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Biblical Covenants

God's Covenant with Us



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To show that it's impossible to reach God through mere religious devotion or rituals.
- To explain that God reached out to us with a "Covenant of Love."
- To show how God's Covenant empowers us to obey Him.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Deuteronomy 7:9-12; Hebrews 10:16; Ezekiel 11:19; Philippians 2:12-13 (God's Covenant with Us).



MEMORY VERSE

Hebrews 10:16: This is the Covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.

Materials Needed: Laptop (to play the video clippings)



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

A Contract is basically an Agreement between two parties. The two parties agree to fulfill certain responsibilities, and in turn, they reap certain profits and benefits.

A simple contract could be one with a classmate. The classmate promises to spend five hours per week coaching me in Math, and I promise to spend an equal number of hours coaching him in basketball. Both of us benefit from this simple contract. I finally score high marks in Math, and he finally gets selected for the school basketball team.

But what if I managed to sign a contract with someone much bigger? What if I managed to sign a contract with Bill Gates? Imagine the profits I'd reap from a partnership like that!

Even bigger than that, what if I managed to sign a contract with God Himself? What would I gain from that? The benefits would be INFINITE because God is INFINITE!!!

So consequently, from the beginning of human history, people have been desperately trying to get God interested in signing a contract with them.



ATTENTION GETTER

Man Reaching Out to God

Ask:

What do you think are the chances that Bill Gates would be interested in signing a contract with me?

(Allow the children to express their opinions).

What are some things that I can do to “catch” Bill Gates’ attention, and “convince” him into signing a contract with me?

(Ask for creative ideas).

Explain:

Catching the attention of big people is not very easy. Making them sign a contract with you is even more difficult.

This is why people have tried to come up with the most creative methods of getting God’s attention. They hope that if they do something spectacular enough, God will get interested in them.

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xx0ncps77Ow>

Duration: 1 minute and 09 seconds

Observe:

The video showed people whipping themselves on Good Friday, using fibers that have glass pieces attached to them.

Later a doctor helps remove all the glass pieces embedded in the skin. The devotees claim that this ritual brings them closer to God.

Ask:

Do you think that cutting your back with glass pieces is an effective method of making God want to sign a contract with you?

(Allow the children to express their opinions).

Read Aloud:

James 2:10: For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

Explain:

This verse indicates that God is not impressed by anyone cutting themselves. If I break just one single commandment, just once, God looks at me as though I have broken all the commandments. So whatever I do, whether it's cutting my back, or giving contributions to the church, or fasting for forty days, it doesn't make me any less sinful. One broken commandment is equal to having broken all of them! How can I expect a perfectly pure and holy God to sign a contract with an unclean sinful person?

Conclude:

We humans are sinful beings. We break so many commandments every week. And breaking even one commandment is equal to breaking all of them! So we can never truly impress God. We can never make ourselves "worthy enough" to impress God into signing a contract with us.

Knowing our helpless condition, the Lord decided to reach down to us and **initiate** a Contract from His side. This is the special contract that we call “God’s Covenant.”



TEACHING CONTENT

Read Aloud:

Deuteronomy 7:9: Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His Covenant of Love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Ask:

How is God’s Covenant described in this verse?

(It’s called a Covenant of Love).

Read Aloud:

Deuteronomy 7:12: If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep His Covenant of Love with you, as He swore to your ancestors.

Ask:

How is God’s Covenant described in this verse?

(It’s called a Covenant of Love).

Observe:

It’s interesting to note that God’s Covenant is called a “Covenant of Love.” A Covenant lays down a series of rules

to be observed by both parties. Yet, God’s Covenant is not called a “Covenant of Rules.” Rather, it’s called a “Covenant of Love!” The emphasis is clearly on God’s love—NOT rules!

Many Christians grumble that following Jesus is a long series of Do's and Dont's. They find the rules tiring and they wish that they didn't have any to keep. These people fail to realize that our Covenant-relationship with God is all about 'love,' not rules. We will now try to understand this in greater detail.

God’s Original Agreement with Adam and Eve:

Adam and Eve originally agreed and promised to obey God. But later they listened to satan and ate the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. As a result, they had to face the punishment of death, both physical and spiritual.

God had warned that if they disobeyed, they would die. So when they disobeyed, their spirits died immediately. And their physical bodies started the long process of dying slowly, day by day. Being spiritually dead, they now became separated from God. The Lord could no longer be friends with them, because He is holy. A holy God can't be friends with sinful people, because holiness and sinfulness can't mix.

This was very painful for the Lord. He had created them so that He could be friends with them forever and ever. But now because of the broken agreement, He could no longer be with them.

So God decided to do something special to save His two friends, Adam and Eve. He decided to take their punishment upon Himself.

Think about it! God, who had done absolutely no wrong, decided to take the punishment for their disobedience! This is why Jesus came to the earth and allowed the Jewish leaders to hang Him on the Cross. While hanging on the Cross that day, Jesus took all the sins of Adam and Eve on His shoulders. He also took all the sinful things you and I have done, upon His shoulders. He carried our sins for us. And He took the punishment for our sins by dying on the Cross.

This is the only reason why, today, we're able to make friends with God. He died on the Cross and rose again to make us part of His family.

Rituals don't help:

People perform so many rituals to try and persuade God into making friends with them. But these rituals don't help, because a holy God can't make friends with sinful people.

We need to become holy first. Only then can God even consider a friendship. This is why Jesus' first act on the Cross was taking the punishment for our sins. Once the punishment was paid, He was able to forgive us of all our sins—our past, present and future sins included!

When we apply this forgiveness to our lives, by choosing to sign up for God's Covenant, we're made utterly holy! God no longer sees the sins we have committed. He can only see the holiness of Jesus covering us from head to toe! And so, now, God is able to forge a deep and intimate friendship with us—if we let Him.

So when we become part of God’s Covenant of Love, all that the Lord wants of us is our love and friendship. Friendship is not about rituals and rules ... it’s just about love and trust.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

How does a person sign up for God’s Covenant of Love? There’s no sheet of paper to put a signature on, is there?

God’s Covenant of Love is not signed on paper. It’s signed in our hearts. This is how it’s done:

1. Admit you are a sinner.

“All of us have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory”
(Romans 3:23).

2. Be willing to turn from sin (repent).

“... you can be sure that if you don’t turn back to God, every one of you will also die” **(Luke 13:5).**

3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you, was buried and rose from the dead.

“God loved the people of this world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who has faith in Him will have eternal life and never really die” **(John 3:16).**

4. Through prayer, invite Jesus into your life to become your Lord and Saviour.

“So you will be saved, if you honestly say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and if you believe with all your heart that God raised Him

from death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others" **(Romans 10:9-10)**.

God's Covenant of Love is a friendship with God. It's not about following a bunch of rules and regulations. Does this mean we no longer need to obey the commandments laid down in the Bible?

Disobedience leads to destruction. Earlier, when we were living in disobedience, every day we were progressively destroying our future hopes and dreams. In other words, we were destroying our lives.

Jesus died on the Cross for us so that we would have new power to overcome this destructive and sinful habit of disobedience. So it would be counter-productive to go back into the very habit that Jesus rescued us from.

We continue obeying the commandments laid down in the Bible even after entering the Covenant. The difference is that, now, we no longer obey because these are compulsory rules. Rather we obey them out of love for our Heavenly Father and Friend.

Even though Adam and Eve were created sinless and perfect, they broke their agreement with God not to disobey. This being the case, what are the chances that we'll be able to do any better? Is it really possible to live in continuous obedience?

(Allow the children to express their opinions).

GD Video Presentation

GD Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQjyYjOzeXsandfeature=relmfu>

Duration: Please play the video only up to “2 mins:57secs.” (The rest of the video is **NOT** relevant during this stage of the Group Discussion).

Explain:

The video explains that the Israelites broke the Covenant that God made with them. Yet God was ready to give them a second chance, and made a New Covenant with them. All of us, who have signed up with Jesus, are a part of this New Covenant.

The video mentions four specific verses with regard to this New Covenant. Let’s take a few minutes looking at these four verses in greater detail.

Read Aloud:

Hebrews 8:6: ... the Covenant of which He is mediator is superior to the old one, since the New Covenant is established on better promises.

Ask:

In what way is the New Covenant better than the old one which God had made with the Israelites?

It offers us better promises than the old one.

Read Aloud:

Hebrews 10:16: This is the Covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.

Ask:

What better promise is the New Covenant offering?

In the New Covenant, God promises to write His laws on our hearts and minds, so that they will get imprinted forever. This way, we can't forget His commandments. We're constantly reminded of them, and this makes it easier to obey them.

Read Aloud:

2 Corinthians 3:3: You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Ask:

According to this verse, if we choose to become part of the New Covenant, what is written on our hearts?

A letter *from* Christ, written *by* the Holy Spirit.

Read Aloud:

Ezekiel 11:19: I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

Ask:

Based on this verse, what do you think is written in the letter on our hearts?

Through the Holy Spirit, Christ writes in us "an undivided heart," a heart which longs to love and follow Him alone ... a heart that is NOT divided between a desire for God and a desire for sin.

Read Aloud:

Philippians 4:13: I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.

Ask:

According to this verse, what does God do for us under the New Covenant?

He supplies us every day with the love and strength that we need to obey Him and follow Him.

Read Aloud:

Philippians 2:12-13: Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose.

Ask:

According to this verse, what does God do for us under the New Covenant?

He gives us the ‘desire’ to love and obey Him. And then He gives us the ‘power’ to fulfill this desire. So we’re not like the helpless Israelites who had neither the desire nor the power to obey God under the Old Covenant.

NOTE: In conclusion, play the GD Video Clipping from “5min:43secs” to “8min:05 secs.”

Link of the GD video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQjyYjOzeXsandfeature=relmfu>

DO NOT play the rest of the video, because portions of the video are confusing and unclear.



