



For Sabbath School Classes

For Teens and Adults

**WITH ONE ACCORD**

This lesson was prepared by the Apostolic Church of God 7th Day under the supervision of Pastor Saunders.  
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Note: The Lesson Readings are meant to be read at home, not necessarily at Sabbath School.

LESSON 1

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## WITH ONE ACCORD

MEMORY VERSE,: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Ps.133:1

INTRODUCTION: In writing these words, King David was reflecting on the sweetness and the beauty of lives brought together in a common sharing of God's blessing. He compared this unity to a holy anointing, something rare and precious, which could not be duplicated. See Exodus 30:25-33

David experienced this unity with Jonathan, his covenant brother. It is written that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

Their example stirs a deep-seated longing in the hearts of most present-day believers. We are stirred because we find, on examining our own relationships, that this kind of unity is indeed rare and precious.

David said how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. He was not singing the praises of an occasional move of God where all were in agreement. He did not extol the virtues of a prayer meeting where the saints managed to maintain harmony. His exclamation was this, "Behold, what a blessing it is when brethren take up permanent residence in the oneness of mind and spirit."

The young New Testament church found this dwelling place. Within the first five chapters of the book of Acts we find the phrase "with one accord" used five times to describe the life and activity of the new church.

Acts 4:32 says, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." How different was the fellowship, the *koinonia*, of that age from what is called "fellowship" by so much of the modern church. Where the lives of New Testament believers were knit together sharing a mutual communion and vision, the present popular concept of fellowship has become merely church-centered social contact.

What then, is lacking?

The Greek words *koinos*, *koinonos* and *koinonia* are the terms from which our word "fellowship" comes. The thoughts behind these terms are "common", "shared", "partnership", and "communion". Genuine fellowship is a true sharing of, and participation in, the lives of those who are members of God's family. It is not based on mutual doctrine but on mutual love, for *koinonia* ceases to exist apart from love.

In her book SAINTS AND SNOBS, Marion Jacobsen says that, "People are hungry for acceptance, love and friends, and unless they find them in the church they may not stay there long enough to become personally related to Jesus Christ. People are not persuaded, they're attracted. We must be able to communicate far more by what we are than by what we say." One of the most important aspects of the Christian message to a desperate world is this- "We can show you how to live."

But before we take our message to a world which is searching for genuine love we must practice on ourselves. David said that the Lord commanded the blessing upon the place where unity dwelt. Let us move into that blessing.

### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Rewrite Psalm 133:1 in your own words.
2. What must be true of your life in order to have fellowship with others? 1 John 1:3-7
3. Read Acts 2:42-47. Compare your church with the first church on the basis of fellowship as described in these verses.

4. What is the foundation on which our comprehension of God's fullness is based? Eph.3:17-19
5. With what must "truth" be coupled in order that we may grow as Christians? Eph.4:14-16, 25
6. By what must the ministry gifts be governed in order for them to profit anything lasting in God's kingdom?  
1 Cor.13:1-3
7. What is God's ideal for the church? 1 Cor.1:10
8. What is the basis and pattern for the unity of the church? John 17:20-23
9. What is one purpose of the five-fold ministry in the church? Eph.4:13
10. Read Heb.10:24,25 and give these answers:
  - A. What three activities should be taking place in the local church?
  - B. In what way are you involved in fulfilling these activities in your church?
  - C. Does your assembling together produce the results named in verse 24?
11. Read 1 Cor.6:1-8 and find the answers to these questions.
  - A. What action should be taken to settle a dispute between believers in a local church?
  - B. Should believers have enough Godly insight and wisdom to make a settlement? Why?
  - C. Why does Paul say, "I speak to your shame."? (V.5)

LESSON 2

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### THE BEAM OF JUDGEMENTALISM

MEMORY VERSE: "So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

Romans 14:12,13.

INTRODUCTION: Read Matthew 7:1-6. This passage of scripture is probably one of the most often quoted on judging. It has much to say about judging one another and is worthy of more consideration than we usually tend to give it.

Inevitably, as we take a stand against someone or something, Matthew 7:1 will be quoted back at us, "Judge not that ye be not judged."

The implication is that we are not to make judgements but let the Lord work the situation out without our interference.

However, verse 1 does not teach that we must not make any judgement because verse 6 requires that we make at least four judgements, (discernments, discriminations)- what is holy, who is a dog, what is a pearl, who or what are swine.

Jesus is admonishing us in regards to how we judge, not as to whether we should or not. As in all things that we do, the Lord is concerned with what attitude we do them. With what heart attitude do you judge your brother?

Matthew 7:1 is speaking of judgement in the sense of condemnation. We could correctly render it as "condemn not that ye be not condemned." The word "judge" is translated from the Greek term **KRINO** which means to judicially condemn, damn, decree or pass sentence upon.

The image which comes to mind is that of a judge in a courtroom, sitting at the bench, gavel in hand, pronouncing the verdict, "GUILTY!" But watch out. Jesus said that kind of judgement will rebound right back at you.

Some people are like that, always able to find fault with their brethren, always ready with a word of criticism. Constructive criticism is healthy and should be welcomed, but there is also destructive criticism which seeks to condemn and tear down.

Be careful what kind of criticism you offer.

In Matthew 7:3-5, Jesus tells of two brothers, one of them He calls a hypocrite. One brother has offered to help the other brother to remove a speck of dust from his eye. Jesus doesn't say there is anything wrong with helping your brother who has a fault.

In order to see a mote in someone's eye, you have to be looking for it. A mote is not glaringly obvious. You have to look pretty hard to see it, especially, as Jesus said, if you have a beam in your own eye. Judgementalism is the beam that prevents clear vision to remove the mote. When we look for motes in our brother and sisters' eyes, we become blinded to our own condition.

What causes us to look for motes? One reason is jealousy. We try to find fault with a brother who is more successful or talented or gifted than we are. Another reason is to build ourselves up by tearing some else down. There have been ministries built on nothing else than tearing down other ministries. But that's very shaky ground to build on.

Sometimes we look for motes because it makes us feel better. We know our own faults and somehow we feel more comfortable if we can find faults in others. We can use this means to justify our own faults.

But consider this. If you were dying of a serious disease, would it help your condition if you discover that 50,000 other people were dying of the same disease? You always find what you're looking for.

Somewhere high over the African plains flies a vulture. It must be wonderful to soar high in the sky through the clouds, over rivers and lakes, shining mountains and all of God's beautiful creation. But that poor old vulture misses out on all of that. While he's circling and soaring' through the sky, all he's looking for is death. He's scanning the terrain for a ripe antelope carcass. But that's not his fault, that's his nature.

What you are looking for or what you see in this world exposes your nature. The vulture is stuck with his. We can change ours.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What is one characteristic of a mature Christian? How do we learn to discern? Heb.5:14
2. What is one area in which we are to exercise discernment? 1 John 4:1
3. To whom will God give discernment? Ps.25:9
4. If a brother is "caught in a trespass", who may correct him? How? Gal.6:1 (Define "meekness").
5. How does Peter say we should deal with sin in a fellowship of saints? 1 Peter 4:8
6. How did David regard Godly criticism? Ps.141:5
7. Why must we choose our words carefully when we admonish one another? Proverbs 18:21
8. What is the purpose of Godly admonition? Heb.10:24
9. What becomes of the believer's relationship to the law when he judges (*krino*) his brother? James 4:11,12
10. How does Paul describe the man who judges others? What is this man actually doing to himself? Rom.2:1

11. What will be the end result of the hypocrite who judges others? Romans 2:3

12. Why must we be careful not to continually complain about others in the body of Christ? James 5:9

(Note) Make a positive comment about the person seated next to you in your Bible Class.  
Find some praiseworthy characteristic of that person and tell how it has blessed you

LESSON 3

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## HUMILITY

MEMORY VERSE: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."  
Phil.2:3,4

INTRODUCTION: King David wrote that God "knoweth the proud afar off" (Ps.138:6) and experience teaches us that this is where they usually stay, afar off from God. On the other hand, James tells us that God "giveth grace unto the humble." (James 4:6)

Jesus began His sermon on the mount with "How happy are the humble-minded, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs!" (Matt.5:3 Phillips Version). The first ones He makes mention of are the humble minded, those lowly in spirit. Who then are the "humble", and how can we become one of this group upon whom God bestows His grace and blessing?

Many Christians have the idea that humility is a kind of vague religious emotion that God gives to us. This is a false concept. Humility is not an emotion, it is a decision. Humility is derived in the area of the will, not the emotions. It is something you DO.

