in these days?
3. Tell in your own words how marriage between a man and a woman is like Christ and the church.
4. What are some ways Christians can be better examples of marriage to others?
5. What are the commands of God for husbands? What are they for wives?
6. If you are married, how is your marriage? What can you do to make your marriage better?

Many people are talking about marriage in America and around the world. Some groups want to change marriage. They want to change how it looks. They want to change how we understand it. Many people do not think marriage was created by God. They see it as a legal relationship only. To them, marriages can be made and broken easily by our courts.

Some people leave when they don't feel love anymore. They forget their vows. They seek love from other people. Many think that **divorce** is the answer to their problems. Divorce tears apart families. More than half of all marriages break apart in this country today. Sadly, believers are also getting divorces. This is not how God wants His people to treat marriage.

As Christians, we must follow what the Bible teaches even during hard times. We cannot let anyone else tell us what marriage means. The Bible is clear. Marriage is between one man and one woman for a lifetime. God planned for husbands and wives to live together for all their lives. They are to serve and give of themselves to one another. We must remember our vows.

As the church, we must help couples grow together. We must help families when they have problems. Christ is our example. When we love as He does, the joy of marriage will continue long after the wedding day.

Ephesians 5:21-33

21 Be willing to help and care for each other because of Christ. By doing this, you honor Christ.

22 Wives, obey your own husbands. In doing this, you obey the Lord.

23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. It is His body (the church) that He saves.

24 As the church is to obey Christ, wives are to obey their own husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives. You must love them as Christ loved the church. He gave His life for it.

26 Christ did this so He could set the church apart for Himself. He made it clean by the washing of water with the Word.

27 Christ did this so the church might stand before Him in shining-greatness. There is to be no sin of any kind in it. It is to be holy and without blame.

28 So men should love their wives as they love their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

29 No man hates himself. He takes care of his own body. That is the way Christ does. He cares for His body which is the church.

30 We are all a part of His body, the church.

31 For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother when he gets married and be joined to his wife. The two become one.

32 This is hard to understand, but it shows that the church is the body of Christ.

33 So every man must love his wife as he loves himself. Every wife must respect her husband.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 4: Children

Bible Text

Psalms 127:3-5; Proverbs 22:6;
Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Memory Verse

"See, children are a gift from the Lord. The children born to us are our special reward."
(Psalm 127:3)

Word List

assume: to believe to be true without asking or knowing for sure

encourage: give courage, hope or help to keep going and to keep getting better

graduate: to finish well enough to go on to something else, for example from one level of school to another.

journey: a trip from one place to another or from one part of life to another

launch: to send up into space as in a ship that goes up; to send children out of the home

outer space: what is beyond the earth's air, where the other planets and stars are

April 12, 1981, is a very important date for me. I became a mom for the first time on that day. That morning my husband and I watched the first Space Shuttle **launch**. Then I told him that we needed to go to the hospital. It was time to have our baby. We had chosen

the name Rachel for our baby daughter. But we did not think to choose a middle name for her before she was born. That day, I decided her name should remind us of **outer space**. The word *celestial* means "of the sky." That was the perfect name. The beautiful name Celeste would always remind us of this day.

When Rachel was born, God gave us a beautiful gift. She was healthy, and we were happy. Children are a gift from the Lord. We now have four gifts from the Lord. And our Rachel Celeste and her husband have two children of their own. We adore our two granddaughters. God continues to give us good gifts.

Thankful for Children (Psalm 127:3-5)

Rachel Celeste will soon be 34 years old. But she is still our daughter. We still pray for her and with her. We still talk with her about the lessons God is teaching us. She is now a parent herself. But our parenting **journey** continues.

Parenting is a life-long journey. We don't **graduate** from it when our children graduate from school. Our children will still have problems and difficulties when they are adults. We should help them when we can. We should give advice where we can. We can share our wisdom with them. Parents hold a special place in their children's lives from beginning to end.

Psalm 127 tells us how good it is to be a parent. Solomon, son of King David, wrote this psalm. He said children are a “gift” and a “reward.” Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 3:3-8). Here he gave a word-picture. Solomon’s country fought many wars. Soldiers carried arrows to defend themselves and their country. Solomon said that children are like arrows in the hand of a soldier. Having children is like being ready for a fight. Children can help parents as they get older. They can keep and work the land or business when the parents can no longer work. Children can be a great blessing!

Solomon gave another word-picture in these verses. The older men of the city would sit by the city gates. They would talk and make important decisions. A man’s enemies could go there and speak badly of him to other men. But a man’s children could also speak for him. The man with many children would have many to defend him. He would not need to worry about the bad words of others. His children would help him.

God blesses families when He gives them children. Mothers and fathers should thank God for their children. Parents care for their young children. And adult children care for their parents as they grow old. The relationship between parents and children is truly a gift from God.

Responsible for Our Children (Prov. 22:6)

Sometimes adult children run away from God and Christian beliefs. Many of their parents read this verse for comfort: “Bring up a child by teaching him the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from it.” These parents feel deeply sad when their children go away from their faith. So they read this verse as a promise and expect their children to return to God. They believe they taught their children well, so they must return. Sadly, some parents have also blamed themselves. They think this verse says that they are bad parents if their children leave behind their faith. They believe that this verse means that good teaching will keep children from turning away from God.

Parents are to teach their children the ways of God. They should be good examples for their children. They should live to please and honor God. Many parents hope that their children will grow up to honor God as well. But this verse does not teach that children will never turn away from faith. It is a proverb, not a promise. A proverb teaches a truth. Children do often follow the ways of their parents, but not always.

Sometimes children leave the church and don’t come back. Many of them have parents who taught them the ways of the Christian faith. Their choices bring great pain and guilt for their parents. We know that

children raised by the same parents do not always act the same way. Fathers and mothers can thank God for children who do follow God. They can pray for each of their children. But they cannot make their children follow God. Each person must make his or her own choices about God. Faith is not passed from parents to children like hair color or eye color. God knows and understands. Parents must simply do their best to teach their children.

Speaking Truth to Children (Deut. 6:1-9)

Moses, the great leader, and the people of Israel were moving into the land God had promised them. Moses wanted the people to stay close to their God and His ways. So he told them to obey God's Law. Moses had taught them the Law. And now they needed to follow it. If they did what God told them to

do, their children would follow their example. They would have a longer and better life.

Verses 4-5 were important to the people of Israel. Jewish people today still say these words every day in prayer. They say what they believe about God. He is only one God. He is the one and only God. All His followers must love Him in every way. Jesus quoted verse 5 when He talked about the most important Law. He added that we must also love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40).

Moses told parents to do their best to teach these important truths to their children. They were to carry their love for God in their hearts all the time. And they were to pass it on to their children. Moses commanded the people to share the joy of knowing God in their daily lives. They should talk of God when they were sitting at home, walking on the road, lying down at night, and getting up.

Parents must not **assume** their children know these truths. Mothers and fathers must teach them God's truths. Parents must **encourage** their sons and daughters to learn these truths well. Moses encouraged the people to wear the teachings on their foreheads and hands. God wanted His Word to be in the thoughts (forehead) and in the actions (hands) of His people at all times. He said to write the commands inside their homes. Today we have Scriptures on jewelry and pictures in our homes.

Things to Think About

1. How did your parents teach you the important things in life?
2. How are you teaching your children about faith in Jesus?
3. Why is it important to see your children as a gift from God?
4. What are some things parents can do to keep a good relationship with their adult children?
5. What are some things you wish you had done differently in teaching a life of faith to your children?
6. What have you learned (good or bad) from your parents' faith example?

Children need parents to teach them the ways of God. Parents are the most important teachers of God's truth to their children. The church must not be the main teacher. Mothers and fathers need to find ways to teach their children during normal family times. Meal time, prayer time, fun time, and travel time are all great times to teach God's truth.

Children are a gift from God. Parents must teach their children to be godly followers of Jesus. We must begin with a close relationship with God of our own. We cannot be a good example if we are not making time for God to speak to us. If we do this, our children will hear and see the truth lived out every day. We can launch them into the world with the faith they need to live well. The parenting journey of showing and teaching continues to adult children and grandchildren. They can learn much from our godly example.

Psalm 127:3-5

3 See, children are a gift from the Lord. The children born to us are our special reward.

4 The children of a young man are like arrows in the hand of a soldier.

5 Happy is the man who has many of them. They will not be put to shame when they speak in the gate with those who hate them.

Proverbs 22:6

6 Bring up a child by teaching him the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from it.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

1 "These are the Laws which the Lord your God has told me to teach you. You are to do them in the land you are going to take for your own.

2 Then you and your son and your grandson will fear the Lord your God. You will obey all His Laws that I tell you, all the days of your life. And then you will have a longer life.

3 O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do them. Then it will go well with you. And you will become many in a land flowing with milk and honey. This is what the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you.

4 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord!

5 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

6 Keep these words in your heart that I am telling you today.

7 Do your best to teach them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up.

8 Tie them as something special to see on your hand and on your forehead.

9 Write them beside the door of your house and on your gates.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 5: Parents

Bible Text

Exodus 20:12; Luke 2:45-52; John 19:25-27

Memory Verse

"Honor your father and your mother, so your life may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you." (Exodus 20:12)

Word List

loyalty: showing constant support to someone or something; being faithful

provide: to give what is needed

selfish: caring too much about oneself with little or no thought or care for others

volunteers: people who work without pay

More than 40 **volunteers** worked in the English classes at my church. Sometimes volunteer teachers had to stop teaching for different reasons. I remember three women who left for a very important reason. They loved to teach and hated to stop. But they had something more important in their lives—their moms. They could no longer teach because they needed to care for their moms. They needed to obey God's command to love and honor their parents. They cried because

they would miss their students. But they were happy to show honor and love to their parents by taking care of them.

Parents take care of their children while they are young. When parents get older, they need their children to care for them. This is the right thing to do. It is the command of God to honor our parents from the time we are young until they are no longer with us.

