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New Testament

Deity of Jesus



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain why we believe Jesus is the Messiah.
- To show that the Messiah is equal to God.



SCRIPTURE PORTIONS

Genesis 49:10; Exodus 3:14, 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Psalms 23:1, 135:6-7; Isaiah 7:14, 44:6, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Micah 5:1; Zechariah 13:7, Matthew 1:22-23, Mark 2:8-12; 4:39, 6:5-7, John 1:1-3, 8:58, 10:11, 30-33; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 1:17-18, 19:16



MEMORY VERSE

John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”



RECAP

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

Note to the Facilitator

All the Bible verses given in the Teacher's Manual are from the NIV the same references in the Student Workbook are from the Contemporary English Version (CEV).



INTRODUCTION

The New Testament Gospels describe Jesus and His teachings in great detail. They help us gain an accurate picture of the Lord. This is important for us because Jesus said, "... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father ..." (John 14:9).

Nobody has ever seen God with their human eyes. So the only way we can understand God is by studying Jesus. Over the following weeks, we will do a brief study of the different aspects of Jesus' life and teachings.



ATTENTION GETTER

Video Presentation 1

Video: False Messiah

Duration: Please play only 57 seconds of this video (The rest of the video is not relevant).

What claim is the man in the video making about himself?

He is claiming to be the promised Messiah.

Read Aloud

John 10:30-33: “... I and the Father are one.’ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?’ ‘We are not stoning you for any of these,’ replied the Jews, ‘but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.’”

Ask

The Old Testament prophets prophesied that God would send a Messiah one day to save the world.

- Jesus claimed to be this promised Messiah.
- The man in the video also claims to be this promised Messiah.

Why do we believe Jesus’ claims about Himself, but refuse to believe this other man’s claims? (*Allow the children to give their answers.*)

Video Presentation 2

Video: Evidence that Jesus is True Messiah

Duration: 3 minutes 39 seconds

This video mentions four pieces of evidence that prove Jesus alone (and not some other man) is the true Messiah. What are the four?

(*Ask the students to read aloud each of the Bible references mentioned below.*)

- Prophet Micah who lived 700 years before the birth of Jesus prophesied that the Messiah would be born specifically in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The man in the first video claiming to be the Messiah, was however NOT born in Bethlehem; he was born in Sandersville, Georgia.
- According to the prophesy in Genesis 49, the Messiah would belong to the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10).

- In 2 Samuel 7 God promised King David that the Messiah would be a direct descendant of his (2 Samuel 7:12-13).
- According to Isaiah’s prophesy, this Messiah would be ‘Emmanuel’— God with us—meaning that God Himself would become human and live with us (Isaiah 7:14). Hundreds of years later, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew declared that Jesus was this promised Emmanuel (Matthew 1:22-23).

Jesus fulfilled these four and many other Old Testament prophesies. (Over 300 Messianic prophesies made in the Old Testament, match the life of Jesus). The man in the video, on the other hand, does NOT match up with any of these prophesies.

Therefore, we believe the words of Jesus rather than the claims of others who say that they are the promised Messiah.



TEACHING CONTENT

Why We Believe Jesus Is Equal to God

Reason 1: God Said the Messiah Would be Equal to Him

In the Old Testament, God indicated that the Messiah He would send, would be equal to Him.

Zechariah 13:7: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” declares the LORD Almighty. ‘Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered ...”

God used the word ‘amiti’ to describe this shepherd. This word literally means ‘companion’ or ‘partner.’ In other words, God promised to send His own companion as a shepherd to the earth.

Over 300 Old Testament Messianic prophesies seem to point towards Jesus specifically. So we must conclude that Jesus is the promised Messiah and that He is equal to God.

Reason 2: The Bible Shows That Jesus and Jehovah are Equal

There are many Bible verses which reveal that the ‘Lord’ of the Old Testament and ‘Jesus’ of the New Testament enjoy equal status.

Example 1

Isaiah 44:6: “This is what the **LORD (YHWH)** says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.”

Revelation 1:17-18: “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.’”