In 1 Pet.5:6 we are told, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God". He means YOU humble YOURSELF, don't ask God to do it. Humility is an inward change.

Nevertheless, although humility is a willed response on the part of the believer, and God does not MAKE us humble, He does employ many means to TEACH us humility. One of these methods is through the reproaches of our brothers and sisters in Christ. In Ps.141:5 David says, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head".

God uses the reproofs and corrections of those who have spiritual oversight and to bring us into a right relationship with Him and His church. Our willingness to receive is a measure of our maturity. Our ability to apply correction to our lives will determine how quickly we grow in the Lord.

God also teaches humility through personal failure, or through what appears to others to be failure in our lives. The Apostle Paul's success in the gospel work did not depend on what others thought of him. In 1 Cor.4:9-13, Paul tells us that the society of his day regarded the apostles as fools, weak, despised, reviled, persecuted and defamed. Yet, this did not discourage those who bore the apostolic ministry but served to draw them closer to God as evidenced in 2 Cor.1:2-10.

King David sinned against the Lord when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then conspired to have her husband, Uriah, killed. When Nathan, the prophet, confronted David with, "Thou art the man", David immediately faced the fact that he had failed God. (2 Sam.12:7,12)

Rather than trying to excuse or justify his sin, David humbled himself. calling upon God's mercy, thoroughly repented, and gained great insight into the heart of God. (Ps.5:6,7)

In 1 Cor.12:25-27 we are told that since we are all members of the same body, when one member suffers, we should share the burden of suffering, and when one member is honoured we should share his glory. Often though, it's easier to bear your brother's sorrow than to rejoice in his blessing. When your brother comes into some great good fortune, you may be tempted to complain to God, "Why did he get that opportunity for a blessing when I didn't?"

God teaches us humility through the advancement of others. We must understand that in the Body of Christ we have been given a diversity of spiritual gifts and ministries. Some are very noticeable, visual and prominent. They are highly recognizable as ministries and are therefore the focus of considerable attention due to this recognition factor. Other gifts and ministries are not so visible. The prayer warriors, the intercessors, the children's ministries, and those who care for the poor and outcast may not receive much attention but are EQUALLY important in God's eyes.

Knowing this, therefore, let us serve the Lord and His church with humility, gladly ministering in the realm that He has apportioned to each of us. True humility before God and man is possible only when we walk in the Spirit.

"Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up."  
(James 4:10).

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. According to Rom.12:3, how should we NOT think of ourselves? How should we think of ourselves? What has God given to each of us to equip us for particular service?
2. Which fruits of the Spirit are characteristic of humility?  
Gal.5:22-24
3. Read the parable of the ambitious guest in Luke 14:7-15. Discuss some practical examples of how this parable can be applied in your life; in your church; at work; at home.
4. The absence of humility shows our absence of respect and love. How must we regard God? Romans 9:20,21
5. How did Paul, who was a mighty worker for the kingdom of God, regard himself? 1 Tim.1:15; 1 Cor.15:9; Eph.3:8
6. How did David describe a godly reprimand? List some spiritual qualities of oil? (e.g. used for anointing). Psalm 141:5
7. What qualities of the heart and spirit does God desire in His people? Ps.51:6,16,17
8. Read 1 Cor.1:26-31. Why has God chosen the base and foolish things to take His message to the world? In what should we boast or glory? V.29,31

Using the above scripture passages as a reference, why did God call:

- A. Moses- Exodus 3:11
  - B. Isaiah- Isaiah 6:5-8
  - C. Jeremiah- Jer.1:4-6
  - D. Paul- Acts 9:3-6
9. Jesus' actions were never inconsistent with true humility. Mark the following statements either true or false.
- A. Humility means being passive in all situations-  
John 2:13-17 (True, False) Ans. \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Humility means never saying anything positive about yourself-  
John 8:12-14 Ans. \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. Humility means never acting confidently- Mark 1:21,22 Ans. \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. Humility means never making offensive statements-  
Matt.16:23; Matt.23:27-33 Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

10. According to Proverbs 13:10 what will bring contention into the church?

11. God is not opposed to His people receiving glory and honour. However, it will be given by His doing and in His time. Read Prov.25:27; 27:2

Discuss the truth in these verses.

How would one feel after eating too much honey?

Note: Self-glorification brings the same results. In the final analysis, does self-glorification bring glory to either God or man?

12. What is the key to being exalted? Luke 14:11

LESSON 4

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### CONTRIBUTING TO THE KINGDOM

MEMORY VERSE: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 1 Cor.12:7 "Bear ye one another's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal.6:2

INTRODUCTION: God has gifted His children for special purposes within the church. He has given to each believer gifts and abilities which are meant to be mutually shared. Some Christians think they don't have anything to contribute. They are wrong because Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit". John 15:5.

Other Christians think they can contribute on their own. They are wrong too because Jesus concluded His statement in John 15:5 by saying, "...without Me ye can do nothing."

In Christ we will bear fruit despite our weakness. But, apart from Him we can do nothing, regardless of our efforts and desires. In an individual sense, fruits are described as attributes such as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness and others. In a corporate sense, fruit (which in nature is normally meant to be eaten) should bless others. Jesus told His disciples, (John 15:16), to "go and bring forth fruit".

The fruit Jesus was talking about is not just a vague, invisible, religious result. It's real. It's actual. It's observable like fruit on a tree. When God is at work in a Christian's life it is visible to others, and it has a positive effect on others.

In John 15:5 the condition that Jesus gives for bearing fruit is "abiding in Him". We usually understand this to refer to our personal relationship with Him. However, as we look further into the passage, we find that "abiding" is related to keeping His words and commandments. John 15:7-14.

In fact, in verse 12 Jesus gives a commandment. He says, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." We might expect the main emphasis to be on our love for Jesus or for the Father. But Jesus shifts the emphasis on to loving one another. Notice, this is not just a "fellowship" type of love. It is, "Love as I have loved you." How then, did Jesus love His disciples? How was His love practically demonstrated?

We find the answer as we observe the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. He demonstrated His love by personally teaching, training, caring for, warning, and encouraging His disciples. He gave them the best part of His time and attention, His gifts and abilities.

We can see then, that abiding and growing in Christ like a fruitful branch on a vine cannot be separated from our practical relationships with each other. We need someone on whom we can "practice" love as Jesus practiced it; with whom we can share our gifts as Jesus shared His.

We contribute to others from the life-flow of the vine. As branches we should never be involved in frantic efforts to bear fruit. We need simply to maintain a growing relationship with the vine, and fruit will naturally appear, maintain contact with the vine and contribute the fruit which He produces.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. How many Christians have spiritual gifts? 1 Cor.12:7
2. How do you receive a spiritual gift? 1 Cor.12:11
3. Compile a list of the different spiritual gifts mentioned in the following scripture passages. 1 Cor.12:8-10,28; Rom.12:6-8; Eph.4:11
4. What conclusion did Paul arrive at when considering the proper use of spiritual gifts? 1 Cor.13:1-3
5. How does Peter refer to the Christian who uses his gift to minister?  
1 Peter 4:10
6. What is one result of allowing God to use us in spiritual gifts?  
1 Peter 4:11
7. How should you regard yourself and your spiritual gift or gifts? Rom.12:3
8. What does Paul command the church members to do in 1 Thess.5:11?
9. How does God equip us to minister comfort to others? 2 Cor.1:3,4
10. What does Paul command the church to do in Rom.15:1?

In your opinion, who are the "strong"?

Who are the "weak"?

How could you fulfill this command?

11. What three types of people need body ministry according to 1 Thess.5:14? What type of ministry does each one need? What must be our attitude in order to minister to them?
12. How must your faith to minister within the body be demonstrated?  
James 2:14-16
13. For what are good works useful? Titus 3:8  
For what are they not useful? Titus 3:5
14. What does God promise to those who continue in good works? Who should have priority in your good works?  
Gal.6:7-10
15. What is another ministry that you can contribute to the body? 1 Peter 4:9
16. How does James describe "pure religion!!"? Jas.1:27
17. What exhortation did Paul continually give to the saints? 2 Thess.3:13; Gal.6:9; 1 Cor.15:58

Why do so many grow weary? How can we overcome weariness?  
Discuss.



## DISCIPLINE, WARNING AND CORRECTION

MEMORY VERSE: Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Heb.12:11

INTRODUCTION: As the Lord begins to integrate His saints into the church it becomes obvious that the process of establishing unity is not all "sweetness and light". When writing to the saints in Thessalonica Paul encourages them to uphold the ideals of comforting and supporting those who needed these ministries. (1 Thess.5:14)

However, he also wrote, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn (admonish) them that are unruly (undisciplined)". This is an essential part of the New Testament *koinonia*. It is an element of the first church which is much stressed in the epistles, but is not practiced widely today.