God's Command: How to Treat Parents (Exodus 20:12)

All of the Old Testament Laws can be put together in two commands. The first is to love God with all your being. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40). The Ten Commandments are examples of these two most important commandments. The first four teach about our relationship with God. The last six teach about our relationship with others, beginning with our parents.

The fifth commandment says to honor your father and your mother. To honor means to give respect. God's command teaches us how to treat our parents. We show our parents how much we love them when we give them honor. We show them we are thankful for them. We give them our time. We care for them. We love them in what we say and do. God's command is to give honor to both mothers and fathers. Both parents should receive honor from their children.

This command has a promise: “that your life may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” This promise does not always mean a long life for every person. But families are stronger when children honor and respect their parents. The church becomes stronger. The nation becomes stronger.

But bad things happen when children do not respect their parents. Bad choices lead to broken families, broken laws, and broken lives. Broken lives sometimes end early. This is a sad truth. Children get a better start in life when they learn to honor their parents.

The fifth command is for children of all ages. It has the strongest meaning for adult children. Grown children should take care of their older parents when the parents can no longer take care of themselves. Children sometimes become **selfish**. They decide to just take care of their own children. Jesus knew this and reminded the religious leaders of His day about this command. They were not caring for their parents (Matthew 15:3-9).

Honoring aging parents is not always easy. Sometimes it costs time or money. It may mean changing plans. Other times, it means we cannot do something we love to do. Honoring our parents may mean letting them make their own decisions. Or it may mean making decisions for our parents. Both children and parents will need the Lord’s help to know how to honor one another.

Jesus’ Example: How a Child Treats Parents (Luke 2:45-52)

Jesus lived His life as an example for us in how to live. Many stories from His life teach us how to treat one another. The New Testament gives us two stories that show how He treated His parents.

When Jesus was 12, He took a trip with His parents to Jerusalem for a Jewish religious holiday. The family stayed in Jerusalem for two days. After this time, Mary and Joseph started the trip back home. But Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.

For safety, large groups travelled together. At His age, Jesus could have walked with the women and younger children at the front of the group. Or He might have stayed with the men and older boys at the back. Mary and Joseph did not know that He was not with either group. They each thought He was somewhere in the group. But when they stopped for the night, they found that Jesus was missing.

Mary and Joseph rushed back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. Three days later, they found Him in the Temple with the religious teachers. Jesus was listening to them, and He was asking them questions. Jesus’ actions surprised Mary and Joseph. Jesus was an obedient son. Why did He not leave Jerusalem when they did? They wondered at His choice to stay at the Temple.

Like any worried parent, Mary asked Jesus, “My Son, why have you done this to us?” They had been full of fear and worry for Him. Jesus’ answer shows how He understood His special relationship with God, His heavenly Father. He must be in His Father’s house (the Jerusalem Temple). Jesus knew His greatest **loyalty** belonged to God.

But Jesus also knew He must obey the fifth commandment to honor His father and mother. So He returned home with Joseph and Mary. He obeyed God by being obedient to His mother and father. Jesus showed love and honor to His parents. He is our example.

Jesus’ Example: How an Adult Treats Parents (John 19:25-27)

As a man, Jesus gave an example of

Things to Think About

1. How is the family made stronger when children obey and honor their parents? How is the church made stronger?
2. How does a person show love and honor to parents when that relationship is broken?
3. How does Jesus’ example of caring for His mother’s needs help you in your relationship with your parents?
4. Jesus’ first loyalty was to His Father. What about you? Where is your first loyalty? Does that loyalty help you honor your parents?
5. Do you have trouble showing respect and love to your parents? Why? What can you do now?

how adults should treat their parents. As the oldest son, His job was to care for His mother. And He did take care of her, even while He hung on the cross. Jesus’ mother Mary, Mary’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene were all standing near the cross. These women loved and believed in Jesus. Nothing would make them leave Him.

Jesus saw His mother near the cross. He also saw His follower, John. Jesus was in terrible pain, but He still thought of others. He did what was right. He asked John to take care of Mary as if she were his own mother. He asked Mary to see John as her son who would **provide** for her. Jesus loved and honored His mother even as He was dying. He put her needs above His own. We can follow His example.

Today, many adults do not want to change their lives to take care of the mothers and fathers who cared for them when they were young. But God’s command and Jesus’ example make it clear that children must care for their parents. Paul said that those who do not take care of their family are worse than unbelievers (1 Timothy 5:8).

How do we love and honor our parents? Some may need to mend broken relationships. One might need to forgive. Another might need to **ask for forgiveness**. Young adults may need to send regular text messages to their parents. Others might make daily phone calls

to check on older parents. For some, caring for parents may mean providing a home or a special place for a parent who needs help.

Living out this command will look different for each person. But the need to show love and respect is the same. How will you express love and honor to your mother and father?

Exodus 20:12

12 Honor your father and your mother, so your life may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you.

Luke 2:45-52

45 When they could not find Jesus, they turned back to Jerusalem to look for Him.

46 Three days later they found Him in the house of God. He was sitting among the teachers. He was hearing what they said and asking questions.

47 All those who heard Him were surprised and wondered about His understanding and at what He said.

48 When His parents saw Him, they were surprised. His mother said to Him, “My Son, why have You done this to us? See! Your father and I have had much sorrow looking for You.”

49 He said to them, “Why were you looking for Me? Do you not know that I must be in My Father’s house?”

50 They did not understand the things He said to them.

51 He went with them to Nazareth and obeyed them. But His mother kept all these words in her heart.

52 Jesus grew strong in mind and body. He grew in favor with God and men.

John 19:25-27

25 The mother of Jesus and her sister Mary, the wife of Cleophas, were standing near the cross. Mary Magdalene was there also.

26 Jesus saw His mother and the follower whom He loved standing near. He said to His mother, “Woman, look at your son.”

27 Then Jesus said to the follower, “Look at your mother.” From that time the follower took her to his own house.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 6: Friends

Bible Text

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1 Samuel 20:1-17, 27-42

Memory Verse

"A man who has friends must be a friend, but there is a friend who stays nearer than a brother."
(Proverbs 18:24)

Word List

available: present and with someone; willing to talk with, listen to, or help someone

benefits: those things that help or give good

jealous: feeling an unhappy desire for what someone else has or can do

protection: to stop or keep from hurt or danger

support: to provide for in a way that helps

Cars can be a lot of trouble! Mine would not start. I had to get to work. I called one friend who came and took me to work. Another friend told me about a man who could fix my car. I called that man, who was also my friend. He fixed my car the next day while I was at work. That day I got a ride in the morning from one friend and one in the afternoon from another. God has given me good, helpful, and loyal friends!

Loyalty means giving help or showing **support** to a person whenever needed.

Loyal friends are faithful, loving, kind, and **available** when you need them. They are not selfish. They put our interests and needs above their own. They do what they say they will do. They keep our secrets. They are interested in our good. God blesses us when He gives us loyal friends.

The Benefits of a Friend (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

Wise Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. He wrote this book to help others learn important truths from his life. In these verses, he wrote a great truth in relationships: Two are better than one.

Solomon showed several **benefits** of loyal friendships. We find one benefit of friendship in our work. When two people work together, they get more work done. They help each other do the work well and quickly. Any job is easier, faster, and more fun when friends work together.

We find another benefit of friendship when we need help. Solomon pictured a person who falls down and his friend helps him up. This word-picture is about having trouble in life. If one person falls into hard times, a friend will help lift him up. Loyal friends will be ready to help whenever hard times come.

We see the third benefit of friendship when we share with one another. In the time of Solomon, travelers often slept on the ground outside in the cold night. Two traveling friends could share a blanket. They could share their body heat to keep themselves warm. Today, we see this benefit when we share what we have with friends in need. Friends share tools, books, dishes, food, money, and many other things to show their loyal friendship.

The last benefit shared by friends is **protection**. Two friends can protect each other and stand against an enemy attack. An enemy could easily hurt a person who is alone. We might not need our friends to fight for us today. But we may need them to protect us from what others say about us. Also, friends can remind us to trust in God when the devil, our real enemy, attacks us.

Solomon gave a final word-picture of the benefits of friendship. One cannot easily break a rope made with three strings. It has strength and power. To work alone is to be weak. But we are made stronger by our friendships.

Friends Help (1 Samuel 20:1-17)

The friendship between David and Jonathan is a good example of loyalty. The two became friends after David killed a giant named Goliath. They shared many interests.

They were both young. They were both brave soldiers. They both had great faith. But King Saul, Jonathan's father, was **jealous** of David. God had chosen David to be the next king after Saul. But Saul wanted Jonathan to be the next king. So he wanted to kill David.

David decided to run away from Saul. But before he did, he wanted to learn why Saul wanted him dead. He asked Jonathan to help him find out. Jonathan did not think Saul was trying to kill David at this time. Even so, Jonathan promised to help David. He would do whatever David told him to do.

David made a plan to find out what Saul wanted to do. He would not go to the special dinners for three nights. Maybe Saul would tell Jonathan his plans if David was not with them. David reminded Jonathan that they had promised to be loyal friends. Now he needed his friend's help. And Jonathan told David he would help. He asked the Lord to punish him if he did not keep his promise.

Jonathan also prayed that God would be with David as king. And he asked David to promise to be kind to his family. New kings often killed the family and friends of the king before them. But David promised to honor his friendship with Jonathan.

Because of their deep friendship, Jonathan wanted to help David. He was willing to risk his safety to support his friend. Jonathan wanted to do the right thing for his

friend. It meant he would never be king. But Jonathan wanted to be loyal to David.

What help are you willing to give your friends? Are you ready to support them?

Friends Keep Promises (1 Samuel 20:27-42)

The two friends followed their plan. David did not eat with Saul. On the first day, Saul thought that David was not able to come. The king knew David followed God's laws. But David did not come the second day. Saul asked Jonathan to find out why the "son of Jesse" was not there. He would not even speak David's name. As planned, Jonathan told that David had gone to Bethlehem.