In our Bibles, we see some verses using ‘LORD’ in capitals. Wherever this is used, the original Hebrew Bible contains the word YHWH (‘Jehovah’).

We notice in the two verses above that both Jehovah and Jesus are said to be “the First and the Last.” They are given equal status.

Example 2

Psalms 23:1: “The LORD (YHWH) is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”

John 10:11: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

The Bible refers to both YHWH and Jesus as the Shepherd. They are given equal status.

Example 3

Jeremiah 23:5-6: “‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord (YHWH), ‘when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days

Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD (YHWH) Our Righteousness.”

Revelation 19:16: “On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

In the first verse, YHWH (Jehovah) Himself declares that He will give His King the title “Jehovah our Saviour.” In Revelation, we see Jesus bearing this title of Jehovah when He takes over as King. They have equal status.

Example 4

Exodus 3:14: “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

John 8:58: “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’”

In these verses, both YHWH and Jesus refer to themselves as the “I AM.” They have equal status.

Reason 3: Jesus ‘Created’ the Universe

John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”

Colossians 1:16-17: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

These verses show that Jesus is the Creator-God, and therefore He must be worshipped by all Creation. He is not inferior to the Father in any way.



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.*

Mark 2:5-7: “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ‘Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’”

According to these verses, who alone has the authority to forgive sins?

God alone has the authority to forgive sins

In the incident above, what did Jesus do to prove that He has the authority to forgive sins—just like the Father?

Mark 2:8-12: “Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, ‘Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...’ He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’ He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’”

Psalms 135:6-7: “**The LORD does whatever pleases him ... He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.**”

According to these verses, God has complete control over Nature. Did Jesus have this power as well?

Mark 4:39: [Jesus] “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.”



APPLICATION

As we can see, Jesus has the same abilities and powers that the Father does. He is equal to the Father in status.

Therefore Jesus commanded us to honour Him the same way that we honour the Father.

John 5:22-23: “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him.”

We honour Jesus only when we choose to please and worship Him in all that we think, speak and do. Can you think of some practical ways through which you can give Jesus your Supreme Worship this week?



CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Take Home Activity – Key



New Testament

Humanity of Jesus



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To show how Jesus humbled Himself when He chose to become human.
- To demonstrate how Jesus related to His parents as a human.
- To motivate teenagers to imitate the Man Jesus Christ.



SCRIPTURE PORTIONS

John 1:1,14, 2:4, 5:30; Philippians 2:5-8; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:9, 5:8-10; Matthew 12:28; Luke 2:41-52



MEMORY VERSE

Philippians 2:7: (He) "... made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Where in the Bible does it say that the Messiah is equal to God?
- Why were the Jewish leaders upset when Jesus forgave the paralyzed man's sins?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

The New Testament Gospels describe Jesus and His teachings in great detail. They help us gain an accurate picture of the Lord. This is important for us because Jesus said, "... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father ..." (John 14:9).

Nobody has ever seen God with their human eyes. So the only way we can understand God is by studying Jesus. Over the following weeks, we will do a brief study of the different aspects of Jesus' life and teachings.



ATTENTION GETTER

Jesus—Two Natures in One Person

(Taken from www.middletonbiblechurch.org)

The Student Workbook contains a Table contrasting the divine and human natures of Jesus. Ask the children to look up the Scripture references, and match the correct verse to the correct human attribute of Jesus.

Explain

Jesus is one person with two natures: divine and human. This is not a logical impossibility and it is something that is supported in scripture. We will now study some of these Scriptures.



TEACHING CONTENT

(Taken from www.middletonbiblechurch.org)

Jesus' Humbled State

As a man and as a Jew, Jesus was in a humbled state, under the Law, and lower than the angels. As a result of these conditions, Jesus had to operate in agreement with His humbled condition. He had to act completely as a man under the Law of God.

Incarnation of Jesus means that the Word became flesh, became a man.

John 1:1,14: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus emptied Himself

(Refer to additional notes on the last page of the book.)

Philippians 2:5-8: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

As a man, Jesus was under the Law

Galatians 4:4: “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law ...”