APPLICATION

We learnt three vital truths about God's Covenant today:

- No ritual is powerful enough to make us holy. And God cannot enter into a contract with sinful, unholy people.
- So God initiated a Covenant from his side ... by taking the punishment for our sins upon Himself.
- When we choose to be part of His Covenant, He gives us both the desire and the power, to love and obey Him.

This week, make the choice to sign up for God's Covenant of Love, if you have not done it yet. Make use of the desire and power that God has given you to obey Him. Start practising obedience and spend time with the Lord, so that your friendship with Him can grow. The more you get to know Him and trust Him, the easier you will find it to obey Him.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

Nature of God's Covenant



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain the importance of shedding blood when making a Covenant.
- To show that the Covenant offers many blessings and privileges.
- To motivate children to fulfill their Covenant-responsibilities.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Genesis 15; Leviticus 17:11; Luke 13:10-17 (A Blood Covenant offers Privileges)



MEMORY VERSE

Leviticus 17:11 says, "... the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

Materials Needed: Laptop (to play the video clippings)



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- How does the New Covenant make it easier for us to obey God?
- What are some choices you made this week, to obey God? (Give examples)
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Hebrews 10:16).



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we learnt that God has made a Covenant with us. He has made an agreement to protect and provide for everyone who becomes part of His Covenant. Today, we will find out what the Bible says about this Covenant. We will look at some of the words and phrases that the Bible uses to describe this Covenant. Hopefully this will give us a deeper insight into the Nature of God's Covenant with us.

Note to the Facilitator

There are **at least seven characteristics** that define the Nature of God's Covenant with us. This session discusses **only two** characteristics:

- God is faithful to His Covenant
- God 'Establishes' His Covenant

- God took the first step in initiating a Covenant with us
- God expects us to obey the Terms laid down in His Covenant
- God promises to remember/fulfill the Terms laid down in His Covenant
- God’s Covenant is established by blood
- God’s Covenant offers Blessings and Privileges in Daily Life

[The first two characteristics are discussed at the Primary Level (Std 1-3). The next three are discussed at the Junior Level (Std 4-6)].



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: Shake Hands with a Friend

(Appropriate for a group of “Seven or more” children).

This game works best with a slightly bigger group. Count off the children in the group into ones, twos and threes. Ask them to loudly speak out their numbers **only once** (The people in the group must carefully observe who has received which number).

Next, jumble up the children by making them change their seats (so that they’re no longer seated in the serial order of one two three, one two three ...). This will make it difficult for the kids to remember whose number is what.

Ask for one or two volunteers. The volunteer must shake hands with each person in the group (If he shakes hands

with a 'One', he must do it once. If he shakes hands with a 'Three', he must shake the hand three times, and so on ...)

The volunteer who identifies all the children correctly (by shaking hands with each of them the correct number of times) is the winner.

NOTE: Kindly do not spend more than ten minutes on this game.

Alternate Activity

(If the group has less children).

Video Presentation

Video Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWL4QUJA_tg

Duration: 1 minute and 07 seconds

Display the video. Then ask the children to create some original handshakes of their own.

After Either Activity:

Ask:

Why do people shake hands in greeting? Is there any special significance to this custom?

(Allow the children to express their opinions).

Explain:

There are generally two explanations given regarding the origin of a handshake:

- First, the handshake is thought by some to have originated as a gesture of peace by demonstrating that the hand holds no weapon.
- Second, it is believed that people of ancient times shook hands to enter into a Blood Covenant. Both persons involved in the contract cut the palms of their hands to the point where blood flowed into the palms. Then they clasped hands together in a handshake, mingling their blood into one. In this way, they guaranteed the promise with their lives.

Guaranteed with Blood:

In a similar way, God too guaranteed His Covenant-promise with blood—the blood that was shed by Jesus on the Cross. This is why, before His death, Jesus took a cup of wine in His hands and said to His disciples, “This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). The words “My Blood of the Covenant,” basically means, “the Covenant sealed with My Blood.”

So, throughout history, a Covenant guaranteed with blood was considered a reliable Covenant. People believed that such a Covenant would not be violated by the person who had sealed it with his blood.

This is the kind of Covenant that God has sealed with us. It’s a seal that will never be broken!



TEACHING CONTENT

1. God's Covenant is Established by Blood

Even before Jesus became a human and came to the earth, He used 'blood' to guarantee His covenant with mankind. Every Covenant that God made in the Old Testament was sealed by the blood of a sacrificed animal. These sacrificed animals represented Jesus Christ, who would come one day in the future, to shed His blood and seal a permanent Covenant with all people. This is why Leviticus 17:11 says, "... the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

We see a demonstration of this truth in God's Covenant with Abraham.

God's Covenant With Abraham (Genesis 15)

When Abraham was 75 years old, God came to him in a vision saying: "Don't be afraid, Abram. I'm your shield. Your reward will be grand!" Abram replied, "God, Master, what use are Your gifts as long as I'm childless and Eliezer of Damascus is going to inherit everything. See, you've given me no children, and now a mere house servant is going to get it all."

Then God's Message came: "Don't worry, he won't be your heir; a son from your body will be your heir." Then he took him outside and showed him the night sky, "Look at the sky. Count the stars. Can you do it? Just like the stars are beyond numbering, your descendants too will be too many to number!"

Abram was 75 years old ... far too old to have even one child. God's promise that he'd have millions of descendants sounded ridiculous! In spite of this, Abram decided to believe God.

When the Lord saw how sincerely this old man believed His seemingly 'impossible' promise, the Lord was impressed by his faith and declared him 'righteous.'

Then, God sealed His Covenant with Abram, using the custom of those times.

In those days, the two partners in a Covenant would cut an animal in two and pass between its halves. In essence, they were saying, "If I don't keep my side of the Covenant, may I be killed just like these animals." By doing this, the two parties guaranteed the Covenant with their lives.

So in the morning, following the custom of those times, Abram split the sacrificial animals down the middle, and laid the halves opposite each other. Then he eagerly waited for God to appear and walk through the split halves.

He waited and waited! But the Lord didn't appear. In the meantime, attracted by the carcasses of the sacrificed animals, vultures began to gather. Abram probably spent the whole day chasing away vultures and other scavengers. He must have wondered why God was delaying; but he didn't give up. He knew that God would definitely turn up.

Finally, tired after a long day of waiting, and chasing vultures, Abram fell asleep just as the sun was going down. The Lord spoke to him in a dream, telling him of future events yet to

come. When Abram finally opened his eyes, the sun had set and it was dark. Then suddenly he saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch moving in-between the split carcasses. He could see no person, but he knew that God had arrived!

In this way, God passed through the split halves, sealing the Covenant that He had made with Abram. The Covenant was established by the blood of the sacrificed animals.

2. God's Covenant Offers Blessings and Privileges in Daily Life

When a Covenant is established by blood, it offers covenant-privileges that can never be revoked—not even if hundreds of years pass by. We see a very clear example of this in Luke 13:10-17.

One day, Jesus was teaching on Sabbath-day at a synagogue. There was a woman present, so twisted and bent over with arthritis that she couldn't even look up. She had been afflicted with this for eighteen years. When Jesus saw her, He called her over. "Woman, you're free!" He laid hands on her and suddenly she was standing straight and tall, giving glory to God.

The leader of the synagogue was furious because he believed that healing was a form of work, and the Mosaic law forbade any form of work on the Sabbath.

But Jesus shot back, "You frauds! Each Sabbath every one of you regularly unties your cow or donkey from its stall, leads it out for water, and thinks nothing of it. So why isn't it all right for me to untie this daughter of Abraham and lead her

from the stall where satan has had her tied these eighteen years?”

According to these verses, Jesus granted the lady physical healing as her “rightful privilege” because of the status she enjoyed as a “daughter of Abraham.” When God passed between the split halves of the animals, He essentially made a promise to Abraham that He would keep His Covenant-promises not only to Abraham, but his descendants as well. This promise was successfully fulfilled in the life of the lady, even though she was born 1900 years later!!!

History records that Jesus sealed His New Covenant with us, by shedding His blood in 30 AD. So we’re now living almost 2000 years after the sealing of the New Covenant. But this doesn’t make a difference!

In the same way, that Jewish lady received her Covenant-privileges even though she was born 1900 years after the sealing of the Abrahamic Covenant, we too can receive our Covenant-privileges today even though we’ve been born 2000 years after the sealing of the New Covenant.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

Even after becoming part of God’s Covenant, many Christians continue to suffer financial difficulties and sickness? Why don’t they enjoy the Covenant-privileges promised in the Bible?

God's Covenant-privileges are like gift-vouchers that need to be claimed. Let's assume that I give you a gift-voucher which you can use at a Clothes Outlet. As long as you sit at home with the voucher, you'll never receive the new clothes that I promised you.

You have to go to the Outlet and 'use' the voucher. In the same way, you have to go to the Lord with the Covenant-privilege voucher and request Him to grant the privilege mentioned.

When you do this, sometimes the Lord will delay replying. He'll wait and see how long you'll continue to trust Him. Most Christians give up after a few attempts, and decide that Covenant-privileges are meant only for other Christians —not for them personally.

However, some continue to wait trustingly on the Lord until they receive what they have asked for.

This is why Luke 18:1 says, "Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." The Lord doesn't want us to give up on our Covenant-privileges.

3. God's Covenant Involves Responsibilities

We saw above, that God's Covenant offers us blessings and privileges, even after the passing of hundreds of years. Do you think that God's Covenant offers only blessings, or responsibilities as well?

(Allow the children to express their opinions).

Video Presentation

Video Link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-LqkH37mKc&feature=related>

Duration: 3 minutes and 03 seconds

This is NOT a Christian video. It teaches that nobody is born with character; we have to build it up over time.

Does this apply to us who are part of God’s Covenant? Doesn’t the Bible teach that we have been “born again as a new creation”? So do we need to build our character, or has it already been supplied to us through God’s Covenant?

When we choose to become part of God’s Covenant, the Lord gives us a brand new heart, with new desires. We learnt this last week.