Saul quickly became angry. He spoke unkind words to Jonathan. He told Jonathan to bring David to him so that David could be killed. But Jonathan told Saul that David should not be killed. When Jonathan said this, Saul threw a spear at him. Saul tried to kill

his own son because Jonathan wanted to protect David. Now Jonathan understood the danger for David. Jonathan became angry and could not eat. He was worried for his friend's safety. He was truly a loyal friend to David.

Later, David and Jonathan met in a safe place. Jonathan **warned** David of the danger and sent him away. Jonathan reminded David of their promises. This was the last time David and Jonathan saw each other alive.

Both men kept their promises to each other. Jonathan showed loyalty to his friend when he told David about the danger. He wanted what was best for his friend. He did not think about his own wishes or safety. And David remembered his promises to Jonathan. He was kind to Jonathan's son after Jonathan died (2 Samuel 9:1-13).

Loyal friends are gifts from God. They help us in our times of trouble. They comfort us when we are hurting. They protect us from our enemies. Friends help each other always. Faithful friends keep promises to each other.

What kind of friends are we? Do we put the needs of our friends above our own? Do we encourage one another toward faith in God? Do we trust one another with our important thoughts? Let's ask the Lord to help us to be loyal to our friends.

Things to Think About

1. Tell about a time when you worked with a friend and the job was done faster and better. How did you feel about it?
2. Have you ever called your friends about a problem before calling your family? If so, why did you do that?
3. How would you like your friendships to be like the friendship between David and Jonathan?
4. How does your faith make your friendships stronger?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

9 Two are better than one, because they have good pay for their work.

10 For if one of them falls, the other can help him up. But it is hard for the one who falls when there is no one to lift him up.

11 And if two lie down together, they keep warm. But how can one be warm alone?

12 One man is able to have power over him who is alone, but two can stand against him. It is not easy to break a rope made of three strings.

1 Samuel 20:1-17

20 Then David ran from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said to Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my sin? What have I done wrong to your father, that he wants to kill me?”

2 Jonathan said to him, “Far from it, you will not die. See, my father does nothing big or small without telling me about it. So why should my father hide this from me? It is not so!”

3 But David answered, “Your father knows well that I have found favor in your eyes. He has said, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this, because it would fill him with sorrow.’ But it is true. As the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is only a step between me and death.”

4 Then Jonathan said to David, “I will do for you whatever you say.”

5 David said to Jonathan, “See, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should sit down to eat

with the king. But let me go. I will hide myself in the field until the third evening.

6 If your father misses me at all, then say, ‘David asked me to let him leave to run to his city Bethlehem. It is the time for the whole family to gather there for the gift given on the altar in worship each year.’

7 If he says, ‘Good!’ your servant will be safe. But if he is very angry, then you will know that he has decided to do what is bad.

8 So be kind to your servant. For you have brought me into an agreement of the Lord with you. But if I am guilty, kill me yourself. For why should you bring me to your father?”

9 Jonathan said, “Far be it from you! If I knew that my father has decided to do something bad to you, would I not tell you about it?”

10 Then David said to Jonathan, “Who will tell me if your father is angry when he answers you?”

11 Jonathan said to David, “Come, let us go out into the field.” So both of them went out into the field.

12 Jonathan said to David, “May the Lord, the God of Israel, see it. I will speak with my father, about this time tomorrow, or the third day. If he feels good about David, will I not send news to you and let you know it?”

13 But if my father wants to hurt you, may the Lord do the same to Jonathan and even more, if I do not let you know and send you away, so you may be safe. May the Lord be with you as He has been with my father.

14 If I am still alive, show me the faithful love of the Lord, that I may not die.

15 Do not stop being faithful to my house forever, not even when the Lord destroys from the earth all who hate David.

16 Do not let the name of Jonathan be lost from the family of David. And may the Lord punish those who hate you.”

17 Jonathan made David promise again, by his love for him. For he loved him as he loved his own life.

1 Samuel 20:27-42

27 But David’s place was empty the next day, the second day of the new moon. So Saul said to his son Jonathan, “Why has the son of Jesse not come to the supper yesterday and today?”

28 Jonathan answered Saul, “David asked me to let him go to Bethlehem.

29 He said, ‘I beg you, let me go. Our family is giving a gift on the altar in the city. And my brother has told me to be there. Now, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me leave and see my brothers.’ That is why he has not come to the king’s table.”

30 Then Saul was very angry with Jonathan and he said to him, “You son of a sinful woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother who gave birth to you?”

31 As long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you and the power you would have as king will not last. So send for him and bring him to me. For he must die.”

32 Jonathan answered his father Saul, “Why should he be killed? What has he done?”

33 But Saul threw his spear at Jonathan to kill

him, so he knew that his father had decided to kill David.

34 Jonathan rose from the table very angry. He did not eat any food on the second day of the new moon. For he was filled with sorrow for David, because his father had brought shame upon him.

35 In the morning Jonathan went out to the field at the time he and David agreed to meet. A little boy was with him.

36 Jonathan said to his boy, “Run, find the arrows I shoot.” As the boy was running, he shot an arrow past him.

37 The boy came to the place where Jonathan had shot the arrow. Jonathan called to the boy and said, “Is not the arrow farther away?”

38 Jonathan called to the boy, “Hurry, be quick, do not stay!” Then Jonathan’s boy picked up the arrow and came to his owner.

39 The boy knew nothing. Only Jonathan and David knew what had happened.

40 Then Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to his boy and told him, “Go, take them to the city.”

41 When the boy was gone, David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground. He bowed three times. Then they kissed each other and cried together, but David more.

42 Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace. For we have promised each other in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘The Lord will be between me and you, and between my children and your children forever.’” Then David got up and left, and Jonathan went into the city.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 7: Enemies

Bible Text

Luke 6:27-36; Romans 12:17-21

Memory Verse

“Do for other people what you would like to have them do for you.” (Luke 6:31)

Word List

directions: commands, or orders in what or how to do something

generously: giving freely; sharing a lot, not little

lend: to let someone use something of yours

treat: to act toward in a good, bad or other way

treatment: the way you are treated

A lady is walking down the street with her purse in her hand. A man runs by and takes her purse away. She screams and calls for help. Another man hears her and runs after the robber. A policeman also hears and comes to see what has happened. She tells the policeman what the robber did. The man who came to help catches the robber. He brings the man and the purse to the woman. The robber just laughs.

What should the woman say or do?
What kind of people hurt you and laugh?
What do you call people who want to harm you, your family, and friends? We call people who do this enemies. How should we **treat** our enemies? Jesus gave His followers very clear **directions**. What He said may surprise you!

Choose to Act in Love (Luke 6:27-31)

Jesus began with a command: Love those who work against you. An enemy may hate us, say bad things to us, or try to hurt us. An enemy may be a person or a group of people. Sometimes enemies hate us because of where we live or what we believe.

Sometimes we don't know our enemies, and sometimes we do. Most of us can name someone who has hurt us in some way.

Jesus commanded His followers to show a special kind of love. This kind of love is not decided by our feelings, but by our will.

We may not like those who have harmed us, but we can choose to do good for them.

Usually people hate and hurt their enemies.

That is normal. However, God wants us to be different from our sinful world. The Lord

wants us to see *all* people as He sees them—people in need of love and forgiveness. God

helps us to obey this command to love those who hate us. We love even if they never

return the love. What *they* do is not important.

But *our* obedience is important.

Jesus gave three commands about how His followers can choose to act in love. First, we can do good to those who hate us. We love our enemies when we do good for them. We love them when we act kindly toward them. We love them even when they are not good to us in return.

Secondly, followers of Jesus must respect those who try to bring bad to us. We choose to act in love. We ask God to care for and provide good things for them. We copy God's love when we wish good things for those who wish bad things for us. We show God's love when we speak well of someone who has spoken badly of us. We choose these actions to honor God.

Thirdly, we must pray for those who make it very hard for us. God can work through our prayers to change those who hurt us. But He can also change our thoughts toward them. Prayer helps us to forgive them. It can help us to not hate or hurt them back.

Jesus gives examples of choosing to act in love. When someone hits our face and when someone steals our coat, Jesus says not to do anything to hurt them in return. It is not about our pain or our loss of something we own. We should do what is best for that enemy. This means we forgive. It means we choose not to hurt back. And we do not look only to our own interests.

Jesus was not telling His followers to

think that stealing or hurting others is a good thing. He was teaching His listeners how to respond to bad **treatment**. We must think of others' needs first. We should give **generously** and freely. If robbed, we should think of the robber's problems. We should be willing to give up our own needs to help others. Jesus directed us to treat other people exactly as we would like for them to treat us. We often call this "the Golden Rule."

How can we follow Jesus' command to love our enemies? We can choose to respond in love. We can decide to act kindly whether we feel like it or not. We can show kindness whether we get back any kindness or not. We can choose to forgive. We can love even if they keep hating.

Follow God's Example (Luke 6:32-36)

Jesus gives three pictures to show how His followers should do better than those who do not believe in Him. We must love others who don't love us in return. We must do good to those who would cause us harm. And we must **lend** without knowing we will get it back. Jesus explained that loving others, doing good, and lending to those who already love us does not show God-like love. Many people do good things to get something in return. But God-like love does not expect to get anything in return. As God's people, we should love those who do not love us. We should do good to those who wrong us. We should lend

without expecting anything back. Does this seem impossible to do? The power of the Spirit of God makes this possible. We can pray and ask for His help.

God promises a great reward for those who make the choice to love their enemies and do good to others. This reward is not a payment for being good. God is good to those who obey Him. Sometimes His reward is the comfort and peace of having done what is right. And sometimes our reward is a deeper relationship with our Heavenly Father.

We do not choose to treat our enemies with love to earn rewards from God. We obey because we belong to Him. We prove that we are truly “children of the Most High” by doing as He would do. As His children, we should be like Him. God showed His love for us by sending Jesus Christ to die for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). We, too, should show love and kindness to everyone.