Paul is not referring here to cases of severe church discipline. These are handled in more specific terms. The "warning of the unruly" is part of the normal maturing process in the lives of those Christians who are joined to Christ's body. This is true whether you are the one who is giving the exhortation or you are the one that is being corrected.

Inevitably you will find yourself on both sides of this process during your Christian growth. Growth is what correction is for. As the writer of Proverbs says, "He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuses reproof erreth (goeth astray)".

We tend to shy away from such concepts as discipline, warning, and correction. We may even wonder if the church has any warrant to interfere with a member who is undisciplined in his life. That's his own business, isn't it? Is that what the church is for?

The answer is "yes". It is all part of the way God deals with us in order to fulfill His constant purpose of bringing us to maturity. (Eph.4:13b). Hebrews chapter 12 gives us one of the best explanations of how and why God wants to straighten us out. The process is called "chastening". It can be unpleasant while it lasts, but it yields "the peaceable fruit of righteousness".

It is true that a preacher speaking to a congregation can warn and admonish the people. Preaching, however, usually is not as personal or direct as the "fine tuning" that God can bring into effect through personal relationships. We can convince ourselves that we will implement the preacher's hard words and change our ways, but then do little about it.

Real change is more likely to be implemented as we allow ourselves to be corrected by caring, objective church leaders. God's ideal is to be accountable to brothers or sisters who we love and trust, yet who are equally accountable and open to correction.

If you as a follower of Christ genuinely want to keep on course day by day, then you will want to be told when you are deviating from that course. Under godly leadership, counsel, and influence, you will begin to take off your masks, drop your self-sufficiency, and stop resisting change. The best way to avoid going astray is to make it easy for others to lovingly confront you in God.

We should note however, that such correction is not normally given in a church gathering. Rebuke is best received in a counselling situation. We should never seek to embarrass one another in the group setting. Change comes as your will to change is activated and stimulated by the lives of the saints around you. You want to change because those with whom you are in close fellowship are wanting to change.

Intimate personal correction, however, is still the prerogative of a leader or leaders who themselves should be open to similar counselling. Does the prospect of some life-changing correction frighten you? It should neither frighten nor discourage. You should embrace the chastening of the Lord as evidence of belonging to the family of God. (Heb.12:6).

### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Jesus said His Father is the Husbandman of the vine. What does God do to help us bear fruit? John 15:1,2

2. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. Then answer the following:

A. Why does God chasten (discipline) us? V.6

B. Who gains by this discipline? V.10

C. Why should we not seek to escape God's discipline? V.7-9

D. What result does God's discipline bring to our lives? V.10,11

E. How do we feel when undergoing God's discipline? Why? V.5,11,12.

3. List 4 blessings that will come to the man whom the Lord chastens?

Psalm 94:12-15

4. What did God, speaking through the prophet Nathan, promise to King David?

2 Sam.7:14,15

5. What is the end result of continually rejecting reproof? Prov.29:1

6. Read the following verses in Proverbs: Prov.10:17; Prov.12:1; Prov.13:1,18; Prov.15:32; Prov.9:8,9.

List the characteristics and consequences for the person who rejects reproof.

Do the same for the person who heeds instruction.

7. What is one way we can demonstrate loving concern for our brother? Explain your answer. Prov.27:5,6;

Prov.28:23

8. What caution does Paul give to those who would give correction? Gal.6:1

What temptation is he referring to? (Consider Rom.2:1,3 in your answer).

9. What is always true of Christ's judgement and reproof that is not always true of man's judgement? Isa.11:3,4

Note: This is why Paul says we must be "spiritual" in order to bring restoration. (Gal.6:1)

10. Why did the Cretians need to be "rebuked sharply"? Titus 1:12-14;

2 Tim.4:2-4

Would this kind of rebuke still be appropriate in today's churches?

11. What does God promise to those who respond positively to His correction? Prov.1:23

12. What does God say will happen to those who will not heed His correction? Prov.1:25,26,30-32

13. Explain the difference between "discipline" and "punishment".

Answer: Taken from Webster's dictionary:

"discipline"- instruction and exercise designed to train to proper conduct or action; punishment inflicted by way of correction and training.

"punishment" - the penalty for some transgression or fault; pain or penalty inflicted on a person for a crime or offense.

14. Do you think God punishes or disciplines you when you transgress? Discuss.

Note: "What do you really desire for your life? Do you honestly want God's will for your life? Which do you see as best for yourself or your church: sweeping the debris under the carpet year by year? Or living a life which is nourished and pruned and therefore flourishing in ever-increasing beauty and maturity? Do you want to be fruitful? "

(Taken from "CELLS FOR LIFE" by R. Trudinger)

LESSON 6

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## THE TRAP OF PREJUDICE

MEMORY VERSE: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised". Luke 4:18

INTRODUCTION: Harvard psychologist Gordon Allport in his book, "The Nature of Prejudice" makes this statement: "The role of religion is paradoxical. It makes prejudice and it unmakes prejudice. Church goers are more prejudiced than the average; they are also less prejudiced than the average."

Prejudice in church? Within the Body of Christ? How could religion possibly create a greater tendency towards prejudice? Why does religion induce intolerance and bigotry in some people, yet cause others to act in loving acceptance and understanding?

For the answers to these questions (at least in part) we must look at a definition of "prejudice". According to Webster, prejudice is defined as, "an opinion, judgement, or evaluation, favourable or more often unfavourable, conceived without proof or competent evidence, but based on what seems valid to one's own mind; a bias against a race, creed, group, or the like".

Prejudice is prejudging. It is passing a judgement of discrimination against others, usually on the basis of things they didn't cause and couldn't change. It is weighing another man, his racial background, social conditions, educational status, or spiritual viewpoint while you hold the scales. It is not logical. It is neither reasonable, rational or responsible.

Where do prejudices come from? Few of us were taught to be prejudiced. It is more often transmitted, passed on like an illness, a "character disease". The tragedy of prejudice is that it can be so subtly passed on that we seldom realize that we possess it. But we are all infected. We are all prejudiced. Not only that, but we are carriers of the "germ" to the next generation. Our children catch it from us every time we offer a prejudiced statement, make a prejudiced judgement, or laugh at a prejudiced joke. You may not be responsible for all the prejudices that infected you during your maturing years, but why are you still using them, why are you letting them use you?

When we evaluate someone through the eyes of prejudice we inevitably resort to the handy little tool for sorting out people and labelling them. We may think that labels applied to people are really useful devices, helping us to make some sense of the human race. We can find a classification or category for just about anybody.

Unfortunately, once we've found the right "shelf" for somebody, that's usually where they remain, permanently pigeonholed by prejudice.

Labelling is simply another term for "name-calling". We learn it quickly and practice it habitually. It begins with the childish names we learn in the schoolyard and stays with us into adulthood. The vocabulary becomes more acceptably sophisticated but the mentality behind it is still the same.

Labels are a sign of mental stagnation in those who use them because they replace thought. Labels are seldom true. They are illogical. A first lesson in elementary logic demands that you discard your collection of labels because "labels are the most common and foolish logical fallacy used by man". (D. Augsburger)

Labels are used by politicians to smear their opponents, by debaters to support weak arguments, and by shallow thinkers to pretend intelligence. How do you use them?

It is clear then that all of us are caught in this trap of biases, labelling and prejudicial thinking. But there is a way to find release. Consider the One absolutely unprejudiced person who ever lived, the one person who offered personal, social, spiritual, and moral help in conquering prejudice: JESUS CHRIST!

We quote further from Dr. Allport, "He was born in the most rigidly ethnic culture of all time; born in a fiercely nationalistic nation; reared in Galilee, the most bigoted backwoods area of that nation; born into a family of snobbish royal lineage; born in a time of revolutionary fanaticism fired every heart with hatred towards the Roman oppressors; born in a country practicing the apartheid of rigid segregation between Jews and Gentiles.

Yet He showed not a trace of bigotry. He died as the victim of man's prejudiced hatreds. Sentenced at a trial without defense. Condemned by those who had prejudged Him by their own prejudices."

How then could Dr. Allport's observations regarding prejudice in church-goers be correct? The fact is that many church-goers are not Jesus-followers in respect to prejudice. There are those who use their church affiliation for status, security and social opportunity, things which Jesus never did. It is also possible that some accept and emphasize only the parts of Christianity that reinforce their own already biased points of view. One cynic remarked, "There are only two kinds of people on earth: the good and the bad. And the good decide which are which."