But God doesn’t automatically give us a new mind. That would be equal to “brainwashing.” We’d become robots with minds programmed to behave a certain way.

To ensure that we have complete freedom of choice, the Lord leaves it to us to decide if we’ll “renew our minds.” Romans 12:2 says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is —His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The more we renew our minds—the more we bring our thinking into line with Scripture—the more our character gets built up. On the other hand, if we continue to believe unbiblical things, our mind will stay un-renewed, and our character won’t be built up.

Why is it important to renew our minds?

So that we can fulfill our Covenant-responsibilities.

Matthew 22:35-40 says: "One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'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 commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Jesus summed up all the commandments of the Bible in two sentences. If we successfully obey these two, we will automatically keep all the other commandments as well.

But we will be unable to observe these two commandments if we don't first renew our minds.

How do we 'renew' our minds?

- First, we must read the Bible every day, so that we get to know what the Bible has to say about different issues.
- Second, we must be willing to agree that what the Bible says is correct. We must be willing to give up old ways of thinking. For example, "commonsense" tells us that copying one little answer during the exam won't harm anybody. But the Bible says its sin. We must be willing to 'renew' our minds "by being willing to agree" that copying IS harmful. It opens the side-door for satan to enter our lives and start taking over. We have to stop thinking what the world thinks, and start thinking the way the Bible does.

- Third, it isn't enough to believe what the Bible says. We must put it into practice, by 'doing' it every day. James 1:22 advises, "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

If we do these three things, we will find ourselves loving God more and more in all our choices. And we will find ourselves behaving with people better and better.

In other words, renewing our minds helps us obey the two greatest commandments, and enables us to fulfill our responsibility as Covenant-participants.



APPLICATION

We learnt three important truths about the Covenant of God today:

- God's Covenant is established by blood.
- God's Covenant offers Blessings and Privileges in Daily Life.
- God's Covenant also involves the responsibility of "renewing our minds" and living differently from the world.

Reflect for a while and draw up a list of Covenant-privileges that you wish to claim from the Lord this week. Also, write down a list of areas where you still "think and act" like the world. Work towards "renewing your mind" in these areas.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

The Blood Covenant



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To assure that God will never break His “Unbreakable Blood Covenant” with us.
- To discover all the privileges that belong to us through the Blood Covenant.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Romans 5:6-8; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 3:7-9; John 10:14-16 (Unbreakable Covenant)



MEMORY VERSE

2 Corinthians 8:9: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

Materials Needed

- 6 sheets of paper
- 2 large hankies / scarves
- Laptop (to play the video clippings)



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- WHY is it important to renew our minds?
- Did you consciously try to fulfill any Covenant-responsibilities this week? (Give examples).
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Leviticus 17:11).



INTRODUCTION

For the last two weeks, we have been looking at God's Covenant with us. Today we will study one more detail of this Covenant ... about why the Bible calls it a "Blood Covenant."

In olden times, a Blood Covenant was a very serious thing. The two partners entering the Covenant would cut an animal in two and pass between its halves. In essence, they were saying, "If I don't keep my side of the covenant, may I be killed just like these animals." Once they performed this Covenant ritual, everything they owned became the common property of both.

Today, we will look at the significance of entering such a Covenant with the Lord.

Note to the Facilitator

There are at least 4 implications of entering into a Blood Covenant. In this session, we will be looking at just two of these:

- A Blood Covenant is made at the expense of life. So a covenant made by blood signifies a Covenant that encompasses all of life.
- In OT covenant-making, a curse was invoked (symbolized by the slaying of animals), signifying ‘so may it be done to him who breaks this covenant.’
- The mingling of blood, which was customary, signified an unbreakable bond.
- Everything of the one, now belonged to the other.

[The first two implications were discussed at the Primary and Junior Levels (Stds 1-6)].

Brief Overview of the Lesson:

- Unbreakable covenant—I’ll never lose my salvation
- Everything of the One, Now Belongs to the Other:
 - Jesus took all our curses, and gave us His blessings.
 - Every area of my life now belongs to Him.



ATTENTION GETTER

Paper Planes

Step 1:

Choose four volunteers (preferably two boys and two girls), and provide them with paper to make one paper plane each (The Workbook provides instructions to make a simple dart plane).

This initial step simply aims at making them familiar with the paper-folding process.

Step 2:

Next, seat the children as two pairs and handcuff the wrists of each pair using a large hanky or scarf (Tie the right wrist of one person to the left wrist of the other person).

Step 3:

Each pair has to now make a paper plane using fresh paper. They're allowed to use only their handcuffed hands to complete the task. The free hands must NOT be used. The pair that manages to construct a paper plane first will be declared the winner.

Ask:

Was it easier making a paper plane on your own, or was it easier when you were handcuffed to the other person?

(Ask for their opinions)



Observe:

When two persons are tied together, they're forced to operate as one person. If you have a talented and reliable partner, you'll be able to achieve much. Similarly, if your partner messes up, you'll have to suffer the consequences as well.

Explain:

In ancient times, something very similar happened in Covenant agreements. The two parties in a Covenant were symbolically tied together by blood.

As we studied last week, non-Israelites used to cut the palms of their hands to the point where blood flowed into the palms. The two persons would then clasp their hands together in a firm handshake, causing their blood to mingle into one.

In other words, the blood covenant was the exchange and the co-mingling of two lives so that the two lives became one. I now stood accountable for the one with whom I had made a covenant and he now stood accountable for me. **My life was his life. His life was my life.** We blended the two together. So, if someone came against him, they came against me. If someone came against me, they came against him. I had to protect him, and he had to protect me ... **because he was now me, and I was him.**

This kind of an agreement could prove either very beneficial or very harmful. For instance, we noticed in the activity above, that it slowed down the pair and almost stopped

them from winning. The strengths of one person would be an advantage to both, while the weaknesses of one would hamper both.

This is exactly what happened in many covenant agreements. If one partner ran into losses and lost all his money, he would start living off the money of the other partner. The other partner could not say, “I don’t want this covenant anymore,” because it was a “blood covenant” that made them one person.

- One Person can’t cut himself into half and say that he wants to become two persons. So a blood covenant was ‘unbreakable.’ Once they entered the covenant and became one, they could no longer be separate.
- Moreover, everything of the one, now belonged to the other—including gold, silver, cattle, etc.



TEACHING CONTENT

We see these factors beautifully mirrored in God’s Covenant with us:

1. God’s Blood Covenant is Unbreakable

When God passed through the split halves of the animal sacrifices that Abraham had arranged, in that moment God chose to become one with Abraham and his descendants. The Lord knew that humans are weak and faithless. He knew that they’d break His commandments and disobey Him. In spite of knowing all this, he chose to enter into an unbreakable Covenant with them.

As a result of this action on God's part, sinful humans became one with God. God began to look at the people as though their lives were His life! Even when they foolishly brought the sentence of eternal death upon themselves through their disobedience, God continued to look upon them as though their wretched lives were His own life!

With this deep sense of love and commitment, He sacrificed His life to save theirs.

When Abraham's descendants sinned, the Lord could have walked away saying, "We're no longer one because you have broken your part of the Covenant. So, suffer in hell on your own."

But shockingly, He instead thought, "Even though you have deliberately dishonoured Me by sinning ... even though you no longer think of my life as your life ... I'm not going to break my Covenant with you. I still regard all of your lives as My own. So I'll lay down My life to save yours."

Romans 5:6-8 says, "... at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Today, God expects the same attitude from us. 2000 years ago, He considered our lives as His life, and was willing to sacrifice EVERYTHING for us. Now similarly, He expects us to consider our lives as His life, and be willing to sacrifice everything for Him.

2. Everything of the One, Now Belongs to the Other

On the day that Jesus shed His substitutionary blood for us, the blood from our hands mingled with His. In other words, we shook hands with God. At that time God gained all our assets, liabilities and debts; and we gained all of God's assets, liabilities and debts.

But the shocking truth is that we never had any assets! When God found us, we were so deep in debt, we owed everything we had to the devil. We were spiritually dead, lost and dead in our trespasses and sins. We didn't own a thing. We were mortgaged up to the hilt and didn't have a penny to pay our way out. We couldn't, by our own self-effort, pay our way out! Similarly, God gained our debts and we gained His. How many debts does God have? None. So we gained only assets!

To the natural mind, God did not get a good bargain. Yet God accepted it. What would make Him do something like that?

Earthly Example: Marriage Covenant

Let's look at a similar example in the natural. If you have ever allowed another person to live in your home, you know that this causes your lifestyle to change dramatically. You must watch the way you dress. The meals you prepare aren't the same as they used to be. The whole atmosphere of the home changes.

So what is it that causes a person to set aside their home, their time and all those things, to bring a marriage partner into their home? What causes them to suffer through all that? The answer is the same as God's reason for entering

into a Covenant with us. Love! This why John 15:13 tells us, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

2 Corinthians 8:9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

Jesus went to the Cross and shed His blood in order to reconcile the world to Himself. He now calls the world His friend. All He asks the people of the world to do is to join hands with Him, to give Him their spiritual death in exchange for His eternal life, to give Him their nothing, but to receive His riches in glory. He asks that they give Him their curse and He will give them His blessing. He’ll exchange their position in Adam for His position in Christ. He promises to provide all their needs and to protect them.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Jesus sacrificed His life on the cross because He was not willing to break Covenant with Abraham and his descendants. He regarded their lives as His own, and He wanted to save them.

- But we Indians are not Abraham’s descendants. So how can this beautiful Covenant and its benefits apply to us?

Galatians 3:7-9 explains that we're Abraham's descendants "through faith:"

"Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."

This is exactly why Jesus said He was laying down His life for "other sheep" as well (which did not yet belong to the Israelite fold):

"I am the Good Shepherd ... and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:14-16).

So we can be very confident that God's Covenant applies even to us.

If God's Covenant is 'unbreakable' does it mean that I'll never lose my salvation, no matter how much I sin? Will the Covenant not break even if I commit a billion sins?