Things to Think About

1. What can you do to show love to someone in your life that you feel is difficult?
2. How difficult is it to love your enemies? Tell about your feelings.
3. How can you love your enemies and still call the police or take some other right action against someone who hurts you?
4. How would the world be different if everyone obeyed God in this way?

Defeat Evil with Good (Romans 12:17-21)

Paul’s letter helps us understand how we should live in this world. Paul taught how followers of Christ should act toward those who are not Christians. When people do wrong things to us, we should not do wrong things to them in return.

Doing “what all men know is right and good” does not mean we should be people-pleasers. Paul was saying that we should live in such a way that no one can find any bad in us. When we live by our Lord’s high ideas, others may see and believe. Our actions can help others know the Good News of Jesus.

As believers, we should do our best to live in peace with everyone. Sometimes it may not be possible. If there is sin that the Bible tells us to go against, we should stand firm in the truth. We should not forget truth just to keep peace. We cannot control other people’s actions. But we can also choose not to be a part of the problem. We can choose how we respond, and love is always a good response.

We should trust God with our feelings about being wronged. God will repay. He knows the best punishment. Paul quoted Deuteronomy 32:35 to remind us that God is the Judge. When we return kindness and forgiveness for wrongs, our enemies may see their sin. Our kindness could lead them to stop and ask for forgiveness. Love may change our enemies, making them our friends.

When taught about loving our enemies, one child said, “I don’t want to do that!” That is honesty. Loving our enemies is a decision to make. Will we choose to obey Jesus, even when it is difficult? The last verse says it well, “Do not let sin have power over you. Let good have power over sin!”

Luke 6:27-36

27 “I say to you who hear Me, love those who work against you. Do good to those who hate you.

28 Respect and give thanks for those who try to bring bad to you. Pray for those who make it very hard for you.

29 Whoever hits you on one side of the face, turn so he can hit the other side also. Whoever takes your coat, give him your shirt also.

30 Give to any person who asks you for something. If a person takes something from you, do not ask for it back.

31 Do for other people what you would like to have them do for you.

32 If you love those who love you, what pay can you expect from that? Sinners also love those who love them.

33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what pay can you expect from that? Sinners also do good to those who do good to them.

34 If you let people use your things and expect to get something back, what pay can you expect from that? Even sinners let sinners use things and they expect to get something back.

35 But love those who hate you. Do good to them. Let them use your things and do not expect something back. Your reward will be much. You will be the children of the Most High. He is kind to those who are not thankful and to those who are full of sin.

36 You must have loving-kindness just as your Father has loving-kindness.”

Romans 12:17-21

17 When someone does something bad to you, do not pay him back with something bad. Try to do what all men know is right and good.

18 As much as you can, live in peace with all men.

19 Christian brothers, never pay back someone for the bad he has done to you. Let the anger of God take care of the other person. The Holy Writings say, “I will pay back to them what they should get, says the Lord.”

20 “If the one who hates you is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him water. If you do that, you will be making him more ashamed of himself.”

21 Do not let sin have power over you. Let good have power over sin!

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 8: Neighbors/Community

Bible Text

Exodus 20:13-17; Leviticus 19:16-18;
Zechariah 7:8-10; Matthew 5:13-16

Memory Verse

"Let your light shine in front of men. Then they will see the good things you do and will honor your Father Who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Word List

connect: to join two or more things together
encouraged: to give hope or help
warned: to tell of danger before it happens

When we moved to Texas, we had the best neighbors! One family brought a pizza the day we moved in. Then they volunteered to watch our young boys (ages 1 and 3) while we unpacked our boxes. That family had two young boys the same age. We had many happy years together as friends.

Most people live near other people. People often share with each other. This is called community. We can be in a community with all kinds of people: sports friends, church friends, families in our children's

schools, etc. This study looks at the community who lives nearby, our neighbors. We will study four groups of verses about our relationship with our neighbors as a community. As you study these verses, think about how they show us ways to help people **connect** to one another and to God.

God's Rules for Being a Good Neighbor (Exodus 20:13-17)

The first word that many children learn is "no." Parents say "no" to their children to teach them to stay away from things that hurt them. Saying "no" can also help children know what is healthy and helpful.

The Ten Commandments were given to God's people so they would know what was right and what was wrong. When we look at the Ten Commandments, some people see them as God's "no." That is understandable. But it is not completely true. Some of the commands are about things we *don't* need to do; others are about things we *do* need to do.

The first four commandments are about our relationship to God. We learn that God comes first. We should not worship idols, only the one true God, Creator of heaven and earth. The next six commands are about our relationships with others. We are to live in ways that show God's plan for living in community. We are to stay away from many sinful acts.

Take a look at five of the last six commandments. These have a lot to say about how we treat our neighbors.

1. God said “no” to murder. Murder is when a person decides to take life away from another person. Life is important to God because people are created to be like God (Genesis 1:26). Communities have punishments for murder.

Jesus **warned** His followers not to hate anyone. Hating comes before murder (Matthew 5:21-27).

2. God said “no” to sex sins. Sex sins are called adultery. Adultery is the sin of having sex with someone who is not your spouse. God knew adultery hurts the marriage relationship. Marriage and family relationships need to be **encouraged** and honored. Adultery is also a sin against God because it breaks the marriage vows between God, husband, and wife (Matthew 19:4-6).

Jesus warned that a person has sinned in their heart if they look at another person with a “sinful desire of wanting” (Matthew 5:27).

3. God said “no” to stealing. Psalm 24:1 says: “The earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it, the world, and all who live in it.” When we steal something from someone, we are really stealing from God. Everything we have is His. We are managers of God’s riches. To steal something hurts community life. Ephesians

4:28 says God wants us not to be takers but workers and givers.

4. God said “no” to lying about your neighbor. Lying about a neighbor hurts the community. Christians should speak “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) and must “stop lying to each other. Tell the truth to your neighbor” (Ephesians 4:25). When we do this, we keep our community free of many problems.

5. God said “no” to wanting what someone else has. The last command is clear: “Do not have a desire... for anything that belongs to your neighbor.” God’s command was to not desire your neighbor’s house, wife, servants, bull, donkey, or anything else.

Jesus warned, “Watch yourselves! Keep from wanting all kinds of things you should not have” (Luke 12:15). Desiring what others have leads to jealousy. Jealousy can quickly destroy our most important relationships.

The wisdom and power of the Ten Commandments is important to our relationships with others. God’s commands guide us even now to know how to live in community.

Neighbors Love Neighbors (Leviticus 19:16-18)

Right actions are important in building healthy relationships with anyone. Love shows the goodness and rightness of God.

When we obey God, we show that we care for and love others.

Jesus told us which commandments are the most important. The most important commandment is to love God with all your heart, and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:34-40). Our relationship to God is most important. These verses end with the most important command for our relationship to others.

Children say, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” That is not true. Words can hurt and wound people. God’s people are to speak differently. Hate and words that hurt have no place among God’s people. Good relationships happen when we love:

- without hurtful words
- without hatred
- without acting against someone
- without talking bad about them
- without holding onto our pain.

In this way, we show that we know what “love your neighbor as yourself” means.

Things to Think About

1. Do you obey more often because you feel like it or because it is a command? Tell why.
2. How would you help a person who says he/she hates someone?
3. How do you help neighbors who are hurt or confused? Give an example.
4. How is Jesus’ teaching about salt and light helpful to you?

Neighbors Do the Right Thing (Zechariah 7:8-10)

Zechariah was a religious leader who wanted to see people live their faith. He gave us four actions to connect our faith to the ways we act: Do what is right. Be kind. Show loving-pity. Do not make it hard for people in need (widows, orphans, strangers, the poor). Do not make sinful plans in your hearts against your neighbor.

Neighbors Make a Difference (Matthew 5:13-16)

Jesus looked at His followers and said, “You are the salt of the earth” and “you are the light of the world.” Salt works quietly; it is hard to see. Salt protects and makes food taste better. Light is seen. Light shows everything, points the way, and may warn of trouble. Jesus said His followers were to be both salt and light.

Sometimes it is difficult to get our “salt” out of the shaker and get our “light” into the world. We must be careful about the way we live as believers. Salt was not created to stay in the shaker. Christians are not saved to merely remain in the church house.

Light helps us see where we are and guides us to where we should go. A light can be covered or hidden. In the same way, a Christian can lose his power to lead someone to where Jesus (the Light of the World) is.

If salt and light are living out their purposes, people will see that. Jesus said when others see the good we do, they need to see not only us but God Himself. We can be a window through which people see God. Though some might give us praise, we should always give praise and honor back to God.

Our communities are blessed with people we know as “first responders.” These are firefighters, police officers, EMTs, and other medical people. They protect us and help us. In much the same way, we as believers can be “first responders” in our neighborhoods. We can be the first people to lend a hand as a good neighbor. We can be the first to provide a good word about God. We can be the first to invite someone to church or to a Bible study. We can be the first to welcome new people, to encourage, and to care.

Our world is becoming less about community. But if we obey God, we can be neighbors who not only are first responders, but who serve those in our community.

Exodus 20:13-17

13 “Do not kill other people.
 14 “Do not do sex sins.
 15 “Do not steal.
 16 “Do not tell a lie about your neighbor.
 17 “Do not have a desire for your neighbor’s house. Do not have a desire for his wife or his male servant, his female servant, or his bull or his

donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Leviticus 19:16-18

16 “Do not go around saying things that hurt your people. Do not do things against the life of your neighbor. I am the Lord.

17 “In your heart do not hate someone from your own country. You may speak sharp words to your neighbor, but do not sin because of him.

18 “Do not hurt someone who has hurt you. Do not keep on hating the sons of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

Zechariah 7:8-10

8 Then the Word of the Lord came to Zechariah saying,

9 “The Lord of All said, ‘Do what is right and be kind and show loving-pity to one another.

10 Do not make it hard for the woman whose husband has died, or the child who has no parents, or the stranger, or the poor. Do not make sinful plans in your hearts against one another.’”