However, those faithful who commit themselves whole heartedly to follow Jesus find something else. They find a new strength in Christ to love their neighbour. They find a new pattern in Christ of what it means to be a child of God to all His other children. They find a new resolve to die to prejudice, and be born again to a life of love. Those who take their stand with Jesus reject prejudice whenever, however, and wherever they confront it. In themselves first of all.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 10:34. Up to this time Peter had acted in a discriminatory way towards the Gentiles. Explain what Peter meant when he said that God is not a respecter of persons. See Acts 10:35 and 11:2-17
2. What is able to cut through racial, social, and sexual boundaries to bring people together? Gal.3:26-29
3. Read James 2:1-9. What kind of prejudice is described here? When we show partiality (favouritism, bias) what does that make us? V.4; Rom.2:1

Is prejudice sinful? James 2:9

4. Read John 9:1-3 and Luke 13:1-5.

In both of these passages of scripture, people and events have been prejudged by those observing them. According to Jesus, were these biased assessments correct?

What clue in each passage tells us that those who showed prejudice were also self-righteous? Can you see how they were judging another man's alleged sin?

5. Read Mark 9:38-41.

Why did Jesus' disciples forbid a man from ministering in Jesus name? Why did Jesus rebuke them for their sectarian bias?

6. Why did Jesus' disciples marvel that He stopped to talk with the woman at Jacob's well? John 4:9,27, Give two reasons.

7. What label did the Jews have for those outside their faith? Matt.15:21-28

Note: The terminology that Jesus used was not in a derogatory sense but only as a further test of the woman's faith.

8. How was Jesus' statement in Matt.5:41 an instruction to the Jews to overcome prejudice?

Note: The Jews hated the Romans who had conquered and occupied Palestine. They were heathen outsiders. Roman law stated that a Roman soldier had the right to compel a non-Roman to carry his belongings for one mile. Jesus taught the Jews to respond with loving service by going the extra mile, even with their heathen enemy. (23)

Read the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37. What quality of the Samaritan outsider made him the neighbour of the man who was robbed? (See James 2:13)

10. Read Luke 5:27-30 and Luke 19:1-10

What is a "publican"?

Note: In Jesus' day, a publican was a collector of Roman taxes and revenue. Zacchaeus was a chief publican while Levi was an ordinary publican, the lowest class of tax collectors. The publicans were regarded as traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent dealings with the heathen, and willing tools of the Roman oppressors. They were classed with the sinners, harlots and heathen.

How did Jesus demonstrate His Father's love for all people, no matter what their social position, or how they were regarded by others in their society?

Did Jesus' unprejudiced openness outrage others in His society? Why?

11. What must we do in order to overcome prejudice and see other believers as God sees them? Col.3:9-11

Note: William Barclay in "The Daily Study Bible" summarizes the words of Christ in Matthew 7 with these three great reasons why no man can judge another.

A. We never know the whole facts or the whole person. We cannot understand his circumstances or temptations.

B. It is almost impossible for any man to be strictly impartial in his judgement.

C. No man is good enough to judge any other man. Our own faults, and our own inability to resolve them, automatically disqualify us as fair critics.

LESSON 7

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## FORGIVENESS

MEMORY VERSE: "And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again unto thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Luke 17:4

INTRODUCTION: All of us have been victims of someone else's wrongdoing. Whether they were accidental or intentional, we have all suffered from the offenses of others. Unjust actions have ruined homes, reputations, plans, and relationships. Our natural reaction when someone wrongs us is to insist that they "pay" for their misdeed. To allow a wrong to remain unpunished appears to the natural man to be an act of injustice. It's unfair and we demand satisfaction.

Forgiveness seems too easy a solution. How about "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," that's in the Bible too, isn't it? Yes, you can retaliate tooth for tooth but what repayment can you demand from the one who has ruined your reputation or broken your home? The problem is that so few offenses can be paid for (how can you truly pay for sin.) In most cases "making things right" is an impossibility.

If we can't get repayment, then we can try to get revenge. We can "get even" with our offender. The result of getting even is just that, we lower ourselves to the same level, "even with our offender", and below. Someone said, "Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging an injury puts you even with him; forgiving it sets you above him." Revenge ruins the avenger while more firmly confirming the enemy in his wrong. It can also initiate a vicious circle of feuding and retaliation. So much for "getting even".

If retaliation won't bring satisfaction, then we can simply hate our offender. We'll just hold on to our grievance and remind our offender, (and anybody else who will listen), that we have legitimate grounds to bear a grudge. But who is really being hurt in such a situation? The man who broods over a wrong poisons his own soul.

Resentment and hidden anger will do much spiritual and emotional damage to the one who will entertain them. Nourishing a grudge is a form of slow suicide.

Hatred can elevate blood pressure, ulcerate a stomach, bring on a nervous breakdown, or result in a heart attack. The slow burn will ultimately result in your own burn-out.

Face it honestly, forgiveness makes sense. It's practical, but most important, it's biblical. We all need forgiveness-constantly. We need the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters, but more importantly, we need the forgiveness of God.

Jesus said in Matt.6:14,15 that forgiving our fellow man his offenses goes hand in hand with our being forgiven by our Father. Forgiving, and being forgiven, cannot be separated in God's economy. The two are one.

The same is true of love. The man who loves God will love his neighbour. The apostle John wrote that he who hates his brother and says he loves God is a liar (1 John 4:20,21) We only learn to love as we learn to know God. We truly learn to know God as we learn to love our brother. Love of God, and of our brother, are indivisible. Again, the two are one.

But true forgiveness is the most difficult thing in the universe. Only the heart that has been touched by God's forgiveness, and been made new in Jesus Christ, has the strength and the freedom to truly forgive. This kind of forgiveness denies the natural self that demands it's "rights". Instead, it voluntarily chooses undeserved suffering and hurt, suffering that rightfully belongs to the offender. It chooses to identify with the one who is forgiveness, Jesus Christ.

In this way forgiving is costly. It means absorbing or paying the price of the offense that is forgiven. If your brother breaks a priceless heirloom that you treasure and you forgive him, you bear the loss and he goes free. If he ruins your reputation and you forgive him, you must be prepared to accept the consequences of his sin, while again he goes free. To forgive is to bear the wrath and anger we feel when we are sinned against.

We find the highest expression of this in Jesus Christ. God substituted His Son for us to pay the cost of forgiving-"who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree". 1 Peter 2:24. When you forgive, you choose as Christ did, to substitute yourself in the place of the offender and bear the consequences of his sin. That's what God did in Christ at Calvary, He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9).

Yes, forgiveness is difficult. It is costly. God paid the immeasurable cost for your forgiveness. How can you hesitate to pay the infinitely smaller cost of forgiving your brother? The cost is high, but the value is higher.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What price did Jesus pay for our forgiveness? Matt.26:26-28; 2 Cor.5:21
2. What has Jesus' payment for sin accomplished for you? Heb.10:10,14
3. Explain the extent of God's forgiveness when dealing with our sin.  
Psalm 103:12
4. Read Isaiah 43:25 and Hebrews 10:17,18. God could remember our sins if He chose to. Why does He choose not to?

What is the relationship between forgiving and forgetting when dealing with offenses?

Discuss some ways that could help you choose not to remember specific offenses.

5. Why is it important to understand God's forgiveness through Christ?  
Eph.4:32; Col.3:13

6. Read Matthew 18:21-35.  
In the parable who does the king represent?

Who does the servant represent?

Who does the fellow-servant represent?

Using marginal references from your Bible, (or another source), determine the comparative values of 10,000 talents vs. 100 pence in modern currency. What consequence did the servant receive for not forgiving his fellow-servant? V.34

Which fruit of the Spirit is mentioned in the parable as being useful in dealing with offences? V.26,29; Gal.5:22

7. Read Romans 12:14,17-21. List the commands given in this passage that could help you to have a forgiving spirit.

8. What will you receive in turn when you practice forgiveness?  
Matt.5:7; Psalm 18:25; Luke 6:35,36; Gal.6:7

9. What characteristics, actions, and attitudes, demonstrate an unforgiving spirit? Eph.4:30-32

10. What can cause bitterness in a Christian? Heb.12:14,15

Why is bitterness described as a "root"?

Why do some Christians remain bitter?