Ask the children for their opinions.

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rc7OFH5yKY>

Duration: 4 minutes and 30 seconds

Explain:

God doesn't make a Covenant with people who have decided to keep on sinning. He doesn't make them part of His family.

He makes His Covenant only with those who have decided to follow Him and obey Him. They become part of His family. Something supernatural happens in the hearts of these people when they enter into a Covenant with God. He gives them a new heart with a new desire to obey Him.

So, a true child of God will not keep on sinning.

If a person is living in deliberate sin every day, refusing to let go of particular sinful practices, it shows that the person never really entered the Covenant in the first place.

- He/she probably said the salvation prayer with tears at a Gospel Meeting.
- He/she probably prays/reads the Bible everyday.
- He/she probably attends church every single Sunday.
- He/she probably gives money to the church.

But the regular lifestyle of stubbornly living with particular sinful practices shows that the person may not yet have received a new heart with new desires. Such a person may not have salvation, even though they assume that they do.

1 John 3:9-10 says, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.”

In other words,

- A true child of God may slip into sin now and then —but because she has entered into an ‘unbreakable’ Covenant with God, she’ll make an effort to repent.
- On the other hand, a person living in deliberate habitual sin, month after month without regret, shows that he never really entered into the Covenant and got saved.

In a Blood Covenant, “everything of the one, now belongs to the other.” What did we receive from Christ as a result of this Covenant?

Jesus took our Curses, and gave us Blessings in Exchange:

1. Jesus was **punished** that we might be FORGIVEN (Isaiah 53: 4-5, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 2:13).
2. Jesus was **wounded** that we might be HEALED (Isaiah 53:4-5, Matthew 8:16-17, 1 Peter 2:24).
3. Jesus was **made sin** with our sinfulness that we might be **made** RIGHTEOUS with His righteousness (Isaiah 53:10, 2 Corinthians 5:21).
Righteousness means to be in good standing with God (Romans 3:22, Romans 4:6, Romans 10:10).
4. Jesus died our **death** that we might share His LIFE
The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23, Hebrews 2:9, John 8:52).
5. Jesus was made a **curse** that we might receive the BLESSING (Galatians 3:13-14, Deuteronomy 21:22-23, Deuteronomy 28:1-13).
6. Jesus endured our poverty that we might share His ABUNDANCE (2 Corinthians 8:9 and 9:8).

Sufficiency is just enough; abundance is more than enough so that we can bless others.

Jesus was hungry, thirsty, naked and in need at the Cross.

7. Jesus bore our **shame** that we might share His GLORY. Matthew 27:35-36; Hebrews 2:10 says that Jesus brings many sons to glory (not shame).
8. Jesus endured our **rejection** that we might have His ACCEPTANCE with the Father (Matthew 27:45-51). The Father hid His face from Jesus and rejected Him for us. Ephesians 1:6 says we are accepted by the Father.
9. Jesus was cut off from the Father that we might enjoy God's PRESENCE eternally.
(Matthew 27:46, Isaiah 53:8, Hebrews 10:21-22, Jude 24, Colossians 1:27, Ephesians 3:16-20).
The fullness of the Holy Spirit is available to give us God's presence (Acts 1:8).
10. Our sin nature was put to death in Him, so that Christ's nature might come to LIFE in us (Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20).



APPLICATION

Today, we have seen the deep love that God has for us. Even when we broke our end of the Covenant, the Lord was not willing to disown us. He considered our lives as His own. He sacrificed Himself so that He could take all our sins and debts and give us His blessings.

This being the case, in return, are we now willing to regard His life as our own, and submit everything to Him?

Here is a brief checklist that helps you determine whether or not you have submitted every area of your life to the Lord (Ask the children to tick the relevant column):

		Not submitted	Submitted to some extent	Submitted to a great extent
1	<p>I have submitted my body to the Lord</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My eyes (what I watch and read, etc.) • My ears (music I listen to/ the conversations I have, etc.) • My hands (things I do) • My feet (places that I go), etc. 			
2	<p>I have submitted my pocket money</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spend carefully/wisely • I give to the needy • I give to the Kingdom of God; etc 			
3	<p>I have submitted my time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spend enough time on Bible Study/Prayer • I spend enough time on studies • I spend correct amount of time on sleep/rest • I make time to help my parents/family; etc. 			

4	<p>I have submitted my friendships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't make close friendships with people who follow wrong values • I don't imitate my friends when they do sinful things • I try to be a friend to the needy; etc. 			
5	<p>I have submitted to the Godly authority placed over me</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I obey my parents in everything, always • I obey my teachers • I obey the rules of the government (traffic rules, etc.) 			
6	<p>I have submitted my character to the Lord</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't lie, cheat, steal, etc. • I forgive those who hurt me • I don't display sinful anger; etc 			

True children of God will grow in obedience and submission every day. If this isn't happening in your life every day, then check your heart to make sure whether you've truly entered into a Covenant with the Lord.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

Davidic and New Covenants



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To show that God kept His Word and fulfilled the Covenant Promises made to David.
- To explain how the New Covenant is linked with the Davidic Covenant.
- To reflect on our response to the Son of David—as Citizens or Whitewashed Tombs.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Jeremiah 33:20-21; 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 2 Chronicles 6:16 (Davidic Covenant)



MEMORY VERSE

2 Kings 8:19: Nevertheless, for the sake of His servant David, the Lord was not willing to destroy Judah. He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever.

Materials Needed: Laptop (to play the video clippings)



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Because Jesus became a curse for us, what are some blessings that we gained in return? List some of them.
- Did you specifically submit any area of your life to the Lord this week? Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (2 Corinthians 8:9).



INTRODUCTION

In the last few weeks, we have looked at how God reached out to humans, to make a Covenant with us. We saw that under His New Covenant, God gives us the desire and power to obey Him successfully.

We also learnt that this Covenant is unbreakable and it provides us free access to all the riches of God. In this context, we took a closer look at both the Covenant-privileges and responsibilities that are now ours.

Today, we'll be studying the Davidic Covenant, and we'll find out how the New Covenant is linked with the Davidic Covenant.

Note to the Facilitator

There are five Covenants mentioned in the Bible. In this session, we will be studying only God's Covenant with David and the New Covenant.

- God's Covenant with Noah

- God’s Covenant with Abraham
- God’s Covenant with Moses
- God’s Covenant with David
- God’s New Covenant

[God’s Covenant with Noah was discussed at the Primary Level (Std 1-3). The Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were discussed at the Junior Level (Std 4-6)].

Brief Overview of the Lesson:

- Davidic Covenant-promises fulfilled through the Messiah
- New Covenant written in our hearts
- Kingdom of the Davidic Messiah (Practical Application today)



ATTENTION GETTER

Cotemporary Myths about David’s Descendants

God made a Covenant with David saying:

... “You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before Me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before Me according to My law, as you have done” (2 Chronicles 6:16).

Moreover, the Lord said:

This is what the Lord says: ‘If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant ... can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne (Jeremiah 33:20-21).

Because of these verses, some people believe that a descendant of David is ruling even today, on a throne somewhere in the world.

Let’s look at a video clipping of one of the more crazy theories floating around today:

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvxkyQAlqN8>

Duration: 2 minutes and 58 seconds

This video suggests that Queen Elizabeth is a direct descendant of King David!

According to this theory, the supposed lineage of the British royal family is as follows:

- King Zedekiah of Judah was the last king who sat on the physical throne of David.
- They say that his daughter, Tea Tephi, married a person named Heremon.
- Heremon’s sons and descendants became the kings of Ireland.

- From this lineage emerged the first King of Scotland, Kenneth MacAlpin.
- Queen Elizabeth II is a direct descendant of the Scottish kings.

Ask:

What are the chances that this myth could be really true?

(Ask the children for their opinions)

Explain:

People who come up with theories (like the Queen Elizabeth theory) have not read the concerned Bible passages properly. God's promise to David is mentioned in three places: 2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, and 2 Chronicles 6:16.

Let's take a closer look at all three passages right now:

Read Aloud:

- 2 Samuel 7:12-13: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for My Name, and I **will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**
- 1 Chronicles 17:12: He is the one who will build a house for Me, and I will establish his throne forever.
- 2 Samuel 7:16: **Your ... kingdom will endure forever before me;** your throne will be established forever.

Observe:

The first part of 2 Samuel 7:13 (and 1 Chronicles 17:12) refer to King Solomon, because he built the temple.

However, the second part of 2 Samuel 7:13 (and 1 Chronicles 17:12) say that the throne of David's descendant "would be established forever." This cannot refer to Solomon because he died of old age, and didn't stay on the throne forever.

- Therefore we have to conclude that the second part of the verse refers specifically to Jesus, whose throne "will last forever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). The same idea is repeated in 2 Samuel 7:16 as well.
- These verses cannot refer to the British royalty or any other human king, because they all die sooner or later. Only Jesus rules forever and ever.

Read Aloud:

- 2 Chronicles 6:16: You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel ...
- 2 Samuel 7:16: Your house ... will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

Observe:

According to these verses, David would always have a direct successor who could be placed on the throne. In fact 2 Samuel 7:16 said that the House of David (i.e., his direct descendants), would 'endure.' The term 'endure' creates a mental-picture of someone managing to survive and continue, in spite of great opposition.

- Just as promised, David's House (his direct descendants) **'endured'** through 600 years of enslavement at the hands of Babylonians, Persians, Romans, etc. Jesus was born into this direct Davidic lineage, which had managed to survive even after 600 years of subjugation. Both Mary and Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, were direct descendants of King David.
- In other words, the Lord did not promise an unbroken monarchy but an unbroken line of descendants from David, who would be qualified to sit on that throne when it was re-established. **David's line did not fail**, and the righteous Branch did come to claim His throne (Luke 1:31-33).



TEACHING CONTENT

Around 400 years after God's promise to David, the last king of Judah (Zedekiah) was forced out by Nebuchadnezzar in the siege of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 32:4-5). This was a great shock for the people of Judah who assumed that in spite of their outright sinfulness and rebellion, God would continue allowing them to rule and reign.