Matthew 5:13-16

13 “You are the salt of the earth. If salt loses its taste, how can it be made to taste like salt again? It is no good. It is thrown away and people walk on it.

14 You are the light of the world. You cannot hide a city that is on a mountain.

15 Men do not light a lamp and put it under a basket. They put it on a table so it gives light to all in the house.

16 Let your light shine in front of men. Then they will see the good things you do and will honor your Father Who is in heaven.”

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 9: Employer

Bible Text

Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-25;
1 Timothy 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-11

Memory Verse

“Be happy as you work. Do your work as for the Lord, not for men.” (Ephesians 6:7)

Word List

attitude: a feeling or way of thinking that affects your actions

principle: a rule or belief that helps you know what is right or wrong

work ethic: the way a person does his job—by doing it very well or by doing it in a lazy way

Work is important. Having a good relationship with the people you work with makes your job a place where you want to go. It is very important to have a good relationship with your boss or employer (the person who owns the company or who hired you). The Bible tells us how we can have a good relationship with those we work for. It talks about servants and owners because that was the normal work relationship in the first century.

Servant and Owner, Employee and Employer (Ephesians 6:5-9)

You might not know what it is like to be a servant or to obey an owner. But you understand the relationship between employee and employer or boss. These verses give good advice for having a good **work ethic**. A good work ethic helps companies but also helps the whole community. A Christian’s work ethic makes him want to serve God in the church and community in a helpful way.

The writer of these verses (and of all of the Bible verses in this lesson) is Paul. His first **principle** for work is: *Do what you were hired to do*. Paul’s words come from verse 5: “Servants... must obey your owners.” That is the basic understanding of obeying your employer. The boss can hire someone else if you do not do the job you were hired to do. So, do the job you are asked to do.

The second principle is: *Work as if you are trying to please God*. When an employee works well, the employer is pleased. However, for the Christian, pleasing God is more important than pleasing others. By pleasing God, we are doing His will.

Some people work hard when the boss is around, but slow down when no one is watching. Such a lazy way of working is wrong. Christians should want to please the boss, but mostly we should want to please God and honor Him with our work ethic.

The third principle is: *Have a good attitude as you work hard.* Work is labor, but it should be done with a happy heart. We should give our best and work hard and work well. Life was not always easy for the servants who were owned in Paul's time, but he told them to give their best work to their owner. Life is much better for us in this time. We can do our jobs with a strong work ethic.

The fourth principle is: *Good work will be rewarded.* A person may be an owned servant or a free worker, an employee or employer, but good work does not go unrewarded by God. Your pay is your reward for good work. This verse reminds believers that if you seek God's favor in your work, then you will have His blessings. Hard work has rewards in pay and other good things.

Next, Paul speaks to owners or employers. Just as God rewards those who serve well, owners and employers should do the same. The workplace should be worker-friendly, not a place for bosses to be hard on others. Paul taught two important reasons. First, God is the "owner" of all of us. We are His servants. Servant and owner, if they belong to Him, are both children of God. Second, He wrote that God does not respect one person more than another. He sees servants and owners as the same. Whether you are an employee, boss, manager, or owner,

God loves us all the same. In the same way, we are to love and respect each other.

Servants and Owners (Colossians 3:22-25)

This group of verses says mostly the same as the last group. Christians often need to be reminded about these principles, so Paul wrote them in his letters to both churches. In Ephesians and Colossians, Paul's teachings were very different from the attitudes of the people in his time. The most different was that God respects everyone the same, not bosses more than others. This teaching is in both of Paul's books.

Four other phrases in Colossians are the same as Paul's teaching in Ephesians. These phrases show how the servant-owner relationship should be in Christ:

- Honor for the Lord
- Working for the Lord/Christ
- Pay/reward from the Lord
- Serve the Lord.

Owners need to do what is right. They need to respect all their workers by following God's example. They also need to follow the same four principles as above. These principles are true for both servants (employees) and owners (employers).

Showing Respect (1 Timothy 6:1-2)

Have you ever heard someone say, “I get no respect”? This is said when someone thinks they have done well and that others should now treat them with more respect. It is also used when someone else is getting more respect or pay than they are. They want people to see, honor, and respect them most. That self-centeredness is not what God has commanded from us in the Bible.

When it comes to respecting others, servants (employees) should respect the owner (employer). In his day, Paul knew people who only worked hard when others were watching them. Again, this is not what we are commanded to do in the Bible. It would make people think that followers of Jesus are lazy and not honest.

Paul gave Timothy two reasons for respecting owners: the respect of God’s name and of Christian teaching, and the fact that

some owners and servants are believers, too. Some Christian servants were not respecting their relationship with Christian owners. They were not obeying or serving them with the kind of work that was best for the owner.

Putting a Good Face on Faith (Titus 2:9-11)

Sometimes we can show others the right way to live without saying a word. Paul taught the importance of living right so that what you do brings honor to Christ and the church. Both servants and owners are under the same command. The book of Titus looks more on the largest group among church members, the servants.

Paul instructed Titus to teach servants to embrace obedience and not to go against it. This commands believers to try to please their owners, and not argue, steal, or do anything that would create mistrust. The verses end with why to do this—to “honor the teaching of God who saves us.” Before others can see Christ, they may first need to see how His followers act toward others.

Christians do all kinds of work. We work with all kinds of people, some who follow Christ and some who do not. Both can have a good work ethic, but some may have no idea of how Christians should act as an employee or a boss. Christians have a special

Things to Think About

1. If the employees at your work made a list of people who do the best job at showing Christ through their work, would your name be on the list? Why or why not?
2. How can you be an example to others of how to please God by the way they live and work?
3. How can you use the rewards of your work (your pay) to tell others about Jesus?
4. Does your church have a good work ethic that is pleasing to God?
5. Who in your workplace needs you to show more respect to them?

chance to show our relationship to Christ by our attitude and work ethic.

How well do you show Christ in the work you do? Being an example of Christ is not limited to your workplace. Christians do not have one attitude for work, one for play, and one for worship. We should have an attitude that is Christ-like everywhere we go. Your whole life can show people what Christ's love looks like in action!

Ephesians 6:5-9

5 You servants who are owned by someone must obey your owners. Work for them as hard as you can. Work for them the same as if you were working for Christ.

6 Do not work hard only when your owner sees you. You would be doing this just to please men. Work as you would work for Christ. Do what God wants you to do with all your heart.

7 Be happy as you work. Do your work as for the Lord, not for men.

8 Remember this, whatever good thing you do, the Lord will pay you for it. It is the same to the Lord if you are a servant owned by someone or if you work for pay.

9 Owners, do the right thing for those who work for you. Stop saying that you are going to be hard on them. Remember that your Owner and their Owner is in heaven. God does not respect one person more than another.

Colossians 3:22-25

22 You who are servants who are owned by someone, obey your owners. Work hard for them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Work for them as you would for the Lord because you honor God.

23 Whatever work you do, do it with all your heart. Do it for the Lord and not for men.

24 Remember that you will get your reward from the Lord. He will give you what you should receive. You are working for the Lord Christ.

25 If anyone does wrong, he will suffer for it. God does not respect one person more than another.

1 Timothy 6:1-2

6 All you Christians who are servants must respect your owners and work hard for them. Do not let the name of God and our teaching be spoken against because of poor work.

2 Those who have Christian owners must respect their owners because they are Christian brothers. They should work hard for them because much-loved Christian brothers are being helped by their work. Teach and preach these things.

Titus 2:9-11

9 Those who are servants owned by someone must obey their owners and please them in everything. They must not argue.

10 They must not steal from their owners but prove they can be trusted in every way. In this way, their lives will honor the teaching of God Who saves us.

11 God's free gift of being saved is being given to everyone.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 10: Government

Bible Text

Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Memory Verse

“Pray for kings and all others who are in power over us so we might live quiet God-like lives in peace.” (1 Timothy 2:2)

Word List

citizenship: the rights and duties of a person who lives in a community, state, or country
crime: doing something that breaks the law
politics: anything to do with government

Love affects everything we do as followers of Jesus. We begin our study of our relationship to government with the question of love: What does *love* have to do with your relationship to your government? What does *love* have to do with taxes, voting, laws, and people in **politics**? What does our **citizenship** in God’s family have to do with our citizenship in an earthly nation?

The verses before and after Romans 13:1-7 talk about love. This teaching about governments is surrounded by Romans 12, which uses 13 verses to explain about true love (Romans 12:9-21). On the other side,

Romans 13:8 says, “Do not owe anyone anything, but love each other.” Love means bringing out the best in one another. God put these verses about government leaders right between passages about loving others. As citizens, we need to think about how true love acts when obeying the government.

God’s Plan for Governments (Romans 13:1-5)

In these verses, Paul wrote about the role of government in people’s lives and the role of people toward their government:

1. Leaders are put in place by God

(v. 1). Whether they know it or not, leaders are God’s servants (v. 4).

2. Leaders are to help and protect their citizens (v. 4). Citizens should obey their leaders (v. 5).

But let us be honest: It is much easier to obey leaders if they are good, honest, and care about the people. In the best situation, a government’s laws offer religious freedom, allow freedom of speech, and protect citizens from **crime**. This lets Christians obey God’s rules (the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20) while they live under the authority of their government. Freedom to worship is possible. Murder, stealing, and lying are punished.

As Christians, our first loyalty is to God and His rules. We are first and foremost a part of God’s family if we are followers of Jesus. But God knew we would also live

under an earthly government's rules. We live in a community in a state in a nation—each level with its own government. Christians are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20) and in the country they live in.

God allows all kinds of governments to rule. But not every kind of government follows God's rules. Not every government is good. Look back at history and you will find plenty of evil leaders. Adolf Hitler was one of the worst in the 20th century. God did not approve of what Hitler did in Nazi Germany from 1933-1945. We have often read that almost six million Jews died in Hitler's concentration camps. But that was just part of the human losses. Because of Hitler's rule, the world went to war. Some sources say 60-80 million died because of World War II. Hitler's government caused worldwide sadness.