As a man, Jesus was made for a while lower than the angels

Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels ...”

Under the Law

When Jesus placed Himself under the law, as a human, He followed all that the Law required of Him.

He was subject to His parents as per Exodus 20:12.

Being under the Law necessitated that He be a man, and behave as a man. Therefore He experienced most of the limitations that we humans endure.

However, none of these things negated His divine nature. It did not mean that He did not possess a divine nature anymore.

- It simply meant that He emptied Himself to become a man (Philippians) and that He cooperated with the limitations of being a man under the Law.



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 1

Video: Baptism of Jesus

Duration: 2 minutes 16 seconds

John the Baptist preached a Baptism of Repentance (Acts 19:4). Do you think Jesus got baptised to repent of His sins? Explain.

Jesus was sinless (Hebrews 4:15). However He was baptised because He had to fulfill the legal requirements for entering into the priesthood.

- God had appointed Him as a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:8-10; 6:20).

Priests offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. Jesus became a sacrifice for our sin (1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21) in His role as priest.

- To be consecrated as a priest, He had to be washed with water (Leviticus 8:6; Exodus 29:4, Matthew 3:16). This was fulfilled in the water of baptism when Jesus was baptised.
- He had to be anointed with oil. (Leviticus 8:12; Exodus 29:7; Matthew 3:16) This was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus as a dove (i.e., oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit).

Both of these were bestowed upon Jesus at His baptism.

Why do you think Jesus was reluctant to change the water into wine, when His mother requested help at the Cana Wedding?

Scholars suggest that Jesus was probably twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old at the Cana Wedding.

According to Numbers 4:3, a person could officially start His priestly service only at the age of thirty. As Jesus was under the Law as a human, He must have decided to wait until thirty before doing miracles in His Father's Name.

So He said to His mother, "... why do you involve me ... 'My time has not yet come'" (John 2:4).

However, we do see an exception to this Levite rule. Samuel began to serve in the Temple long before the age of thirty. So, after Jesus' mother sought help, Jesus probably received special permission from the Father (just like Samuel), to begin His miracle ministry that day onwards.

This incident shows us how humble Jesus was in submitting to the laws that God had placed on humans.

In the desert why did Jesus refuse to turn stones into bread, even though His 40 day fasting-period was completed?

If you or I get hungry in the desert, we can't automatically turn stones into bread because we're human and helpless.

Jesus on the other hand was fully God even when He became fully human. He was NOT helpless.

Yet He chose to identify with us humans and be as helpless as we are. So even though Satan tempted Him to use His divine powers, Jesus refused to do so.

He had obeyed His Father by emptying Himself of divine powers, and He meant to stay empty until He ascended into heaven once more.

Philippians 2:7: "but made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."

If Jesus was fully human, how could He perform such mighty miracles?

While on earth as a human being, Jesus performed miracles the same way we do.

We perform miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:7-9: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom ... to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,"

Jesus too performed miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 12:28: "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

While living as a human, Jesus chose to give up the power to perform miracles in His own strength. Therefore He said,

John 5:30: "By myself I can do nothing ... for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."



APPLICATION

Video Presentation 2

Video: The Boy Jesus at the Temple

Duration: 1 minute 10 seconds

Discuss

(Please refer to Luke 2:41-52 while answering the questions.)

Why do you think Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem? Do you think He was deliberately disobeying His parents?

Both 1 Peter 2:22 and Hebrews 4:15 indicate that Jesus never sinned. So obviously Jesus was not disobeying any specific instruction of His parents when He stayed behind in Jerusalem.

Jesus was old enough to take care of Himself. So His parents assumed He would leave along with some of the relatives and friends, when they all started back home.

However, after an entire day of traveling back, they realised that He wasn't anywhere in their big group. That was when they got worried and returned to Jerusalem to search for Him.

Explain

At twelve years of age, Jesus was on the verge of turning into a teenager and He had the same boundless energy and enthusiasm as other teenagers.

Though current tradition regards age 18 as the time when a child becomes an adult, Jewish boys of the first century had a "coming of age" at 12. This was when they started being held responsible for keeping the law, and when they first read from the Torah during public synagogue services.