However, God clarified the facts for the people, through Jeremiah the prophet.

Read Aloud:

- Jeremiah 30:14-15: All your allies have forgotten you; they care nothing for you. I have struck you as an enemy would and punished you as would the cruel, **because your guilt is so great and your sins so many.**

Why do you cry out over your wound, your pain that has no cure? **Because of your great guilt and many sins I have done these things to you.**

Explain:

God made it very clear that He had temporarily dethroned the descendants of David because of their great sins. He had clearly warned them through King David, that they'd stay on the throne only if they were "careful in all they do to walk before Me according to My law, as you have done" (2 Chronicles 6:16).

After scolding them for their disobedience and rebellion, the Lord provided hope for the future. He assured them that all the Covenant-promises He had made to David would be fulfilled one day.

The Lord's Covenant with David contained six promises

- A Great Name (2 Samuel 7:9; 8:13)
- A Place for the People (v.10)
- Rest (v.11)
- A House (v.11)
- A Seed (v.12), and
- A Kingdom (v.13)

Jeremiah, and the other prophets, prophesied that these **six promises would be fulfilled through the Messiah**, who would be known as the Son of David.

Promise of a Great Name

Jeremiah prophesied that God would cause the nations to honour the House of David, in the future. Jeremiah 30: 19-20: **I will bring them honour, and they will not be disdained.** Their children will be as in the days of old, and their community will be established before me ...

Promise of a Place for the People

Jeremiah prophesied that God would re-establish the House of David in their own land.

Jeremiah 30:3: ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and **restore them to the land I gave their ancestors to possess,**’ says the Lord.

Promise of Rest

Jeremiah prophesied that God would provide the House of David with rest in the future.

Jeremiah 31:2: This is what the Lord says: “The people who survive the sword will find favour in the wilderness; **I will come to give rest to Israel.**”

Promise of a House

Isaiah prophesied that God would establish the House of David through the Messiah, the Son of David.

Isaiah 16:4-5: ... The oppressor will come to an end, and destruction will cease; **the aggressor will vanish from the**

land. In love a throne will be established; **in faithfulness a man will sit on it—one from the house of David**—one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.

Promise of a Direct Descendant

Jeremiah prophesied that God would provide a ruler who'd come directly from the House of David itself.

Jeremiah 30:21: Their leader will be **one of their own**; their ruler **will arise from among them**. I will bring him near and he will come close to me ...

Promise of a Kingdom

Jeremiah prophesied that God would re-establish the Kingdom of David.

Jeremiah 30:8-9: In that day ... I will break the yoke off their necks ... no longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the Lord their God and **David their king, whom I will raise up for them**.

The Response to the Messiah

Because Jeremiah prophesied that all of these Davidic Covenant-promises would be fulfilled through the Messiah, the Israelites eagerly began to await His arrival. When Jesus was finally born, and it looked like He was the promised Messiah, they became very excited. They thought He'd immediately form an army and attack the Romans, to re-establish the earthly throne of David.

None of them seemed to remember the words of prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah had prophesied that the Lord would form a New Covenant. Under the New Covenant, the first task would NOT be the restoration of the earthly Israelite kingdom. Rather, the first task would be restoration of the “hearts of the people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Read Aloud :

Jeremiah 31:33: This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people ...”

Explain:

Jesus, the Messiah, established this New Covenant through His sacrifice on the Cross. He died on the Cross so that we would be forgiven of all our sins, just as promised in Jeremiah 31:34.

- Jeremiah 31:34: “For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**”
- Zechariah 13:1-2: On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **to cleanse them from sin and impurity.** “On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more,” declares the Lord Almighty.

When the Jews realized that Jesus’ immediate goal was to restore hearts rather than restore the earthly kingdom, many of them were very upset.

- They didn't like Jesus pointing out their sins to them. They didn't want their hearts changed. They were very comfortable with their selfishness, pride and rebelliousness.
- They just wanted to enjoy position and power in a powerful earthly kingdom.

Division between Jews and Christians

Ever since that time, there has been a great divide between the Jews and the followers of Jesus Christ (the term 'Christian' means "follower of Christ" – Acts 11:26).

- The Jews believe that Jesus is NOT the Messiah, as He failed to prove His Messiah-ship by restoring the earthly Kingdom of David.
- Christians believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah because He is able to fulfill both prophecies of Jeremiah (prophecy that he would obtain forgiveness of sins for us; and the prophecy that He would establish the Kingdom of David).



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

One of the main arguments of the Jews is that the Messiah was supposed to establish a Kingdom.

- But Jesus did NOT seem to establish any Kingdom.
- So Jesus is not the Messiah.

How do we respond to this Jewish argument? Is what they're saying valid?

(Encourage the children to come up with answers to this question).

Video Presentation

Video Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNtBa_qwlho

Duration: 2 minutes and 19 seconds

Based on this video, would we still say that Jesus did NOT establish a Kingdom when He came to the earth?

As explained in the video, Jesus did begin the process of establishing God's Kingdom when He came to the earth.

Dr. Witherington quotes Jesus who said, "... if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

The fact that demons obeyed Jesus, proves that they recognized His kingship and authority. The King had come down to the earth, to reclaim His kingdom and His people, and the demons acknowledged His authority to do so.

However (as the video also explains), the process of Kingdom-establishment **has not been fully completed yet**. Jesus has not yet sat down on the earthly throne and proclaimed His earthly rulership over human politicians.

If Jesus has occupied the throne of David to rule forever, WHERE exactly is His Kingdom located RIGHT NOW? Is it located today in the current State of Israel? Or is it located only in Heaven?

(Encourage the children to come up with answers to this question).

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NtgjNLNpao&feature=related>

Duration: 3 minutes and 45 seconds

According to this video, where is the Kingdom of God today?

It is in the hearts of those who're sincerely following the words of Jesus.

So right now, the Kingdom of God is a "hidden kingdom." It's hidden in the hearts of true Christ-followers, and its silently spreading from person to person, through the preaching of the Gospel.

- Luke 17:20-21: Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."

However, one day, when the physical kingdom is established, even those who don't want to follow Christ will be forced to bow their knees and acknowledge Jesus' supreme kingship.

- Philippians 2:9-11: Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee

should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

According to the video, Christians are “Citizens of the Kingdom of God.” Does this mean all Christians will go to Heaven one day?

The actual citizens of God’s Kingdom are those who are born again.

Symbolically speaking, God writes His laws on the hearts of these people (Jeremiah 31:33). In other words, He gives them the desire and the power to obey Him and follow Him.

- They don’t hold prejudices by treating the rich in one way and treating the poor in another.
- They don’t abuse and exploit the natural resources that God has created.
- They treat people with love and so on.

Only these people, who’re living by the King’s standards, are citizens of His Kingdom. So only they will be allowed access into Heaven after their physical death.

The rest are not truly ‘Christians’ (Christ-followers) because they did not “get born again into new people” with new hearts. So they cannot enter heaven.

If I try to sincerely follow all that Jesus commands, will this make me a Citizen of God’s Kingdom?

People who sincerely try to follow Jesus’ commands, without being “born into His Kingdom,” will find that it’s impossible to keep most of His commandments.

As we learnt in the first session, only those who have become a new creation are able to obey the Lord. This is because the Lord writes His commandments on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33), and gives them the power to obey Him (Philippians 2:13).

- So, trying to keep Jesus' commandments doesn't make anybody a Citizen of God's Kingdom.
- Rather, becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of God, **by accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour**, makes it possible for a person to keep God's commandments.

There's a big difference between the two! It's a difference of life and death ... heaven and hell!

The Jews believed that they could keep the Old Testament Commandments without accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour. But Jesus called them "whitewashed tombs" that only pretended to be holy on the outside while being filled with sin on the inside.

So, Citizenship in God's Kingdom is possible only through Jesus Christ.



APPLICATION

Check your life to find out if you're a "**Citizen of God's Kingdom**" or a "**Whitewashed Tomb**."

Citizen of God's Kingdom: A Citizen is clean both inside and out. They don't pretend to be holy on the outside, while hiding a lot of dirt on the inside.

Whitewashed Tomb: Whitewashed Tombs appear so holy on the outside that everybody praises them. But their hearts are filled with pride, self-centeredness, jealousy and all kinds of evil.

Checklist:

- Do I read/watch/do things that I don't want others to know about? Are they things that Jesus would not like to watch/read/do?
- Am I the giving/helpful type? Or am I extremely self-centered?
- Do I have a regular Quiet Time with the Lord? Is it truly effective, or do I simply do it as a ritual (Am I usually sleepy, distracted or in a big hurry to finish it off)?
- Do I enjoy the friendship of people who're openly/secretly doing sinful things?

(The extent to which you enjoy their company, will reveal the extent to which your heart enjoys such things).

- Do I make a conscious effort to show "love in action" at home by helping out, by restraining my anger, etc.? Or do I simply express love through words/cards (and not back them up with "love in action")?
- Do I pretend to be studying when I'm, in fact, doing other things? How often do I do this each week?
- Do I pretend to show respect to older people and then speak badly about them behind their backs (especially teachers, parents, relatives, etc.).

- Do I pretend to forgive people but continue holding a deep grudge inside my heart?

How you answer these questions will give you an idea of whether you're a true Citizen of God's Kingdom or a White-washed Tomb.

Explain:

While skimming through the above list, you might have felt God specifically convicting you of certain things:

- If you genuinely repent of those things, and work toward overcoming them, it shows that you're a Citizen.
- A Whitewashed tomb, on the other hand, will feel sorry for a little while and then forget about it. They won't make an effort to submit to the Lord's prompting and change.

How to become a True Citizen

If any of the children are convicted of their sinful condition, and realize that they never became true citizens of God's Kingdom, lead them into salvation. The four simple steps involved are mentioned in "Bible Covenants—Lesson 1."