Many Christians in Germany and other countries chose to disobey Hitler. They chose God's laws over Hitler's laws. It was not an easy choice to make because bad things happened when people disobeyed Hitler. Their choices brought hard results. But they knew they must obey God's rules first.

Look to the Old Testament for an example of God's people who had to make a hard choice between God or the government. Daniel 3 tells how three Hebrew boys were living in Babylon. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not worship the king's idols.

When told they must bow down to the idols or die in a furnace of fire, they chose faithfulness to God. "If we are thrown into the fire, our God Whom we serve is able to save us from it. And He will save us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the object of gold that you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18). They were willing to die so they would not disobey God's first commandment—"Have no other gods other than Me" (Exodus 20:3).

In the New Testament (Acts 4), Peter and John disobeyed the laws of the government when those laws went against God's Word. They were told to stop talking about Jesus. But they could not. God's call on their lives was stronger than the law of the land. They made a choice to obey God first.

Many Christians in our world risk their lives to follow God. Their government does not give them the freedom to worship God or even to talk about God. Choosing to be faithful means hard choices with even harder results—possibly jail, beatings, even death.

Paul wrote the letter to the Romans at a time when Romans were putting Christians in prison or killing them in cruel games for sport. Even so, he called for Christians to live right—to live according to Jesus' instruction to love your enemies. (Remember Lesson 7 of this unit.)

Paul knew very well that choices sometimes had to be made between following the government or God. He knew about the punishment of disobeying the government. Still, he encouraged believers to respect their leaders. Even if Christians disagreed with their leaders, they could still give them respect.

What Good Citizens Do (Romans 13:6-7)

Christians who follow God's rules make good citizens. They care about their neighbors. They share with those in need. They help those who are struggling. They work hard at their jobs and are honest.

So what can you do to help the "leaders of the land" lead a good government? Be a good citizen. Paul mentioned two good citizenship duties: Pay taxes. Respect your leaders.

People should pay their taxes and their bills. Jesus talked about taxes. When asked if they should pay taxes, He told His listeners to give to Caesar what is Caesar's (tax) and give to God what belongs to Him (Mark 12:17).

Things to Think About

1. Which duty of being a good citizen is most difficult for you?
2. If Paul were writing today about your actions as a good citizen, what would he say?
3. What should Christians do when government does not do what is best for all or makes bad laws?
4. How are the principles of being a good citizen like those of being a good church member?
5. What do you need to do differently now?

Tax money built the roads that Paul used to travel to tell many people about Jesus. Paul sometimes needed Roman protection when crowds were violent (Acts 21:35).

When you disagree with a leader, what do you do? Do you complain? Do you talk badly about the leader or their actions?

Even when we disagree, we are to show respect to our leaders. Government employees should be respected, such as police, firefighters, community leaders, and national leaders. There is no good reason to act poorly or say bad things about them. Do not give others a reason to hate them. Many government workers quietly serve well for their whole career. Show love and respect to all people in leadership.

Pray for Those in Authority (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

Jesus prayed for many people. He also prayed for us (John 17:20). It is not surprising that God had Paul teach the believers to pray for their leaders. Paul asked them to pray for their leaders and not just during voting times.

Pray for those who may not have the same political beliefs as you. Jesus told His followers to pray for their enemies (Matthew 5:44-45; Luke 6:27-28). His teaching reminds us to pray for all those in the government:

- Ask God to give wisdom and guide them.
- Pray they are able to lead our country.
- Ask God to work in people's hearts to

create a strong and kind government.

Mostly, we can pray that each leader will follow Jesus as Lord. Each person needs a true relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Paul says we are to “live quiet God-like lives in peace” (v. 2). He said the same thing to the church in Rome: “As much as you can, live in peace with all men” (Romans 12:18).

Paul wrote about this peace, but he did not enjoy it very often. The message of Jesus was not welcome in Paul’s day. Paul was run out of many towns for preaching about Jesus. City leaders and religious leaders ordered him to stop. But he could not stop telling about Jesus. His first loyalty was to his Lord. This made him an enemy of the government.

It is different for us today. In the U.S., we live under the protection of the U.S. Constitution and the First Amendment rights to freedom of religion, speech, press, and the right to gather peacefully. We can tell others of Jesus without fear. But we should never forget that many people do not have this kind of peace and protection in other countries.

Many Christians who lived before us made good choices. Most were good citizens. Our lives are better today because of their wisdom and courage in the past.

As good citizens, we can make our government better. We can vote for good leaders. We can pay taxes to help our community. We can care for people in need.

May God guide us to follow Him first and to show respect to our leaders so we can help our governments to do the good that God intended for them to do.

Romans 13:1-7

- 1 Every person must obey the leaders of the land. There is no power given but from God, and all leaders are allowed by God.
- 2 The person who does not obey the leaders of the land is working against what God has done. Anyone who does that will be punished.
- 3 Those who do right do not have to be afraid of the leaders. Those who do wrong are afraid of them. Do you want to be free from fear of them? Then do what is right. You will be respected instead.
- 4 Leaders are God’s servants to help you. If you do wrong, you should be afraid. They have the power to punish you. They work for God. They do what God wants done to those who do wrong.
- 5 You must obey the leaders of the land, not only to keep from God’s anger, but so your own heart will have peace.
- 6 It is right for you to pay taxes because the leaders of the land are servants for God who care for these things.
- 7 Pay taxes to whom taxes are to be paid. Be afraid of those you should fear. Respect those you should respect.

1 Timothy 2:1-4

- 1 First of all, I ask you to pray much for all men and to give thanks for them.
- 2 Pray for kings and all others who are in power over us so we might live quiet God-like lives in peace.
- 3 It is good when you pray like this. It pleases God Who is the One Who saves.
- 4 He wants all people to be saved from the punishment of sin. He wants them to come to know the truth.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 11: Church Leaders

Bible Text

Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13;
Hebrews 13:17-18

Memory Verse

"We are to grow up and be more like Christ. He is the leader of the church." (Ephesians 4:15)

Word List

attacked: to try to hurt or destroy someone or something

explains: to make something clear or easy to understand

responsibility: a duty or task you are expected to do

result: something that happens because of something else that was done before

A story is told about a man who woke up one Sunday morning and told his wife, "Honey, I don't want to go to church today. The people there don't like me. They complain all the time, talk behind my back, and argue with me when I make a mistake." The wife patted her husband's hand and said, "You have to go to church this morning. You're the pastor."

Being a minister in a church is hard work. It is often a seven-day-a-week job. Rarely does a minister work only 40 hours a week. Yet, some church staff members feel as if their church members only want to complain: The music was too loud. The music was too soft. The sermon was too long. The pastor did not meet every new visitor. The sanctuary was too hot or too cold.

The relationship between church leaders and church members is supposed to be known by its Christ-like love. Both members and leaders need to remember that God sees their attitudes, words, and actions. While being a church leader can be difficult, this lesson reminds us to encourage, respect, and honor our leaders.

Learn from Your Leaders (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Paul **explains** how God made the church to grow and care for each other and for the people who are not Christians. First, God has given special abilities to some people to help them be leaders in the church. These include missionaries, preachers, traveling preachers, and teachers. Other places in the Bible list more gifts (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30). These gifts help church leaders in their work. They are important for every growing church.

Second, Paul explained the work of

those church leaders. Men and women in leadership are given the work of teaching believers how to do the work of the church. Sadly, some church members say things like, “I don’t check on visitors. That’s what we pay the staff to do.” God’s plan for the church is that members and leaders work side-by-side.

Leaders are there to teach the church so that everyone is ready to do all of the work of the church. God never wanted the church staff to do all of the work. That work is the **responsibility** of every believer, not just the leaders.

Third, Paul explained the **result** of such teaching and work. The church members grow stronger together. One reason for arguments and trouble is that the people are not mature. They may have been believers for many years, but they have not matured in their faith.

Rather than grow in their faith, some people like what the church does for them but do not like to help or serve. They think their only responsibility is to sit in church, sometimes give money in the offering plate, and go to Sunday school. The result is they are still like children who don’t help with the work of the church. They need to grow up.

Fourth, Paul warned about Christians who are too quick to believe teachings that are not in the Bible. This is called false teachings. They don’t know what the Bible says so they believe anything they hear. But as believers

mature, they can see false teaching more quickly and reject it.

Paul explained what believers become as they grow up in Christ. Each believer does his own work in service to Christ. This results in full-grown believers and a mature church.

Honor Your Leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

Paul also wrote a letter to the church in Thessalonica. Both this letter and the one to the Ephesians encourage church leadership. Paul commands the believers to “respect those who work among you.” Paul didn’t ask believers to always agree with their leaders. They will disagree sometimes. But they can show respect for their leaders. In the same way, leaders should show respect toward church members.

Respecting your leaders means that you don’t talk bad about them as you drive home from church. Respect means listening to their teaching and being thankful for the work put into preparing it. Respect means looking for ways to work *with* them, not *against* them.

Paul also told his readers to “think much of them and love them.” This means that you should try to understand your leaders and help them in their work. Sadly, sometimes churches ask church leaders to work but don’t thank them for what they do. Everyone needs encouragement, love, support, and respect. The result is living in peace with each other.

Follow and Pray for Your Leaders (Hebrews 13:17-18)

In these verses, the writer reminded believers about how to treat their leaders. The directions are easy to understand: Obey them, do what they say, and pray for them.

Obedying leadership is sometimes difficult for Americans in any group, not just in the church. Our culture tells us to make our own path; don't let others tell you what to do; be your own boss. But there is a big difference between being your own boss and learning how to work with others in Christ-like love in the church.

Part of working together is learning to listen to each other. If you have a problem with a church leader, work to understand them better. Find out what goes on “behind the scenes” as the church staff works hard every day. Make time to sit down with that leader for a kind, honest discussion about church matters. Listen with a prayerful heart.