11. What advice and warning does James give concerning anger? James 1:19

What observations did Solomon make? Prov.16:32; Prov.19:11; Prov.14:29

12. Why should we not seek vengeance? Heb.10:30

13. According to Jesus' teaching, is forgiveness optional or mandatory?  
Luke 17:4

LESSON 8

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### **LEADERSHIP IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

MEMORY VERSE: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."  
Heb.13:17

INTRODUCTION: Democracy, although it demonstrates a fine ideal of government vested in the people, is not a Biblical concept. A high degree of democracy was found in the ancient Greek city-states in the 6th century B.C. The very word itself is taken from two Greek words, *demos*, people, and *krates*, rule. But it's not God's idea for His church.

Theocracy, however, is. The term theocracy is derived from the Greek *Theos*, God, and *kratos*, power. It is the government of a state or body of people by the immediate direction of God through delegated authority.

Throughout Scriptural history, God has ruled His people this way. Through leaders such as Noah, Abraham, Moses and Joshua, through Judges, and prophets, God made His voice clear to those He had called out as His people. Even as Israel clamored for a king to rule over them, God was still able to speak through those to whom He gave authority. This principle has been carried over into the New Testament as well.

The Father spoke through Jesus Who in turn chose twelve men to speak His message after He returned to His heavenly home. These apostles, under the authority of Christ, then took the gospel and entrusted it "...to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim.2:2.

And so it goes to this day. In every church, in every place where the Body of Christ meets together, there should be leadership raised up by God. This "call to the ministry" must be evident in the life of the one who is to be given authority and confirmed by other leaders in the church. The essential ingredient here is that authority is "given" or "delegated". There is not room in God's plan for the self-appointed leader.

Another important factor in keeping with the Biblical principle of leadership, is that each leader must himself be led. Anyone who desires to exercise God's authority must be under authority. The Bible gives us a clear example of this in Matthew chapter 8. A Roman centurion wanted Jesus to heal his servant, but did not consider himself worthy enough to have Jesus come into his house. Instead, he told Jesus to just "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." He went on to say that he was a man under authority. He was able to command his soldiers effectively only because of the authority of his own superior officer over him. He recognized that Jesus too was acting under the authority of a higher power.

At this, Jesus marveled at the centurion's insight and faith.

God uses this principle of being under authority to guard against the tyranny of unscriptural authoritarianism. Being accountable to others, as well as to God, is one of the most important qualifications for leadership.

A leader must also be an example of humility, be patient, and teachable. His personal and business life should be above reproach. This is not to suggest that it must be perfect, but rather not giving occasion whereby others may stumble. His marriage and his family life should set a good example, his spouse standing by him in leadership.

A leader must recognize his great responsibility to those he is leading. He must search his heart to see that he has godly motives for desiring leadership and authority. That authority must never be used for his own gain or status. The Bible clearly shows that those leaders who use their position selfishly will be judged by God.

Leadership raised up by God should be able to "wait on the Lord", "apt to teach", willing to give counsel, ready to direct God's people into God's path, and capable of hearing from God.

All of these qualities, however, mean very little unless they are ministered with a shepherd's heart of love. Whether you have been called to be an apostle, to lead a prayer group, to be a youth minister, or teach a children's class; unless you minister in love, you will fail to accomplish much for the kingdom of God. Remembering Jesus as the good Shepherd, the apostle John leaves us this exhortation; "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John 3:16.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. From where do earthly leaders derive their positions of authority?

Psalm 75:6-7; Prov.21:1 John 19:10,11 Knowing this do you have greater assurance in submitting to authority?

2. How then, should you respond to authority? Why? Rom.13:1;

1 Peter 2:13-15; 1 Tim.2:1-3.

3. Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20

What commandments did Moses give to Israel concerning leadership (Kingship)?

Note: Apply these commandments in today's terms.



4. What charge is given to leaders (Judges) by Jehoshaphat? 2 Chron.19:6,7
5. What are the necessary qualification for deacons and elders in local church leadership? 1 Tim.3:1-12; Titus 1:6-9
6. Does God use women in positions of leadership? Judges 4:4; Esther 9:29; Acts 21:9; Acts 16:13-15; Romans 16:1-4,6,12; 2 John 1. Name some of these.
7. List the characteristics and responsibilities of church leaders found in 1 Peter 5:1-4
8. Read Ezekiel 34:2-10. In this passage God rebukes the shepherds (leaders) of Israel. What responsibilities does God indicate that shepherds should have to their flock? Apply these responsibilities to leadership in a local church today.
9. What principles of leadership does Jesus teach in John 10:11-14?
10. What leadership principle did Jesus teach in Matt.20:26-28?
11. List the reasons why Jesus condemned the leadership of the Pharisees. Matt.23:1-12
12. What warning did James give to those desiring to be leaders? James 3:1

LESSON 9

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### **FOLLOWING LEADERSHIP**

MEMORY VERSE: "Remember them that have the rule over you who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end (goal) of their conversation." Hebrews 13:7

INTRODUCTION: One day as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, fishing with a net. The words that He then spoke to them were so remarkably simple and yet so profoundly life-changing. He made this invitation to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." The scriptures record that they immediately left their nets and followed Him. From that day forth Peter, Andrew and ten other men who answered Jesus' call, journeyed as disciples or disciplined followers of the Lord.

Down through the centuries Jesus has continued to extend the invitation, "Follow me", to all who will pause to hear Him. Of the many who answer the call and take up the cross and begin to follow down that narrow way, there are those despite good intentions and eager hearts, who fall along the wayside. Many fall because they do not understand true discipleship. They do not know what it is to be a submitted follower.

Jesus never indicated that being a disciplined follower would be easy. We see the depth of his challenge to be a follower in Luke 14:27 where He says, "Whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." It is obvious from this scripture that the Lord is referring to something more than just believing certain doctrines and attending church services. He is pointing out the absolute necessity of submitting to His leadership, even at the cost of radical change in the lives of his followers. (See Luke 14:26 & 33).

Change, constant and consistent, is the essence of discipleship. As the twelve followed their Lord, He taught them the principles of God's kingdom; demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit, and challenged them to walk in His footsteps. Under Jesus' leadership the disciples were exhorted to exercise greater faith, deny their flesh; break out of the walls of dead religion; and become mature teachers of the gospel. What a remarkable transformation we see in the lives of Jesus' disciples in the gospel account. Within the recorded period of three years we see the unlearned fishermen changed into powerful workers for God. How was the "miracle" accomplished? Was it by the direct intervention of the Father? No! The change took place because these twelve men answered the call to follow, and submitted their lives to the Spirit-inspired leadership of Jesus Christ. -- 16 --

At this point you may say, "If that's what it takes to be a disciplined follower then I'll just stay close to Jesus." I can make it with Him, like the old Negro spiritual which says, "Just Jesus and me, we travel the road." This may seem like a sound position to take, but the Bible assures us that it is not. There will be some "loners" in the gospel work, pioneers who pattern their lives after some Old Testament hero, but they are by far the exception rather than the norm. Even the Old Testament pioneers were never called to do "their own thing". They were always chosen and commissioned by God to do His will for the sake of His people, His called-out ones, His "Church".

Today, if we want to travel the road with Jesus, we must use the vehicle which He has provided. His provision for His followers in this day is His Body, the church. His desire to train submitted disciples has not changed. To this end, the Chief Shepherd has raised up leaders within the Body to oversee and teach His flock. The key thoughts in Ephesians 4:11-14 are that the Lord Jesus has provided various leadership ministries within the church to bring the saints into maturity, into a unified faith, full-grown and firmly grounded in Christ.

So now, if we want to be responsible followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must be responsible to the leaders that Christ has placed over us. Of course, this responsibility is not one-sided. Church leaders have a sacred responsibility to those placed in their care, but what is often overlooked is the responsibility that the followers have to uphold their leaders.

As members of Christ's Body, the Bible tells us that we should highly regard our church leaders and be in submission to them (Heb.13:17) Being in submission entails more than just following orders. It is a reflection of a heart-attitude that embraces whole-heartedly the vision and desires of those in authority. Submission, (in God's economy), never means losing our identity or individual purpose in life. Instead, by submitting to leadership, we place ourselves in a position to experience a greater measure of God's power in our lives. That is, God's power to bring change in our lives from glory to glory.

Let us purpose to walk even as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6). Though He was Himself sent to be a leader, He was also continually submissive. He submitted to the leadership of God, the Father; He submitted to His parents; He submitted to the Law; He even submitted to the various religious leaders and customs of the day.

If you have heard His call, walk as His disciple, a disciplined follower of the Lord

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What attitude are you told to have toward your church leaders?