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

Mosaic Covenant Vs New Covenant



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain how the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant.
- To show that God made the New Covenant to establish a close friendship with us.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Exodus 29:45; Amos 5:21; Hebrews 8:6; Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Friendship with God).



MEMORY VERSE

Jeremiah 31:34: No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

Materials Needed:

- Chart Paper
- Ziploc packet with boiled cabbages
- Sketch pens / colour pencils
- Laptop (to play the video clippings)

**RECAP**

- What did we learn about last week?
- Where is God's kingdom located currently? In heaven or on earth? (In the hearts of true followers of Christ).
- Mention some things you did this week which showed that you're a Citizen of Heaven. Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (2 Kings 8:19).

**INTRODUCTION**

Over the last few weeks, we have been studying Bible Covenants in great detail. We looked at how God initiated a New Covenant with us, when we were still in a sinful, undeserving condition. We also saw that the New Covenant is unbreakable and permanent, and that we enjoy several Covenant-privileges because of it.

Today, we'll focus more on the Core Motive of the Lord in making this New Covenant. What did the Old Mosaic Covenant lack, which motivated the Lord to establish this New Covenant? We'll attempt to answer this question by making a comparative study of both the Covenants.

Note to the Facilitator

Here is a brief overview of the Lesson:

- God’s Primary Goal: Fellowship with People
- Old Covenant: Indirect Incomplete Fellowship
- How the New Covenant establishes a direct friendship



ATTENTION GETTER

Prepare Beforehand:

Cut Chart paper into rectangular cards (one card per child). Place the cards in a ziploc packet, along with boiled cabbage. This will result in a set of cards with an offensive odour.

Take plenty of sketch pens and color pencils to the class. Take a few minutes to draw a blueprint of your ‘main hall’ at home (A sample blueprint has been included in the Student Workbook, to give you an idea of how to draw one).

Activity: Smelly Offerings

Give each child a blank card and ask them to prepare a “Thank you Greeting,” to be given to the Lord. Ask them to make it attractive and colourful. (Apologize for the smell on the cards if the odour is strong; but don’t provide any explanations).

NOTE: Please make sure that the Activity Time does not cross ten minutes.

Discuss after Activity

What if the card you've prepared were being given to you by someone else? How glad would you be to receive it?

(Those who put in a sincere effort to make their cards look good, will probably like them better).

What about the fact that the cards seem to smell a bit offensive? How happy would you be to receive a smelly card?

(Ask for their opinions).

Observe:

It's difficult to enjoy something that smells bad—even if it's something that you like a lot. If your favorite T-shirt had a foul odour, you'd probably avoid wearing it—even though it's your favourite!

Similarly, if your best friend were smelling unbearably bad, you'd find it a bit difficult to be near him/her—even though they're your favourite friend.

Explain:

Some of you put in a lot of effort to make your cards look good. But even then, you couldn't cover up the smell.

The reason you won't be preserving your card for long is because it smells. Nobody likes to be around bad odours.

Have you ever wondered WHY God made a New Covenant with humans? The reason had something to do with foul odours and getting rid of them permanently. Let's find out more ...



TEACHING CONTENT

God's longing to get close to people

Why God created us in His own image

God created Adam and Eve IN HIS OWN IMAGE so that he could make friends with them.

Some people say that people evolved from gorillas, because gorillas resemble the human race. But the simple fact is that a gorilla can never form the kind of deep friendships that humans can!

A gorilla was not made in the image of God. So it can't understand friendship in the way humans and God do. It can't communicate the way God and we do. It can't make the kind of conscious friendship commitments that we do.

God wanted friends with whom He could relate on a very deep, personal level. So He created humans in His own image.

The first thing God did after creating humans in his own image

One of the very first things God did after creating humans was ... to start hanging out with them!!! God used to have long walks and talks with Adam and Eve everyday!

Why the long walks and talks stopped

However, Adam and Eve chose to sin against God, and this brought the stink of sin and death into their hearts. God could no longer have a deep friendship with them because they stank in His presence!

In His deep love for them, the Lord sacrificed an animal, so that He could ‘cover’ their sinfulness with its sacrificed blood. The law “requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

So, their filthy sin was ‘covered’ and hidden out of sight. But the smell persisted. A cover-up job can’t get rid of the stink of sin.

God offered His hand in friendship once more

In spite of the fact that humans stink of sin, the Lord did not stay away. On Mount Sinai, He came back with thunder and lightning, in all of His glory, and offered His hand in friendship once more.

God’s glory and holiness was so great that the entire mountain and the ground around it began to shake. The people were so terrified that they begged God not to speak to them directly.

It was here that God established an indirect friendship with the human race ...

- ‘Indirect’ because sinful humans would get wiped out in the direct presence of His holiness.

An “Indirect” Friendship Established

At Mount Sinai, God established the Mosaic Covenant and declared, “I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God” (Exodus 29:45).

He wanted to live with them, the way a friend would but he had to protect them from the burning fire of His holiness which would consume them!

- So He appointed a High Priest who'd represent the people and make sacrifices on their behalf.

He wanted to talk to them, the way a friend would ...
But their sin-hardened hearts couldn't bear the mighty sound of His voice.

- So He appointed a Prophet who'd represent Him to the people and convey His messages to them.

In this way, with the help of High Priests and Prophets, God established an indirect friendship with His people, whom he loved so deeply.

How the “Indirect” Friendship Operated

Imperfect High Priests

- Aaron, the High Priest, offered animal sacrifices on behalf of the people every day. In this way, the blood of animals, covered the people's sins and protected them from God's judgment. However, Aaron was not a perfect man. He too sinned sometimes ... and ended up having to offer sacrifices for his own sins as well. So he wasn't a very perfect representative of the people.
- Moreover, Aaron was human. He grew old and died. Then he had to be replaced by his son.

In this way, one imperfect High Priest replaced another. And the people couldn't help feeling very far from God! The Indirect friendship felt too 'indirect!'

Imperfect Friends

Not only was the High Priest imperfect, the people were imperfect too. One day they promised to obey and love God, but the next day they went chasing after idols, or committed some other sins.

God didn't feel very loved, and He didn't like it. The indirect friendship was proving too 'indirect'!

The Stench

The worst part of this friendship was the smell. The people 'covered' their sins by offering the blood of sacrificed animals. But the covered-up stains remained; nothing could cleanse them away. So the smell of hidden sinfulness always lured the people back to their old ways. And these sinful ways kept God far from them.

In fact, at one time, God was so disgusted with their sinfulness that He said, "I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me" (Amos 5:21).

God decided to establish a Direct Friendship

God had signed a Covenant of Friendship with the Israelites at Mount Sinai. But the people repeatedly failed to keep it.

This is when God set into motion His plans for a New Covenant with these words:

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new Covenant with the people ... It will not be like the Covenant I made with their ancestors because they broke My Covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares

the Lord. “This is the Covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

We have studied this New Covenant over the last few weeks. We know its strengths.

The New Covenant offers better promises

Hebrews 8:6 declares, “But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the Covenant of which He is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant **is established on better promises.**”

The New Covenant offers **Four Better Promises**, that turn an imperfect ‘Indirect’ Friendship, into a **Very Direct and Very Personal Friendship with God!**

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Promise 1: Imperfect Friends REPLACED by Perfect Friends

- **V.33:** I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

The Old Covenant people constantly broke their friendship promises by sinning against God. But now Jesus writes His law on our hearts. He can supply us with both the desire and the power to stay committed to Him (Philippians 2:13). So now we can draw as close to God as we wish.

- **How close do you really wish to get to God? Now Jesus can help you get there.**

Promise 2: Indirect Friendship REPLACED by Direct Friendship

- **V.33:** I will be their God, and they will be My people.

Human High Priests were imperfect because they were sinful people. So they couldn't represent us perfectly and help us draw very close to God. But Jesus is the perfect High Priest because He never sinned. So He represents us perfectly before God and is able to bring us as close to God as we wish.

- **How close do you really wish to get to God? Now Jesus can help you get there.**

Promise 3: Distant Friendship REPLACED by Close Personal Friendship

- **V.34:** No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord.

Under the Old Covenant, God communicated with people through the Prophet. So, the common people couldn't have direct, intimate conversations with the Lord. However, under the New Covenant, now that we have the Holy Spirit living within us, we can speak to God directly and informally, as though He is our own Father.

- **How close do you really wish to get to God? Now Jesus can help you get there.**

Promise 4: Guilt-ridden Friendship REPLACED by Guilt-free Comfortable Friendship

- **v.34:** For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

The sins of the Old Covenant people could only be ‘covered’ by the blood of animals. The blood of animals can’t wash away sins. So the people felt uncomfortable in the presence of a holy God. But today Jesus’ blood washes away our sins permanently! Today, when God looks at us, He doesn’t see our sinfulness. He only smells the sweet smelling sacrifice that Jesus offered up on the Cross, on our behalf. So we can have a guilt-free “stink-free” friendship with the Lord now.

- **How close do you really wish to get to God? Now Jesus can help you get there.**

Conclude:

As you can see, we cannot use any of the excuses that the Old Testament people used, to stay away from the Lord. Because of the New Covenant which the Lord has established, through His sacrifice on the Cross, we can now get as close to God as we wish.

So the question today is:

- How interested are you in getting close to God?

The New Covenant cost God EVERYTHING. He sacrificed His Son on the Cross just to get close to us. Are we willing to return His friendship?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYaz96TVIJU>

Duration: 5 minutes and 50 seconds

According to the video, what are some of the things we need to do, to grow close to God?

(Ask the children for feedback on the video).

Why do you think people say Bible-reading leads to a close friendship with God? How can ‘reading’ lead to a friendship?

Many people don’t enjoy ‘reading.’ They associate ‘reading’ with school and studies. So they find it difficult to connect reading with something enjoyable like friendship.

However, making friends with God is a bit like making friends with someone on Facebook. You’ve probably never met the person face-to-face; you only know them from the photos they’ve posted on Facebook. Moreover, you probably can’t call them on the phone or sms them because they live in another country, on the other side of the world.