Things to Think About

1. Put yourself in the place of the leaders in your church. What do you think their lives are like?
2. What do you think is the attitude toward the leaders in your church?
3. Do church members and leaders ever argue? What do they argue about?
4. How can your class show support for your church leaders?
5. Who among your church leadership is often forgotten? How could you support and encourage them?

Speak with grace and kindness. Be willing to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

James has this advice: “My Christian brothers, you know everyone should listen much and speak little. He should be slow to become angry” (James 1:19). Voicing our opinions with anger is never a good idea.

Paul wrote a letter to the church in Colossae. His advice is good for us today: “Speak with them in such a way they will want to listen to you. Do not let your talk sound foolish. Know how to give the right answer to anyone” (Colossians 4:6).

The verses before and after Colossians 4:6 make it clear that Paul was telling the church how to talk with non-Christians. But his words are good as we think about talking with anyone. We should speak so they will want to listen to us. Knowing how to give “the right answer” means being wise in how we present our ideas.

God has called certain people to be leaders for this time. In the same way, God has led you to be a member of your church for this time. Both leaders and members will answer to God for their actions and their words. Everyone must keep their eyes on Jesus. He is the most important leader of the church. Together, we all work under the guidance of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the most important gift you can give your church leaders is to pray for them.

Church leaders are **attacked** by Satan, the enemy of God. Satan wants to stop the work of God. Satan does not want people to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. He wants to cause arguments in the church.

The next time you want to say bad things about the leaders in your church, stop and pray for them.

- Ask God to help them know and follow His plan for the church.
- Ask God to protect them and their families against the attacks of the enemy.
- Ask God to show you how you can support your leaders. If you disagree with them about something, talk alone with them. Don't tell everyone else. Be Christ-like. Look for ways to encourage your leaders.
- Ask God to guide leaders and church members to work together for God's purposes.

You may be surprised at how quickly your attitude may change when you pray for someone. You may find it easier to respect, honor, and encourage the leaders in your church.

God's desire for everyone in the church—leaders and members—is that they grow in love, as each person does the work of bringing others to know Jesus personally.

Ephesians 4:11-16

11 Christ gave gifts to men. He gave to some the gift to be missionaries, some to be preachers, others to be preachers who go from town to town. He gave others the gift to be church leaders and teachers.

12 These gifts help His people work well for Him. And then the church which is the body of Christ will be made strong.

13 All of us are to be as one in the faith and in knowing the Son of God. We are to be full-grown Christians standing as high and complete as Christ is Himself.

14 Then we will not be as children any longer. Children are like boats thrown up and down on big waves. They are blown with the wind. False teaching is like the wind. False teachers try everything possible to make people believe a lie, 15 but we are to hold to the truth with love in our hearts. We are to grow up and be more like Christ. He is the leader of the church.

16 Christ has put each part of the church in its right place. Each part helps other parts. This is what is needed to keep the whole body together. In this way, the whole body grows strong in love.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

12 We ask you, Christian brothers, to respect those who work among you. The Lord has placed them over you and they are your teachers.

13 You must think much of them and love them because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

Hebrews 13:17-18

17 Obey your leaders and do what they say. They keep watch over your souls. They have to tell God what they have done. They should have joy in this and not be sad. If they are sad, it is no help to you.

18 Pray for us. Our hearts tell us we are right. We want to do the right thing always.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 12: Christians

Bible Text

Acts 4:32-37; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27;
Galatians 6:9-10; Hebrews 10:24-25

Memory Verse

“Because of this, we should do good to everyone. For sure, we should do good to those who belong to Christ.” (Galatians 6:10)

Word List

nickname: a name that is different from your real name; usually what family or friends call you
persecution: to treat someone in a cruel way because of race or religious/political beliefs
sacrifice: giving up something for someone else
selfless: showing great concern for other people but little concern for self

Have you ever been hurt by someone in your church? This kind of pain can happen in any church, even in a good church. We are all sinners saved by grace. Sadly, some believers have been part of bad churches where they could not obey the leaders. Now, they will not give their time, money, or themselves to this important part of the Christian life. They have “given up” on church. Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25), even though its people are sinful and make mistakes. This lesson will

help us to learn about our relationships with other Christians and the role of the church in our life.

Believers Sacrifice for Each Other (Acts 4:32-37)

The Book of Acts is the story of the early church and its growth. It tells how Jesus’ followers obeyed God’s command to take the good news about Jesus to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8). Luke wrote Acts to tell about the first Christ-followers (Christians). He told about their work and their relationships to each other. The early Christians shared a commitment to Christ and to each other. This resulted in them sharing all they owned with each other.

Luke gives an example of these **selfless** acts through Joseph. He is best known by his **nickname**, Barnabas, which means “son of comfort.” He sold a field and gave the money to the missionaries. Barnabas’s gift and the gifts of others were given to anyone who had a need. Some early believers were very poor because of their faith in Christ. Often, people would not buy anything from Christians. Many people were angry with the Christians, who had left the faith of their fathers (the Jewish faith). Many Christians lost their jobs and homes. Others were attacked and beaten.

Early Christians did many acts of commitment and love. One of these acts was to **sacrifice** what they owned. Then they gave

the money to help those in need. The early church took care of one another.

In America, believers do not have this kind of **persecution**, but some are in need. Like the early church, Christians today can serve and give to believers who are in need. Our relationship with each other should be one of love and sacrifice.

For example, one young man in my church is mostly blind. He came from another state with just two suitcases. Our church had given him a job. His old church gave him some money to come to this new job, but he had nothing for his apartment. An email went out to our church family. Very soon, he had furniture, dishes, and everything he needed to live. Believers gave what they had to this new family member in need.

There are stories like this in many churches around the world. These beautiful acts of sacrifice show the world how the love of Christ can change a group of people.

Believers Serve Each Other (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

Christians within the church are like a family. But Paul also talks about the church as being like a body. He reminded the believers that people may be different in many ways. But Christ calls all believers together into one large group called the church.

Paul talked about a problem in every group, not just churches. He wrote, “But God

has put all the parts into the body just as He wants to have them.” (v. 18). Some believers did not think they were important to the church. Their gifts were not seen as much as other people’s gifts. As a result, they decided that they were not needed.

This is a problem today. Some believers look at the preacher or teachers and think to themselves, “I could never do that. They are so important. I am just not that gifted.” But everyone has something they can do as part of the body of Christ. Paul was calling everyone to service using their gifts from God.

Think about Paul’s ideas. What would the church be like if only the pastor and teachers served others? Who would give mercy to those who are in need? Who would serve by cleaning dishes in the kitchen? Who would keep the church going?

Every part of the body (the church) does something different and is needed. The work of every person within the church is needed for the church to work well. You may think you don’t have anything to give your church, but you do. God promises that if you are a believer, He has given you gifts to use to serve others and the church. You are serving even if your gifts are not seen by others. You and your gifts have been placed in the family of faith for a purpose. When you use those gifts, you honor God who gave them to you.

We must also learn another important truth: We can't do everything by ourselves. We need others. Some believers are quick to cover up their needs and try to solve their own problems. However, the Bible is clear that Christianity is to be lived out in a shared community, not doing it all alone. God created the church (the body of Christ) so that each person's gifts could be used for the good everyone.

Believers Do Good Even When Weary (Galatians 6:9-10)

Paul reminded the church (and us) to keep going, even when it is tough. Giving to others, caring for the forgotten, and giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name can be tiring. You may want to give up, walk away, or quit. The answer is to ask God for strength to keep going. When we come together as a body of believers, we remember the end result of doing good. We remember it when

new people find a relationship with Jesus. We are encouraged when someone walks up and says, "You're doing a great job. Thanks for what you do." Those times give us a great reminder to keep going, to keep doing good, and to keep loving and serving each other.

Believers Meet Together Regularly and Encourage Each Other (Hebrews 10:24-25)

How many times have you heard a conversation like this at church?

Paul: Hey, Bob, how are you doing?

Bob: Great, Paul. How are you?

Paul: Fine, thanks.

Bob: Well, great! See you later, Paul.

In the church, we should be able to be honest with each other. We should be able to share our hurts, failures, and discouragements. We should also be able to share our joys with our fellow Christians. We need to encourage each other to keep going. But it takes caring enough to do more than just say a quick hello.

Sitting around a campfire, you can see a principle of Christian growth. The pieces of wood that stay closest to the fire burn strong, bright, and warm. They produce the most heat. Those that get pushed away from the fire become cold quickly and burn out.

Spending time with fellow Christians is like being a piece of wood close to the fire. You get heat from those around you and continue to burn strongly and brightly as you help other believers and the lost world for

Things to Think About

1. How have you seen Christians sacrifice for each other?
2. How have other believers served you? How have you served others?
3. Why do you think it is difficult to accept others' service to us? Why do we try to fix our problems ourselves rather than letting others help us?
4. How have you had a reward for continuing to do good and serving those in the church?
5. If someone at your church were to give you a nickname that means something, what would it be?

Christ. Staying away from the church and from fellow believers will leave you cold and without light. You will burn out and lose your fire for Jesus.

You need other Christians—and other Christians need you!

Acts 4:32-37

32 The many followers acted and thought the same way. None of them said that any of their things were their own, but they shared all things.

33 The missionaries told with much power how Jesus was raised from the dead. God's favor was on them all.

34 No one was in need. All who owned houses or pieces of land sold them and brought the money from what was sold.

35 They gave it to the missionaries. It was divided to each one as he had need.

36 Joseph was among them. The missionaries called him Barnabas. His name means Son of Comfort. He was from the family group of Levi and from the country of Cyprus.

37 He had some land which he sold and brought the money to the missionaries.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

12 Our own body has many parts. When all these many parts are put together, they are only one body. The body of Christ is like this.

13 It is the same way with us. Jews or those who are not Jews, men who are owned by someone or men who are free to do what they want to do, have all been baptized into the one body by the same Holy Spirit. We have all received the one Spirit.

14 The body is not one part, but many parts.

15 If the foot should say, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that would not stop it from being a part of the body.