1 Thess.5:12,13

2. What benefits are promised to those who are submissive? 1 Peter 5:5,6

3. Read Romans 8:5-7

Which state of mind will likely produce submission?

Which state of mind will bring rebellion?

4. Read 1 Tim.5:17-20

What responsibility should the congregation take toward those leaders who are working hard for the church?

Why is the admonition in verse 19 so vitally important to church unity?

Read Hebrews 13:17

What sacred responsibility do church leaders have toward those they are leading?

Does understanding this responsibility make it easier to submit? Discuss.

According to this verse, what responsibility on our part will help our church leaders fulfill their ministry in the most mutually beneficial way?

6. Read Exodus 17:8-13

Who was the leader in this passage?

Give an example of a submitted follower.

Give an example of followers anticipating their leaders' need and supporting him.

Note: God gave the victory to all through submission to, and support of, the leader He had placed in authority.

How can you apply the principles of this passage to helping the leadership, (Pastors, Elders) in your church? Give examples.

7. As followers we need godly examples to follow. Read 1 Cor.4:15,16;

1 Cor.11:1; 1 Cor.16:15,16

What command does Paul give that is common to each passage?

What special quality of care does Paul describe in 1 Cor.4:15?

What reason to follow a leader does Paul give in 1 Cor.11:1?

Note: The word here translated as "followers" (K.J.V.) actually means "imitators" (see marginal notes).

Describe the kind of leader Paul says we should submit to.

1 Cor.16:15,16

8. Why is it important to our growth to give attention in following our church leaders' godly example? Heb.13:7; Luke 6:40

9. What attitude should we have towards our spiritual leaders even when they behave in ways with which we disagree? 1 Sam.24:4-6; Acts 23:1-5

10. Complete this personal statement: "Because I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, I will be a supportive follower of my church leaders. I can best serve them and my church by

LESSON 10

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## GOSSIP AND TALE-BEARING

MEMORY VERSE: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Eph.4:29

INTRODUCTION: Someone once said that, "Great minds discuss concepts, lesser minds discuss things, and small minds talk about people". There is nothing that will bring disharmony, disunity, and outright division into the church faster than small minds discussing people.

As a preface to the following remarks in this lesson, let us look at one scripture verse in Matthew 12:36. It is a habit of some students to write their name in the margin beside each promise of God in the Scriptures. Although Matthew 12:36 promises neither prosperity, power, nor victory, it is a promise nonetheless, spoken by Jesus Himself. Jesus said, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement."

Write your name beside this verse.

James said that if any man can control his tongue it is proof of his maturity and temperance in controlling himself in every other way (James 3:2). However, he goes on to say that no man can tame the tongue (V.8). What hope is then left for us if we are given a standard of maturity to strive for, and then told it is impossible to attain? We must carefully note it says that no man can tame his tongue. But the Spirit of God can.

We regard "speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance" as the initial evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. There is good reason for this. If God can "tame" the tongue of a man, He can "tame" the man.

Regardless whether we speak in tongues or not, it is essential for us to walk in the Spirit in order to bridle our tongue. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal.5:17a). Included in the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, we find the following: "works of the tongue, hatred and fighting, jealousy and anger, constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticisms, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those that are in your own little group- and there will be wrong doctrine..." (The Living Bible).

Jesus makes it quite clear that you will speak the things that your mind, (heart), is full of, whether good or bad. (Luke 6:45). God spoke to His people through the prophet Jeremiah these words of caution, "The heart, (mind), is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord, search the heart..." (Jer.17:9,10).

It is evident that the Bible is not condemning the Spirit-filled heart- the renewed mind of the born-again believer. But this renewal is not an instantaneous occurrence. It takes time to completely overcome the carnal mind with its patterns of thought, its disposition toward temptation, and its uncontrolled tongue.

Gossip is a tool of Satan. It is a wedge which will find its way into the little cracks of an undisciplined mind. James urges the saints to confess their faults to one another, and to pray for one another (James 5:16). The desired outcome is healing.

Gossip, on the other hand, will take our faults and combine them with judgement, rumor, and innuendo. The outcome is confusion and division.

Jesus called Satan a "...liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). Gossip is often full of half-truths and twisted information. Satan is also called the "...accuser of our brethren..." (Rev.12:10). Is not gossip many times full of accusations or statements of an accusing nature?

Jesus prayed that we, His followers, might be one as He said He and His Father are one (John 17:21). Satan's desire is to bring division and discord among the saints of God. 1 Corinthians 14:33 tells us that God is not the author of confusion. We need not guess as to who is.

Solomon, the preacher, gives us these following observations on mutual help and support; "Two are better than one...for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow,... and if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Eccl.4:9-12). If one falls, the other will not chide or criticize him for falling, he lifts him up. The Living Bible renders V.12 thusly, "And one standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer." Even stronger, says Solomon, is a rope made from three separate cords braided together. It is not easy to break.

These verses describe the advantage of mutual defense and loyalty towards our brothers. They also describe some of the chief characteristics of being a member of Christ's Body: safety, security, and wholeness. We strive to remain loyal to our Lord Jesus Christ, we defend our faith from the onslaughts of the ungodly; we should defend one another. Jesus takes us and loves us and intercedes for us just as we are. Can we do anything less for our brothers and sisters in Christ? We are called to be committed to helping one another (Gal.6:1,2). Gossip betrays our lack of commitment, even non-commitment, to the member who is being talked about, and to the body as a whole.

"Mud-slinging" is the term used to describe the defamatory remarks made by political rivals. Gossip can make you feel dirty if you tell it, and dirty if you receive it. As the "mud" is flung around the church everyone who either receives it, or passes it on, gets soiled.

When rumors begin to fly and people start talking in hushed tones, it's time to be cautious. If you don't need to pass on the information, then don't. Resist the temptation to add to the story, or to turn inference into "fact". Before you make any judgements or get involved in conversations, make sure you know the truth.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. According to Romans 6:13, to what should we not yield ourselves? Are your mind and tongue included as "your members"?

2. What power does the tongue have? Can the tongue literally bring death? Explain. See Prov.18:21
3. What does the Bible say about the tongue of the wise?  
Prov.12:18; Prov.15:2
4. Why must we be careful of the words we speak? Prov.6:2; Matt.12:36
5. What is one result that gossip will always bring if left unchecked?  
Prov.16:28; Prov.17:9
6. Who will listen to gossip? Prov.17:4  
Who will not get involved in gossip? Prov.11:13
7. What motivates hurtful gossip? Prov.10:12; Prov.26:28  
What motivates us to cover a brother's transgression?  
Prov.10:12; Prov.17:9; 1 Peter 4:8
8. Compare the words of a wholesome tongue with the words of a talebearer.  
Prov.26:22; Prov.15:4
9. What is one way to break the vicious circle of tension and strife that gossip brings? Prov.22:10; 26:20
10. In situations involving gossip, who should we stay away from? Why?  
Provo 20:19
11. Read Eph.4:29-32. Take careful note of specific words in this passage such as:  
CLAMOUR: A loud cry, a forceful complaint or urgent demand, to make insistent complaints. (Verse 31)  
Ques. In what way can gossip be linked to clamour?  
What kinds of behaviour are associated with clamour? John 19:15,16;  
Acts 22:22-25  
  
SLANDER: This word is SCANDAL in another form. It means defamation, a false tale maliciously uttered, injurious to the reputation.  
(evil speaking, Verse 31)  
Ques. How can gossip be equated with slander? Why is evil speaking so dangerous? James 3:6,8  
  
MALICE: Active or vindictive ill will, desire to inflict injury or suffering. (Verse 31)  
Ques. How can gossip be motivated by malice? Why must we guard against a malicious attitude? Prov.24:17,18
12. Read Eph.4:1-3  
What 5 qualities should mark the walk of the called-out believer? V.2.  
What unity are we exhorted to keep? How?

## DEALING WITH DIVISION

MEMORY VERSE: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor.1:10

INTRODUCTION: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." Jesus spoke these words to the Pharisees, (Matt.12:25), referring to Satan's kingdom, but the fact is, this principle holds true even when referring to the kingdom of God.

When the house of God, His church, begins to tear itself apart by strife and discord, God is grieved. Division goes against His very nature. Backbiting, bitterness, contentions and jealousies, destroy the harmony He intended for His church.