So your main contact with the person is through Facebook. You ‘read’ everything the person writes and you start getting to know them.

Similarly we read the Bible to get to know God.

Just as the video explains, we only have to read a small portion every day. It's like reading a short blog online.

After your Bible reading, talk to God. Tell Him what you thought and felt while reading his 'blog.'

If something is too difficult to understand, then take the help of your Children's Church teachers to find out what the passage means.

When you start hearing God's voice regularly during your Bible-reading, you'll begin to enjoy your time with Him.

In a friendship, both friends talk. Can God really talk like a friend? If a Bible verse catches my attention and I say something to God, will He respond back with a reply? How?

(Ask the children for their opinions).

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmvCKLWw5Vc&feature=relmfu>

Duration: 2 minutes and 41 seconds

According to this video, how does God respond back when we talk to him?

(Ask the children for feedback on the video).



APPLICATION

Jesus did not sacrifice His life on the cross just to buy you a ticket to Heaven. His main goal was to establish a close friendship with you.

- Close your eyes for a minute right now, and thank God for paying such a heavy price, just to be your friend.
- Make a commitment to spend time with Him, and hear from Him.
- Ask God to prepare you, to hear His voice clearly during the week.
- This week, maintain a record of the different ways God spoke to you (through a picture in your mind, through a song, through a Bible verse, etc.) Share these experiences with the rest of the class next Sunday.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

Ark of the Covenant



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach that the Ark also served as the throne of God where 'mercy' was provided.
- To explain that mercy is shown only to the repentant.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

1 Samuel 4; Joshua 3:10-11; Exodus 25:17; Exodus 25:22; Hebrews 10:26-27; Romans 2:4; 1 Samuel 7:3-4 (The Mercy Seat of God)



MEMORY VERSE

Romans 2:4: "... do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness ... not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?"

Materials Needed: Laptop to play video clippings.



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- What was the main reason for God making a Covenant with us? (To develop a close personal friendship with each one of us).
- We studied the different ways God speaks to us. Did you hear God's voice this week? Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Jeremiah 31:34).



INTRODUCTION

Last week, by making a comparison between the Old Covenant of Moses and the New Covenant, we learnt how deeply God longs for our friendship and fellowship.

Today, we'll study the Ark of The Covenant which was placed in the Tabernacle, and we'll find out how it holds significance for us even today.

Note to the Facilitator

Here is a brief overview of the Lesson:

- Significance of Ark for the Israelites
- Why it's called "Mercy Seat"
- Mercy is offered to those who SUBMIT at God's Throne/Seat



ATTENTION GETTER

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4B88fcwR8M>

Duration: 2 minutes and 48 seconds

Ask:

What is your opinion regarding this video? Do you think the Ethiopian Ark is the original one made by Moses?

(Ask the children for their opinions).

According to the video, the Ark was probably captured by the Babylonians when they took away the Israelites as slaves. Why do you think God didn't protect the Ark from being captured?

(Ask the children for their opinions).

- Did the Ark have special powers, as mentioned in the video?
- If it did, how could it be captured by enemies?
- Why didn't the Ark use its powers to destroy them?

We'll try to answer these questions today.



TEACHING CONTENT

Capture of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4)

In the days when Samuel was still a child, Israel went to war against the Philistines. Israel set up camp at Ebenezer, the Philistines at Aphek. The Philistines marched out to meet Israel, the fighting spread, and Israel was badly

beaten—about four thousand soldiers left dead on the field. When the troops returned to camp, Israel's elders said, "Why has God given us such a beating today by the Philistines? Let's go to Shiloh and get the Ark of God's Covenant. It will accompany us and save us from the grip of our enemies."

So the army sent orders to Shiloh. They brought the Ark of the Covenant of God, the God-of-the-Angel-Armies, the Cherubim-Enthroned-God. Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, accompanied the Ark of the Covenant of God.

When the Ark of the Covenant of God was brought into camp, everyone gave a huge cheer. The shouts were like thunderclaps shaking the very ground. The Philistines heard the shouting and wondered what on earth was going on: "What's all this shouting among the Hebrews?"

Then they learned that the Ark of God had entered the Hebrew camp. The Philistines panicked: "Their gods have come to their camp! Nothing like this has ever happened before. We're done for! Who can save us from the clutches of these super gods? These are the same gods who hit the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues out in the wilderness. On your feet, Philistines! Courage! We're about to become slaves to the Hebrews, just as they have been slaves to us. Show what you're made of! Fight for your lives!"

And did they ever fight! It turned into a rout. They thrashed Israel so mercilessly that the Israelite soldiers ran for their lives, leaving behind an incredible thirty thousand dead. As if that wasn't bad enough, the Ark of God was taken and the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas—were killed.

Glory Is Exiled from Israel

Immediately, a Benjaminite raced from the front lines back to Shiloh. Shirt torn and face smeared with dirt, he entered the town. Eli was sitting on his stool beside the road keeping vigil, for he was extremely worried about the Ark of God. When the man ran straight into town to tell the bad news, everyone wept. They were appalled. Eli heard the loud wailing and asked, "Why this uproar?" The messenger hurried over and reported. Eli was ninety-eight years old then and blind. The man said to Eli, "I've just come from the front, barely escaping with my life."

"And so, my son," said Eli, "what happened?"

The messenger answered, "Israel scattered before the Philistines. The defeat was catastrophic, with enormous losses. Your sons Hophni and Phinehas died, and the Ark of God was taken."

At the words, "Ark of God," Eli fell backward off his stool where he sat next to the gate. Eli was an old man, and very fat. When he fell, he broke his neck and died. He had led Israel forty years.

His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and ready to deliver. When she heard that the Ark of God had been taken and that both her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went to her knees to give birth, going into hard labour. As she was about to die, her midwife said, "Don't be afraid. You've given birth to a son!" But she didn't feel comforted at all.

Because the Ark of God was gone, she named the boy Ichabod (Glory's Gone), saying, "Glory is exiled from Israel since the Ark of God was taken."



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Why did Eli have a massive heart attack and die when he heard that the Ark had been captured?

- (Notice that the dying daughter-in-law didn't name her son "My family is dead." She was more worried about the Ark and named him "God's glory has left").

Why did the Israelites consider the Ark so important?

The secret behind Israel's power was the Ark.

This is because the Ark symbolized God's presence. In Joshua 3:10-11, the Lord explained that when the priests carried the Ark into the flooded Jordan river, the river would stop flowing. Then the people would know that the Lord was with them, and he would give them victory over all their enemies in Canaan.

Just as foretold, the flooded Jordan stopped flowing as soon as the feet of the priests, carrying the Ark, touched the water! Later, when the priests carried the Ark around the walls of Jericho for six days, the walls collapsed and Jericho was utterly razed to the ground.

When the nations heard about this, they began to fear the Ark. They knew that wherever the Ark went, the presence of a very powerful God went along with it. And they were terrified of Him.

Because of this, Eli, his daughter-in-law, and everybody else in Israel was horrified when the Ark was captured. They believed that if the ark left, God's presence would also leave along with it. Then, the Israelites would be left exposed, without any protection from God.

Exodus 25:17 calls the Ark a “Mercy Seat”? Why do you think the verse refers to the Box as a Seat?

God instructed that the Ark be made with expensive acacia wood, overlaid with solid gold. In this sense, the Ark was a box made with human hands.

However, Exodus 25:17 refers to this wooden box as “Mercy Seat” for a very specific reason. The purpose of the Ark was to symbolize God's visible throne on earth.

At each end of the Ark Cover, there were two Cherubim facing each other, their wings outspread. The empty space between their wings marked the spot where YAHWEH's presence dwelt.

Whenever God wanted to speak to Moses and the people, He came down in a cloud (Leviticus 16:2) between the wings of the Cherubim. He said to Moses: “There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the Ark of the Covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites” (Exodus 25:22). Thus, the Ark

Cover was regarded as God’s throne from which He gave His instructions (His Rhema Word) to His chosen ones.

Notice that God didn’t call the Ark Cover simply a ‘throne.’ He specifically used the term “Mercy Seat” to show that He is a loving and merciful God. Once a year, when the High Priest came into the Holy of Holies to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the sins of the people, He and the people would receive mercy at God’s hands—NOT His wrath and judgment.

So the Ark was symbolically the throne of God on earth:

- the place where people received mercy, and
- the place from where God issued instructions, as Ruler of the people.

Mercy is the kindness shown to a person who doesn’t deserve it. Why do you think the “Undeserving Israelites” didn’t receive mercy on the battlefield, even though they carried the Mercy Seat with them?

(Ask the children for their opinions. Don’t provide any explanations at this stage).

Hebrews 10:26-27 says, “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”

- **Why does this verse seem to suggest that there is no mercy for undeserving people? Isn’t it the very Purpose of Mercy to show forgiveness to the undeserving?**

(Ask the children for their opinions. Again, don't provide any explanations at this stage).

Video Presentation 1

Video Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_-mKcMPgxU

Duration: 1 minute and 37 seconds

Video Presentation 2

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6qt4qZUnWc&feature=related>

Duration: Please play only the first **1 minute and 15 seconds** (where the term 'repentance' is explained). The rest of the video is NOT relevant to our discussion.

Based on these two videos, now can you guess why the Israelite soldiers didn't receive mercy even though they carried the "Mercy Seat" into the battlefield?

Romans 2:4 says, "... do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness ... not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" According to this verse, the mercy of God is given to us, to make us move toward repentance.

It doesn't matter to the Lord how sinful I am. Even if I have robbed a bank, the Lord will show me mercy IF I repent of what I've done. Repentance is the willingness to stop doing the sinful things that I've been doing. It's the willingness to change my old ways and not return to them.

However, the Israelites on the battlefield, that day, had no desire to repent. They wanted to continue worshipping the

idols of Baal and Ashtoreth (1 Samuel 7:3-4). But, at the same time, they wanted the Lord to grant them mercy.