16 If the ear should say, "I am not a part of the body because I am not an eye," that would not stop it from being a part of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye how would it hear? If the whole body were an ear, how would it smell?

18 But God has put all the parts into the body just as He wants to have them.

19 If all the parts were the same, it could not be a body.

20 But now there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you." Or the head cannot say to the feet, "I do not need you."

22 Some of the parts we think are weak and not important are very important.

23 We take good care of and cover with clothes the parts of the body that look less important. The parts which do not look beautiful have an important work to do.

24 The parts that can be seen do not need as much care. God has made the body so more care is given to the parts that need it most.

25 This is so the body will not be divided into parts. All the parts care for each other.

26 If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it. If one part is given special care, the other parts are happy.

27 You are all a part of the body of Christ.

Galatians 6:9-10

9 Do not let yourselves get tired of doing good. If we do not give up, we will get what is coming to us at the right time.

10 Because of this, we should do good to everyone. For sure, we should do good to those who belong to Christ.

Hebrews 10:24-25

24 Let us help each other to love others and to do good.

25 Let us not stay away from church meetings. Some people are doing this all the time. Comfort each other as you see the day of His return coming near.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Created for Relationships

Lesson 13: All People Everywhere

Bible Text

2 Corinthians 5:11-21; 1 Peter 3:15;
Colossians 4:2-6

Memory Verse

“Be wise in the way you live around those who are not Christians. Make good use of your time.”
(Colossians 4:5)

Word List

deserve: used to say that someone should have or be given something

gratitude: a feeling of thanks; thankfulness

passion: a strong liking or excitement about something

persuade: to talk someone into doing something or believing something

“How many people have you told about Jesus today?” This was the question my roommate asked two young girls in Asia. The two girls had decided to follow Jesus just the day before. They had not told anyone—at least not yet! Her next question surprised me. “Why not? Don’t you care about your friends who don’t know about Jesus?” She explained that we must tell others about Jesus’ love because of our love for them.

2 Corinthians 5:15 says it this way:

Christ died for everyone so that they would live for Him. They should not live to please themselves but for Christ Who died on a cross and was raised from the dead for them.

If we love people the way Jesus loved them, we will make good use of our time. We will tell them our story of how Jesus forgave our sins. We will ask them if they want to give their lives to Him and join God’s family.

Why Share Jesus’ Love? (2 Cor. 5:11-15)

Paul explained the reasons why he shared Christ with everyone: the fear of God (v. 11) and the love of Christ (v. 14).

The Greek word for *fear* had several meanings. In this verse, Paul used *fear* to mean being in awe of God’s power and might. His fear was not about being afraid of God.

Think of the awe you would feel for a good king who rescued you from a horrible enemy. You would feel more than just **gratitude** and thankfulness. You would stand in awe of the king’s strength and power. Paul knew God had rescued him from sin. He honored God with his awe and gratitude.

The other reason Paul shared the Good News of Jesus with everyone was because of his love for Jesus. Paul knew Jesus’ sacrifice had paid the penalty of his (Paul’s) sin. This amazed him. Paul (and all of us) **deserve** to be punished for our sins. But Jesus paid the penalty for us. Paul’s response was to love Jesus in return. Oh, how we love Jesus, too!

Paul wanted to **persuade** people to turn to Jesus as their Savior. As a missionary, Paul had such **passion** for his work that he had to remind the Corinthian church that he was not crazy. To the Jewish people, Paul must have seemed crazy. Paul had been a popular and respected leader among the Jews. He had even hunted and punished new Christians. But now, everything was different. Now Paul believed Jesus was truly the Messiah. Paul suffered many times for telling people about Jesus, but he never stopped. Paul knew others might think he was crazy. But Paul knew it was God who had changed him so completely.

Paul gave a second reason for his passion that seemed crazy: the church at Corinth. Paul seemed crazy in his care and love for them. Paul wanted to love like Christ loved. The love shown by Jesus on the cross gave Paul the passion to love others. He could not stop his ministry to them and to others. Jesus' love for people had become Paul's love for people. He was sure that Christ died for all people, even those who hurt him.

Such love also gives believers today a passion for telling others about Jesus. When someone understands their sinfulness, they have a deep gratitude to God for forgiveness. Luke wrote about the woman who put perfume on Jesus' feet because of her deep gratitude for His forgiveness. Jesus had said, "Her many sins are forgiven because she loves

much. But the one who has been forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47).

Like Paul, we can boldly share Jesus' love with other people. We have been forgiven much; let us love much. Let our *awe* for God's forgiveness and our *gratitude* for Christ's love put us into action (vv. 14-15)

Sent with a Lesson (2 Cor. 5:16-21)

Paul talked about God's love as the reason for sharing the Good News of Jesus. He also talked about the message itself. He shared God's story in five verses:

- v. 17: *We become a new person.*
- v. 18: *God brought us to Himself through Christ.*
- v. 19: *God is not holding our sins against us.*
- v. 20: *Turn from your sins and come to God.*
- v. 21: *We are made right with God because of what Christ did for us.*

God made us right with Himself through Jesus Christ's work of paying for our sins with His death on the cross. Because we are His people, Christ's followers are commanded to share this good news. We are His missionaries. We must go and share it with all people everywhere!

Be Ready with Your Answer (1 Peter 3:15)

Peter wrote this during great trouble in his country. He wrote these words in 1 Peter 1:8:

You have never seen Him but you love Him. You cannot see Him now but you are putting your trust in Him. And you have joy so great that words cannot tell about it.

Such joy and hope must have seemed crazy to those who were worried about persecution and danger.

Peter wrote to “always be ready to tell everyone” the reason for such hope. Like other believers, Peter was persecuted but his hope was in Christ. People must have wondered about this Jesus who had so greatly changed Paul’s life. If they asked him about it, Paul was always ready to answer them!

The same command to be ready is ours today. While we may not suffer so much persecution in today in this country, we will have troubled times. Trouble makes our faith stronger. Faith with hope in troubled times makes people ask questions. We can give them a simple answer. We know that our hope is in Christ and an eternity with Him. Our suffering cannot compare with what He will give us (Romans 8:18). We have hope

because He is our hope.

Peter reminded us to be gentle and show respect for others when we give our answer. Perhaps some Christians did not always answer with kindness. Sadly, some Christians often have the same problem today. The news has stories of churches and believers who only show hate. Speaking to others with hate and shame does little to bring people to Christ. Perhaps this is why Peter felt the need to tell us to show respect and be gentle when talking about our faith.

Pray & Look for an Opportunity (Col. 4:2-6)

In Paul’s letter to the Colossian church, he commanded them to pray, watch, and be thankful. He asked them to pray that God would open doors for the message of Jesus. He also asked the church to pray for him, that he would tell the story of Christ clearly so all would understand.

That same prayer is needed now - 2,000 years later. Only God can open the door for you to talk about your faith. Only God provides the words. Only God provides the understanding. Only God persuades. Only God saves. We, like Paul, only need to walk through the doors God opens. The rest is up to Him.

Paul gave the church one last command: Be wise. Use wisdom when talking to those who are not yet in the family of faith. It is difficult to persuade others to believe in the

Things to Think About

1. Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ? If you do, ask God to make you able to talk to others about your relationship with Christ.
2. Does God’s love make me want to share His love with others? How? Where? When?
3. Look at your life this week. What does the life you live each day say about what you believe?
4. If you have never accepted Jesus as your Savior and received His forgiveness of your sins, what is holding you back? Consider praying and asking God to help you know what to do and to speak to your heart. Ask Him to reveal His love to you.

love of God if Christians tell Jesus' story with a bad attitude. God's love is what causes us to want to share. That same love should show in how we speak and how we live.

Which is more important: to tell about Christ or to live out an example that would bring people to ask about our faith? The answer is both. As you have God's love, you cannot help but tell others about God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. However, they need to see that your life shows what you believe.

Your words and your living example of faith are powerful ways to show how the love of God can change a life. When you share with others, treat non-Christians with the same love that brought you to Christ. Every person is looking for that kind of love!

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

11 Because of this, we know the fear of God. So we try to get men to put their trust in Christ. God knows us. I hope that your hearts know me well also.

12 We do not want to sound as if we think we are so important. Instead, we are making it easy for you to be proud of us. In that way, you will be able to tell them about us. They always talk about the way people look, but do not care about their hearts.

13 Are we crazy to talk like this? It is all because of what God has done. If we are using our minds well, it is for you.

14 For the love of Christ puts us into action. We are sure that Christ died for everyone. So, because of that, everyone has a part in His death.

15 Christ died for everyone so that they would live for Him. They should not live to please

themselves but for Christ Who died on a cross and was raised from the dead for them.

16 So from now on, we do not think about what people are like by looking at them. We even thought about Christ that way one time. But we do not think of Him that way anymore.

17 For if a man belongs to Christ, he is a new person. The old life is gone. New life has begun.

18 All this comes from God. He is the One Who brought us to Himself when we hated Him. He did this through Christ. Then He gave us the work of bringing others to Him.

19 God was in Christ. He was working through Christ to bring the whole world back to Himself. God no longer held men's sins against them. And He gave us the work of telling and showing men this.

20 We are Christ's missionaries. God is speaking to you through us. We are speaking for Christ and we ask you from our hearts to turn from your sins and come to God.

21 Christ never sinned but God put our sin on Him. Then we are made right with God because of what Christ has done for us.

1 Peter 3:15

15 Your heart should be holy and set apart for the Lord God. Always be ready to tell everyone who asks you why you believe as you do. Be gentle as you speak and show respect.

Colossians 4:2-6

2 You must keep praying. Keep watching! Be thankful always.

3 As you pray, be sure to pray for us also. Pray that God will open the door for us to preach the Word. We want to tell the secret of Christ. And this is the reason I am in prison.

4 Pray that I will be able to preach so everyone can understand. This is the way I should speak.

5 Be wise in the way you live around those who are not Christians. Make good use of your time.

6 Speak with them in such a way they will want to listen to you. Do not let your talk sound foolish. Know how to give the right answer to anyone.