Not long before He was crucified, Jesus prayed for unity among His followers, those men who would ultimately establish his church throughout the world. This is what He said to the Father: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:20,21). The unity between the Father and the Son is the basis and the pattern for the unity of the church. Jesus prayed that His followers would be characterized by this same oneness, and that includes the church today. Jesus' concern for unity becomes more emphatic when we realize that He recognized it as being a witness to the world, that He is the Christ. (Vs.21,23)

Sadly, the church has earned a bad reputation through congregational quarreling, constitutional wrangling, offenses leading to breached friendships, even petty disputes over church decor. When the controversy, whether great or small, overflows the boundaries of a local fellowship into the surrounding community, it brings dishonour to God's name. One wonders how many people, in winning some church disputes, have lost the loving favour of God.

According to the Bible, it is possible for a church to deal successfully with difficult situations and to resolve them harmoniously. However, it is possible and often the case, that in attempting to deal with a problem, that a congregation may be misled by surface issues and not attack the root cause. In other words, it is vitally necessary to properly identify the problem.

One of the chief causes of division is doctrinal disagreement. Throughout the New Testament Scriptures from Jesus' warning against false prophets, (Matt.7:15) to John's revelation of the Spirit to the churches, (Rev.2:14,24) are found admonitions to guard against twisted or wrong beliefs. The apostle Paul often wrote about the danger of doctrinal error. He told Timothy to stay in Ephesus and "...charge some that they teach no other doctrine". (1 Tim.1:3).

At another time, Paul told his young disciple to "...rightly dividing the word of truth", and warned him about two of the brethren that were teaching error. (2 Tim.2:15-18)

As many Gentile believers swelled the ranks of the early churches, there were conflicts over doctrinal issues. The Jewish believers wanted to hold on to, and enforce, some of the regulations of Judaism such as circumcision. When the dispute threatened to divide the church, a general council of the church leaders met in Jerusalem to resolve the issue (Acts 15).

Church leaders today still have a difficult task in protecting the church from error. Yet, as difficult as it may be, the church must not fail to be vigilant and deal with the issues. The churches in Pergamos and Thyatira were rebuked by the Lord because they failed to deal with doctrinal and moral problems. See Rev.2. It would be foolish to think that God will overlook our disregard for purity of doctrine or spiritual unity today.

Is it wrong for Bible-believing, born-again Christians, to have a genuine difference of opinion about church matters? No, it is not, unless those disagreements deteriorate into selfish, prideful squabbles, that feed on gossip and character assassination. When personal conflicts threaten the unity of the local assembly, the problem becomes more than a simple difference of opinion. Paul had to deal with such a problem in Corinth where the church had split into factions over several "personality" issues. The congregation had taken sides about their favourite ministers (1 Cor.1:11-13).

They had fallen into the practice of taking each other to court with lawsuits (1 Cor.6:1-8). When they came together to partake of the Lord's Supper, they came as self-centered or clique-oriented individuals, rather than as a unified body (1 Cor.11:17-22).

Church leaders should be able to see things differently without disputing or creating hateful feelings. To do this, admittedly, takes a good measure of spiritual maturity, and a concern for the greater good of the church. Paul and Barnabas disagreed as to whether John Mark should accompany them on a missionary journey. Since "...the contention was so sharp between them...", they decided to change their plans and go their separate ways. (Acts 15:36-41). Later on, however, Paul wrote of John Mark with great respect (2 Tim.4:11). In another incident Paul strongly rebuked Peter for his apparent hypocrisy and the confusion that it was causing among the brethren (Gal.2:11-14). In neither case, however, did disagreement bring disunity to the body, or a reproach to the ministry.

Obviously, resolving conflict within the church is never easy, and inevitably some of those members involved will be left hurting and alienated. Even though the root problem may be solved there will be those who need healing and restoration. There must be a caring, compassionate follow-up, especially to young believers, whose faith and confidence may have been damaged. However, as much as the wounded need sympathy, it is imperative to support the decisions of the church leaders.

There is a well-known adage that says, "Unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials, love in all things." Let us remember this when we pledge ourselves to stop doing anything that may contribute to strife in the church. Let us accept the responsibility given to us by Jesus, to be one with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us do away with division.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. From Jesus' prayer for unity, give one important reason for maintaining a unity of love among the brethren. John 17:20-23
2. Why should you try to prevent a difference of opinion with another brother from creating disunity? Romans 14:12,13,16-19
3. The church cannot function properly when people are not willing to sacrifice individual opinions or ideas for the sake of the unity of the body.  
From the following scriptures list the qualities and attitudes that will help you set aside your personal opinions so that the cause of Christ may be advanced.
  - A. 1 Cor.13:1-3,13; 16:14
  - B. Eph.4:1-3
  - C. Col.3:12-17
  - D. Phil.2:3-8
4. Where does contention come from? Prov.13:10
5. What was Diotrephes' sin? 3 John 9-11
6. Division will plague a church if conflict is ignored and not confronted. From the following scriptural passages identify the cause of the contention and the action taken to restore unity.
  - A. Acts 6:1-7
  - B. Acts 15:1-27
  - C. Gal.2:12-14
  - D. 2 Thess.3:11-15

7. Disunity in a church body will result in weakened ministry. However, when conflict is dealt with, the church's witness can become even more effective. From the following passages of scripture, explain the problem and list the results obtained by dealing with it.

A. Acts 5:1-10 (Problem)

Acts 5:11-16 (Results)

B. Acts 6:1-6 (Problem)

Acts 6:7 (Results)

8. According to Paul, how should you respond to those who cause division and doctrinal contention? Rom.16:17  
Why? Verse 18

9. How does the Bible refer to Christians who "live with", rather than "deal with", division? 1 Cor.3:1-3

Are these Christians spiritual? V.1

Can they grow to maturity? V.2

10. Personal disagreements need not create a stir in the body by becoming a major issue. Read the procedural pattern given by Jesus to settle a personal dispute in Matt.18:15-17

A. What result are you trying to achieve by following this procedure? V.15

B. To begin with, should you tell anyone else that you have been offended? Why? V.15

C. With what attitude should you confront your brother? 1 Cor.16:14; Gal.6:1

D. If loving personal confrontation is not successful, what is the next step you should take? Why? Matt.18:16

E. If the issue cannot be resolved, the church leadership must take action. How did Jesus say to handle the brother who is still unrepentant? Matt.18:17

6. Although the Bible is not specific on this point, how many times do you think the first step should be applied before resorting to step three?

11. Most churches today are probably too lenient rather than too strict when it comes to church discipline.

Read 1 Cor.5:1-5,11-13

A. What problem was the Corinthian church facing?

B. What were they doing about it?

C. What did Paul tell them to do?

Now read 2 Cor.2:6-8

D. What effect did proper discipline have on this man?

E. What response did Paul tell the church to make at this time? Why? Vs.5,11

12. Although it's easy to blame our fellow saints for causing strife, who are our real foes? Eph.6:12

A. What provision has God made for our defense? Vs.13-17

B. What actions will keep the church strong and in one accord? Eph.6:18



## THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

MEMORY VERSE: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. but by love serve one another."

Gal.5:13.

INTRODUCTION: In the years following World War 2, while China was struggling to adapt to her new yoke of Communism, the Christian church in that country began to come under close scrutiny. One communal farm in particular, which was managed by a fellowship of born-again believers, had the regional party government baffled by its tremendous success during these hard times.

Consequently, an investigation was undertaken and the soldiers and their commanding officer were sent to the farm to question the residents about subversive activities. When the communists arrived at the farm they immediately gave an order that the Christians' leader be brought to them. The Christians simply pointed to a nearby field where an elderly man was spreading animal manure with a wheel barrow. At this, the soldiers became enraged, thinking that the Christians were mocking them. Surely no leader would be doing such a lowly job! But, in fact, this was the pastor of the fellowship, labouring at a task that was heavy, dirty and unsavoury. Through his unflagging efforts to put the words of Jesus into practice, he had led his little flock by service and example to be the most successful farm in the region.

His success and authority had its roots in service. Providing leadership is a significant service, coming from a life laid down to bear responsibility for God's people. The nature of a servant is at the heart of being the people of God. We are called to serve our Lord and one another.

Serving is not just doing something nice for somebody else. It is orienting yourself around another individual's good; it is giving yourself to that which will bless another. This desire to serve is basic to the nature of Christ. It is not extraordinary or unusual and God wants us to express it.

Service begins in the home. If service and obedience are not established there, they cannot be established elsewhere, because the home is the prototype of the church. Service grows from the home to the body of Christ and the community at large. It grows out of our love for one another, especially when serving is not convenient. It is a curse to be oriented around your own conveniences and comfort as top priority. Discomfort in serving will give rise to murmuring and discontent if you do not learn to give yourself unselfishly. Service in the church will deteriorate to the level at which our families are. Start at home!