So this particular temple visit to Jerusalem was a very special occasion for Jesus.

Luke 2:42: “When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, **according to the custom.**”

In His eagerness to begin serving His Heavenly Father, Jesus wanted to learn as much as He could. So He stayed behind at the temple courts, to sit among the teachers, listen to them and ask them questions (Luke 2:46). The young Jesus ‘assumed’ His parents would realise He was in His Father’s house.

When Jesus realised how much He had troubled His parents, the Scripture narrates that “... he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them ...” (Luke 2:51).

Jesus fully believed that the Heavenly Father should be His first priority and His parents only a second priority. But though He strongly believed this, He did NOT talk back to His parents or ignore them.

Rather, “... he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them” (Luke 2:51). As a result, “... Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

How this applies to us

Teenagers tend to have a different perspective from their parents. They tend to see things differently. They may not always agree with everything their parents say.

This isn’t necessarily wrong. Differences in perspective is a natural part of growing up.

But the Bible does command us to honor our parents and obey them ... even when we don’t see eye to eye with them.

Ephesians 6:1-3: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’”

Jesus was willing to submit to His imperfect human parents, even though He was MORE PERFECT than them! If Jesus was willing to have this attitude, we must have the same attitude!

Please reflect on this deeply. This week, have the same attitude as the young Jesus, in all your interactions with your parents.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



New Testament

Jesus Said 'I Am'



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To reflect on what Jesus meant by “I am the Way, Truth and Life.”
- To teach how to abide in the Vine.
- To explain the concept of fruit bearing.



SCRIPTURE PORTIONS

Acts 10:4; John.15:5-13; Galatians 5:22-23; Hebrews 13:15; Romans 15:28; Colossians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 16:15; 2 Corinthians 8:2-4



MEMORY VERSE

John 15:5: “... If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Why did Jesus get baptised by John the Baptist?
- In what way did you 'honor' your parents this week? Give examples
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

The New Testament Gospels describe Jesus and His teachings in great detail. They help us gain an accurate picture of the Lord. This is important for us because Jesus said, "... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father ..." (John 14:9).

Nobody has ever seen God with their human eyes. So the only way we can understand God is by studying Jesus. Today, we'll take a look at what Jesus said about Himself.

Note to Facilitator

This session dwells briefly on the I AM sayings of Christ:

Primary Level

- I Am the Bread of Life
- I Am the Gate

Junior Level

- I Am the Good Shepherd
- I Am the Light of the World
- I Am the Resurrection and the Life

Senior Level

- I Am the Way, Truth and Life
- I Am the Vine

**ATTENTION GETTER****Video Presentation 1**

Video: Jesus - The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Duration: 3 minutes 07 seconds

Discuss

(Do not provide readymade answers. Ask the children for their observations.)

How does Franklin describe the long road? What does he say about it?

It's the road of life, and it contains many unexpected surprises and hurdles. So we do not have the assurance that the road will lead to something good in the end.

What explanation does Franklin give for the empty box?

The empty box represents the emptiness of life. We chase after so many things like money, etc. But these things that we trust so much, let us down in the end. They are not reliable.

What explanation does Franklin give for the “minus sign”?

The “minus sign” represents the precious things that we lose in life.

According to Franklin, how does Jesus change the road?

Jesus gives the road a “clear direction”. (The arrow mark attached to the road points to heaven).

When we go down the road of life with Jesus we know that it will lead us to heaven.

According to Franklin, how does Jesus change the emptiness of life?

The things we chase after may let us down. But Jesus will never let us down. If He has promised that He will take us to heaven, then He definitely will. He will not betray us. Therefore Jesus is truthful and reliable.

According to Franklin, how does Jesus change the 'minus' into a 'plus'?

Jesus is like the "First Aid sign" (which is a Red Cross). When we lose precious things, He is able to comfort us and restore us. Even spiritually, He restores us to a fuller, richer spiritual life.

Explain

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6).