As explained in the video, this cannot be. Mercy is granted only when there is true repentance.

Why do you think God is very particular that mercy be shown only to the repentant? Doesn't God love the unrepentant?

We forget most of the time that God is not only our Saviour but also our Ruler. The Ark symbolized not only a place of mercy but also the throne of God. God is a King.

Let's imagine that a certain king has many law-breakers in his country. They're robbing and killing, and causing great harm to the people of the kingdom. If the king forgives all these law-breakers and allows them to continue causing harm, he'd be a cruel king. He would in fact convey the impression that he supports disobedience and law-breaking. No good king will ever do this.

In the same way, God does not keep on excusing those doing evil, because it will encourage them to continue in their evil ways. He punishes them if they show no signs of repentance.

However, the minute they repent, He opens his arms wide to them once again. He loves them as deeply as He loves the others.



APPLICATION

The Lord does not change every few years. He is constant. He'll treat us today, the same way He treated those Israelite soldiers back then.

- Those who repent will be shown loads of mercy
- But the unrepentant will not receive forgiveness or help.

Today, make a definite decision to repent of all your unconfessed sins. Get right with God, and enjoy the great power and privileges that are available at His throne.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

God's Covenant and My Daily Life



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach about the “Communion Service” as a symbol of God’s Covenant.
- To explain our Covenant Responsibility towards other believers.
- To show how to participate in the Communion with the right attitude.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 10:16-22; 1 Corinthians 11:20-34 (The Lord’s Table)



MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 11:29: ... those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Materials Needed: Laptop to play Video Clippings



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Why is the Ark called a “Mercy Seat”?
- If God loves everyone, why doesn’t he show mercy to the unrepentant sometimes?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Romans 2:4)



INTRODUCTION

Over the last six weeks, we have studied different aspects of Bible Covenants. Today, we’ll study how to apply God’s Covenant to our personal lives.

Note to the Facilitator

Here is a brief overview of the Lesson:

- Communion—Symbol of the New Covenant
- Our Covenant Responsibility of Love towards God’s Family
- Do you make more Sacrifices or more Comfort Choices?



ATTENTION GETTER

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZpGxTzlt4sandfeature=fvsr>

Duration: 5 minutes and 30 seconds

Explain:

The same way the wedding ring is a symbol of the marriage covenant, 'Communion' is the symbol of God's Covenant with us.

This is why Jesus says in Matthew 26:28, "This is my blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Ask:

In the video, when the little baby was unwrapped, what object was revealed?

Loaf of bread

Read Matthew 26:26 and explain what the bread represents.

Physical body of Jesus Christ

Next read 1 Corinthians 10:17 and explain what the bread represents.

All the believers—the family of God

In the video, what was poured out on the Cross?

Wine

Read 1 Corinthians 10:16 and explain what the wine represents.

The blood of Jesus

Next read Matthew 26:28 and explain what the wine represents.

The Blood Covenant that God has made with us

List down the two things that the Communion Bread represents.

- Physical body of Jesus Christ
- All the believers—the family of God

List down the two things that the Communion wine represents.

- The blood of Jesus
- The blood covenant that God has made with us



TEACHING CONTENT

Significance of the Communion Service

Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians, in which he explained the importance of the Communion Service (1 Corinthians 11:20-34). We will now look at this passage in some detail, to find out how it is related to God's Covenant with us.

Ask:

Read 1 Corinthians 11:18 and explain why Paul was upset with the Corinthians.

They behaved like a divided family, competing with and criticizing each other.

How did this divisiveness affect their participation in the Lord's Supper? Read 1 Corinthians 11:20-21 and explain.

Instead of eating together as one united group, they ate separately in divided groups. And they didn't bother to share with those who hadn't brought enough food with them.

Explain:

Our churches have 300 or more people attending each Sunday. So we don't celebrate the Lord's Supper the way Jesus and the Early Christians used to.

For them, the Lord's Supper was more like Potluck Dinner. Each person brought whatever they could. The rich brought a lot, while the poor brought little. Then, they lovingly shared this food with one another, together praising God for His great sacrifice.

However, the people in the Corinthian church developed differences among them. So they didn't feel like being loving or sharing any longer. They preferred to eat in their exclusive little groups, ignoring all the others. As a result, the poor people who hadn't brought much food, went back home hungry and unfilled.

This upset Paul greatly because the food being shared was supposed to represent the "oneness and unity" of the believers. Jesus had set an example by taking one single loaf of bread and sharing it with all the others. When the Corinthians failed to follow Jesus' example it angered Paul.

Ask:

According to 1 Corinthians 10:17, WHY do we share one single loaf?

All of us received salvation by feeding on one loaf—Jesus Christ. He has made us one. Therefore, we must continue to maintain this oneness by sharing with one another.

According to 1 Corinthians 11:27, what are we guilty of, if we don't maintain love and oneness?

Such a person is guilty of sinning against the Body and Blood of the Lord.

What are the consequences if we sin against the Lord, by not maintaining love and unity? Read 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 and explain.

We bring God's judgment upon ourselves. Some may become weak with physical ailments. Some may even die.

Explain:

As we can see from all of this, God's Blood Covenant with us, and its celebration, is a serious matter of life and death!

Jesus shed His blood to forgive us of all our sins. Because we're forgiven and no longer stained with sin, we have become God's own children!

Similarly, Jesus' body was broken to make all of us whole. His broken body was meant to unite all of us into one family.

The Lord's Supper was supposed to be a visible demonstration of this love, sacrifice, unity and holiness:

- The people participating in the Supper were supposed to show the same kind of love that He did.
- They were supposed to make sacrifices for one another, the same way He did.
- They were supposed to be united together like one single loaf of bread.
- They were supposed to be holy and pure, just like their Saviour.

Instead of demonstrating these things, the Corinthians had turned the Lord's Supper into a competition:

- Those who could bring the most grand dishes were honoured the most.
- Those who brought the costliest wines had the highest social status.
- The rich shared with their friends, and didn't bother to share with those they disliked.
- Nobody bothered to share with the poor because they couldn't give anything in return.
- As a result, the poor gathered in a corner by themselves, feeling very ashamed that they couldn't bring enough food for the "Potluck."
- These poor people went home hungry because nobody shared with them.
- The rich went home drunk, after gulping down all the expensive wines.

The Lord was disgusted to see the people ‘celebrating’ His Blood Covenant in this repulsive manner. So He withdrew His protection from them. As a result, many came down with diseases and some even died!

So Paul advised them saying, “... when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment” (1 Corinthians 11:33).



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

Why do you think we must participate in the Communion Service? Is it really necessary?

The same way the wedding ring is a symbol of the Marriage Covenant, the “Communion Service” is the symbol of God’s Covenant with us.

The wedding ring reminds a person of the Covenant-promises they made on their Wedding Day. It reminds them to faithfully keep those promises on a daily basis.

In the same way, when we take Communion, we too are reminded of our Covenant-Privileges and Responsibilities. We remember all that Christ accomplished for us on the Cross, and we’re able to claim those privileges for ourselves. Also, we’re reminded of all the Covenant-responsibilities that God expects us to fulfill on a daily basis.

So if we have become part of God's Blood Covenant, it's very important for us to participate in the Communion Service regularly.

How do you think today's lesson about 'Unity' can be applied to the Sunday Communion Service?

When the church conducts the Communion Service, it's easy to put on solemn faces and partake of the wafer and grape juice.

But God looks at our hearts. If we're holding hatred, unforgiveness, bitterness or jealousy toward other believers, in our hearts, God will not like it.

If our heart is in this condition, we must immediately confess our sinfulness and make a conscious decision to give up the sinful attitude.

1 Corinthians 11:29 says, "For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves." What does it mean to "discern the body of Christ"?

To 'discern' is to 'recognize.' We must 'recognize' what we're doing when we take Communion. We must recognize that Christ sacrificed himself to make us part of "one family," and we're coming together as "one family" to express our gratitude to Him.

So we must always behave like "one family."

How should members of "one family" behave toward one another?

(Ask for opinions)

Video Presentation

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3OW9wr0tQo>

Duration: 2 minutes and 25 seconds

According to this Video, how should members of “one family” behave towards one another?

They must be willing to lay down their lives for one another.

Do they “lay down their lives” only when the “cost is less?”

[The John Piper quote says, “Even when [the cost is a lot, do it”].

To what extent do I have to be loving towards a rude, unloving believer? What does Matthew 5:21-22 say about this?

Matthew 5:21-22 says, “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that **anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.** Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”

- Even if another believer is rude, we must not allow ourselves to hold anger against that person. God considers “unforgiving anger” equal to murder!

Is it okay to take Communion if another believer is not on good terms with me?

Matthew 5:23-24 says, “... if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has

something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. **First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.**"

According to this verse, you're innocent. You don't have any grudge against the other believer. You care about them and love them

But you know that they don't like you. They're very hurt/angry/jealous about something.

In this case, God wants you to take the first step in working out a reconciliation. You must approach the other person and offer your hand in friendship.

You are required to do everything possible to heal the relationship. In spite of your sincere efforts, if the other person still rejects your offering of friendship, then it's not your fault anymore.

So make sure that your conscience is clear when you're taking Communion. Don't have strained relations with any member of God's family.

What will happen if I take Communion while having an unloving attitude toward another believer?

I may end up bringing sickness and disease upon myself. This is how seriously God treats disunity among believers!



APPLICATION

Ask:

What was the Opening Question in the video?

(Play the first few seconds of the video if necessary).

“In a given day, how many ‘Sacrifices’ do you make? And how many ‘Comfort Choices’ do you make?”

- If you have truly “discerned the body of Christ,” you’ll be willing to make more sacrifices. You’ll be willing to give up your own comforts, on behalf of other members of God’s family.

Also reflect on the Covenant-Privileges and Responsibilities that have been given to you. How many of the former have you claimed? And how many of the latter are you fulfilling on a regular basis?



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



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