Learning to serve is not a simple process. Even Jesus' disciples had a struggle with this aspect of the gospel because this role deals with our selfishness, pride and human ambition. On the night of the Lord's Supper as recorded in Luke 22:24-27 and John 13, the disciples still had difficulty grasping the meaning of service and were still hassling about which one of them would be the greatest. After three years of Jesus' ministry, each was wanting to be served rather than to serve.

However, there is a difference between serving and being a servant. To serve without being a servant means serving when it's convenient for you or when it pleases you to do it. You can serve that way all your life and never really be a servant.

An example of truly selfless serving is found in 1 Chronicles 11:17,18. Here we find David and his men under siege by the Philistines, hiding in a cave, cut off from their source of supplies in Bethlehem. Three of his men overheard David longing for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem. They fought their way through the Philistine's encampment, drew water for David and brought it back to him. These men were so committed in wanting to serve David that just by hearing what he desired, without receiving any orders, they risked their lives to satisfy his thirst. They surely had no thought of reward. They were simply being faithful in service.

Another aspect of the nature of service is anticipation. The servant will anticipate the master's needs because he knows the master's desires. Meaningful service grows out of knowledge. We must know someone, (whether Christ or our brother), to really serve him effectively. If we do not know him it will limit the depth of our service, and we are liable to serve him in ways that he does not want to be served.

There are levels of service. One is: "If there is anything I can do for you, just ask me." That is good, but as the servant's heart begins to grow in us, the next level is: "I've noticed something to be done, may I do this for you? " Then, as our relationships mature and deepen, we may express an even higher level of service. We are able to perceive a need or desire and proceed to do it just to bless our brother. We can do it anonymously as a gracious servant of the Lord, not wanting to draw attention to ourselves, away from Jesus.

The world does not understand it when men honour one another, prefer one another and serve one another. Society today is deeply self-centered and self-determined. But God is calling unto Himself a people who honestly testify not in word only, but in character and nature, of their resurrected King.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read Matt.20:20-28

- A. What request did James and John through their mother, make of Jesus?
- B. Did Jesus rebuke them for their ambitious request? Why?
- C. Why might the other ten disciples have been indignant?
- D. What did Jesus say they could do to accomplish their ambition?

2. According to Luke 22:27 who should be the "chief" or leader?

3. Read Luke 17:7-10

- A. Whose needs are put first?
- B. Did the servant receive thanks for his sacrifice?
- C. Does dutifully carrying out the master's command merit extra praise? V.10 Why?

4. Read Matt.25:14-30

- A. What is one important quality of a servant? V.21
- B. Why did the master call the first two servants "good and faithful"?
- C. Is it important to be faithful in serving at small tasks? V.21 Why?
- D. What did, the master call the third servant? V.26,30
- E. What is the difference between a profitable and an unprofitable servant? Compare their attitudes and characteristics.

5. Read Ephesians 6:5-8

- A. List at least 5 important characteristics of a servant.
- B. How should you not serve? V.6 Explain.
- C. What promise is given in V.8?

6. Apart from serving Jesus directly, where should the focus of our service be?

Gal.5:13; Gal.6:10

7. What should be our motivation to serve? Col.3:22-24

8. What about serving under adverse conditions? 1 Peter 2:18-20
9. Explain the principle that Jesus gives in Luke 16:10,11
  - A. How does this relate to being a servant?
  - B. How can you apply this principle to taking on responsibility in the church?
10. What quality did Naaman's servants demonstrate despite their master's rage? 2 Kings 5:9-13
11. What quality did Elisha's servant, Gehazi, demonstrate after Elisha declined Naaman's lavish gifts? 2 Kings 5:21-25
12. Why did Martha's act of service not gain Jesus' approval? Luke 10:38-42
13. Which brother was a servant in Matt.21:28-31?

What does this teach us about priorities?

LESSON 13

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### **COVENANT AND COMMITMENT**

MEMORY VERSE: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Matt.18:19

INTRODUCTION: The Bible presents a beautiful relationship that is possible between the believers. This kind of relationship is not possible in the natural realm. It is only obtainable in the realm of the Spirit. It is an affinity even greater than is experienced between blood relations because its origin is of a divine nature. Blood relations are on the natural level and many times are anything but sweet or harmonious. The kinship that true believers have in the Spirit, having a community of origin, will cause a person to give his life for another just as Jesus, the Author of true covenant and commitment, gave His life for the world.

The benefits and blessings that will accrue the person who has discovered this kind of relationship are manifold. One of these is mentioned in our memory verse: if we agree on asking the Father for specific things that are in his will, Jesus said, it shall be done for them by God the Father. That is spectacular!

Furthermore, true covenant relationship will summon forth those spiritual qualities within the believer to be bestowed upon the brotherhood. There will be great joy and spiritual fulfillment in serving others. Jesus' statement "it is more blessed to give than to receive" then comes into reality.

When God created man He made him in such a way that man was not complete in himself. The Bible says He made him an "help meet". The Amplified Version makes it a little clearer. It says, "But for Adam there was not found a helper meet, (suitable, adapted, completing) for him." (Gen.2:20)

In view of this fact, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ when understood in all its ramifications, provides a relationship, not only for the husband and wife, but also for the brotherhood in Christ, that will meet all the needs in this life for a happy and productive subsistence.

There are many beautiful examples in the Bible of true covenant and commitment. We shall look at these in this lesson. The purpose is to learn for ourselves what true covenant is and how we may apply the same in our own lives.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read 1 Samuel 18:1-5

- A. What expressions are used to describe the relationship between David and Jonathan?
- B. What was the motivation for the "covenant" that David and Jonathan made between themselves?
- C. How did Jonathan demonstrate his love? V.4

2. Read Ruth 1:16,17

- A. In what words did Ruth express her personal relationship to her mother-in-law, Naomi?
- B. How about her fraternal relationship with respect to the Jewish people?
- C. What did she declare regarding the God .of Israel?
- D. Why do you think Ruth was so attracted to her mother-in-law?

3. What promise did Jesus make if two shall agree in true covenant relationship? Matt.18:18-20

4. A committed fellowship will not collapse or scatter when it is persecuted or buffeted. How did the early Church respond to the threat of persecution? Acts 4:29-31

5. How does Paul describe the relationship of true believers? Rom.12:5

6. What is God's "design plan" for the "body" of Christ? What is meant by "joint to joint"? Eph.4:16

7. Describe the meaning of Eph.5:30.

Some theologians say we are the "mystical body" of Christ. What do you think of this expression? Are the members of Christ's body, the Church, actually "joined to Christ and His body", or is this only a theoretical concept?

8. List some of the situations that cause an artificial relationship to collapse, but does not affect the commitment of the born-again believer. Rom.8:35

9. What expressions are used to describe the covenant relationship of the early believers? Acts 4:23,24,32; Eph.4:4-6

10. Peter declares the believers to be the "temple" of God. (1 Pet.2:5) Please read Ex.36:20-34 noting the construction of the tabernacle and make the analogy to the body of Christ, the N.T. church.

11. Describe the benefits of true covenant relationship in the following scriptures:

- A. Heb.13:3
- B. Gal.6:2
- C. Heb.3:6

Here are some thoughts you may want to consider as benefits from the kind of relationship we have been studying today:

Bearing one another's burdens, encouraging one another, edifying one another, provoking to good works, security in covenant relationship, we are God's house, a place of refuge, growth in ministry, fulfilling a specific need in individuals, and in the body.

Thought questions: How can you develop close relationships with others in your church? Can you compare some relation- ships in your church to those of a family? How?

12. How did Paul demonstrate his commitment to the Lord and his fellow men?

1 Cor.9:22

PLEASE NOTE:

These lessons are prepared to be used at any time, so the dates are not printed. The persons using these lesson guides should write the date in as it suits their particular situation. It is advisable to keep the lessons permanently, to be used for reference or reused in future studies.

It is difficult to arrange a lesson so that it can be properly handled in the time allotted for the class. We suggest therefore, that the teacher use his discretion in this matter, and if more time is necessary to teach one particular lesson, that it be continued at the next session.

Do not hurry through or skip questions to conserve time. Make sure each student understands the question and the answer and then proceed to the next question. Remember, teaching is one of the most important ministries in the church. Therefore, let the teacher prepare carefully and prayerfully for the presentation of the subject.

May the Spirit of God enlighten each student who pursues diligently the acquisition of the knowledge and the wisdom that God's Word provides.

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