1. Jesus is the **only** way to heaven.
2. **Jesus is not just *some* truth but the *entire* truth. He is God's definitive and perfect Word expressing who God is, what He is like, who we are, and what we need to do to be saved from misery and futility.**
3. **Jesus is the life. He gives us not only commandments and noble ideals, but also the *power to live them out*, the power to become new people. That Power is the Lord and Giver of Life Himself, the Holy Spirit, who Jesus pours out on those who accept Him.**



TEACHING CONTENT

Video Presentation 2

Video: Vine and the Branches

Duration: 1 minute 27 seconds

Discuss

(Do not provide readymade answers. Ask the children for their observations.)

According to the video, why did the dead branch die?

Because it stopped staying connected to the main trunk. It got disconnected.

What must we do to “remain connected” to Jesus, so that we don’t become like the dead branch? Refer to John 15:9-13 and give your answers.

(Ask the children to read the reference and give their opinions.)

Read Aloud

John 15:9-10: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

Explain

First, Jesus tells us to keep His commands **in the same way** that He kept His Father’s commands.

- Jesus’ interests are to become my interests; His likings to become my likings; His happiness to become my happiness; His sorrows to become my sorrows; His dislikes to become my dislikes; His ways to become my ways.
- Similarly, remaining in the Lord Jesus also means to reject what Christ rejected—to reject the worldly techniques to get ahead of others, to reject the worldly short cuts to become rich and famous, to reject the worldly entertainment that pollutes our mind.

When we do this we ‘remain’ in Jesus.

Jesus Said 'I Am'

Read Aloud

John 15:12-13: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

Explain

Second, Jesus tells us to love each other **in the same way** that He has loved us.

- This means we must be willing to forgive one another and help one another.
- It also means that we must be willing to share the Gospel with those who haven't yet become part of Christ's family. I must be willing to make whatever sacrifices are needed to save others, in the same way Jesus was willing to lay down His life to save me.

When we do this we 'remain' in Jesus.

Summarise

So 'remaining' in Jesus involves four things:

- Jesus' interests must become my interests.
- I must reject the worldly things that Jesus has rejected.
- I must love and forgive believers the same way Jesus has forgiven me.
- I must be willing to make sacrifices to share the Gospel with others.



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 3

Video Link: Fruit Bear—Humorous Video

Duration: 2 minutes 2 seconds

What did Jesus mean when He said we will “bear fruit”? Was He talking about a Fruit-Bear? If not, what kind of ‘fruit’ was He talking about?

Galatians 5:22-23 – Fruit of Godly Character: When we ‘remain’ in Jesus, the Holy Spirit develops godly character in us, including true love, everlasting joy, effective self-control, etc.

Hebrews 13:15 – Fruit of Thankful Praise: When we ‘remain’ in Jesus, He makes us thankful people. We will find ourselves praising God and thanking Him for who He is and what He has done. This is the fruit of our lips.

Romans 15:28 – Fruit of Helping those in Need: When we ‘remain’ in Jesus, we will long to help others. **For instance, the extremely poor Macedonians generously gave money to the suffering Jerusalem believers, because their hearts were full of the joy of the Lord! (2 Corinthians 8:2). Paul refers to their gift as ‘fruit.’**

Colossians 1:10 – Fruit of Purity in Conduct: When we ‘remain’ in Jesus, God will release into us the fruit of self-control, which will help us to abstain from evil and stay holy.

1 Corinthians 16:15 – Fruit of Converts: Paul called the first converts in Achaia the “first fruits of Achaia.” Like other spiritual fruit, success in winning converts is not accomplished by anxiously running around and participating in lots of “evangelistic activities”—it comes by abiding in the Vine. The way to be effective in leading people to Christ is not solely by being an aggressive witness; rather it is by abiding in Christ. Concentrate on your relationship to Jesus Christ and He will give you opportunities to share your faith.

How do we bear all the fruit described above? Isn’t it impossibly difficult? For instance how do I bear the fruit of gentleness if

I'm a bad-tempered person? How do I get rid of all the anger inside me, and become gentle overnight?

Jesus said, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4).

Jesus promised that if I 'remain' in Him, then I will automatically "bear fruit"—including the fruit of love and gentleness (Galatians 5:22-23).

Jesus commanded us to 'remain' in Him. He promised that if we do so, we will automatically grow more and more gentle.

Many Christians do not realise this simple truth. They work hard at improving themselves. They try very hard to be loving, gentle and patient. But one day somebody comes along who is too irritating to love, and they blow up.

On the other hand, there are other Christians who have been spending every day getting as close to Jesus as they can (they are focusing on 'remaining' in Him).

Every day, they try to get a little bit closer to Jesus—by getting rid of a wrong attitude, or by spending more time with God, or by avoiding things that make them feel more attracted to the world than to God, etc.

Even as they get closer and closer to Him, the 'fruit' starts growing automatically. They automatically become more loving, gentle and patient.

So do not focus on the deeds ... don't get up in the morning and make a resolution to be more gentle or patient that day. Rather get up and resolve to get as close to Jesus as possible that day. Even as you are busy focusing on getting closer to Him—getting rid of every little sin that is in the way—you will automatically see the fruit manifesting more and more in your life.

John 15:5: “... If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Is this verse an exaggeration? Aren't Non-Christians fruitful too—even though they are apart from Christ?

It is true that non-Christians do a lot of good works. And God approves of their good deeds. In fact the Lord may give them a lighter judgment in hell because of all the love and kindness they have shown on earth (Matthew 11:20-22; Acts 10:4).

When Jesus said, “apart from me you can do nothing” He wasn't talking about these good works. He was talking specifically about “fruit that will last” (John 15:16). Apart from Christ, nobody can bear “fruit that will last throughout eternity.”

The good works of good non-Christians does not earn them salvation. So they go to hell after death, and none of their fruit ‘lasts.’ The fruit they have borne loses value once they die.

But if a Christian bears “fruit that will last,” through the help of the Holy Spirit, His fruit will last even after it is tested by fire. And he will receive a great reward for this lasting fruit. No Christian can bear “lasting fruit” without the help of the Holy Spirit. All fruit that has been produced through mere human effort (without the approval and support of the Holy Spirit) will get burnt up in the testing fire on Judgment Day (1 Corinthians 3:13).

That is why Jesus frankly declared that apart from Him, none of us can produce “Lasting Fruit.”

Please Note : Usually “Temporary Fruit” is of three kinds:

1. Things done simply because the person has a natural inclination for it:

E.g., someone who sings in the Worship team because they have a naturally good voice—and not because they have any specific desire to glorify God.

E.g., someone who doesn't smoke or drink because they have a natural disinterest in such things—and not because they have any specific desire to glorify God by abstaining.

2. Things done to make ourselves feel good:

E.g., giving a large amount of money to the church because it makes me feel good (As opposed to giving because I wish to glorify God, or obey His command to give).

E.g., spending an entire evening listening to Worship songs because it makes me feel good. (As opposed to doing it as a conscious act of worship).

Please notice these examples include “good deeds” that are done simply to satisfy oneself ... rather than to glorify God.

- The Lord does NOT think of these ‘deeds’ as evil; they are indeed ‘good’ deeds.
- He just won't reward you for them, as you did them for yourself (the joy you got out of doing these things will be your only reward).

3. Things done with selfish or crooked motives:

E.g., forgiving someone and being friendly because you can get certain benefits from them.

E.g., volunteering in church so that everybody thinks you are a wonderful person with a servant heart.



APPLICATION

Edward Skidmore narrates an incident about a girl who used to be actively involved in their Church Youth Fellowship. She was close to them and spent much time with them. Then she met a guy who had drinking issues, and wanted to marry him. Because they constantly advised her to stop seeing him, she stopped visiting them. Finally she married the man and had a terrible life.

Skidmore uses this incident to explain the concept of ‘abiding.’

- Because the girl did not want to obey what they were advising, she stopped ‘abiding’ with them. She stopped spending time with them.
- Then, when she stopped visiting (stopped abiding), there was no longer anybody left to hold her back. So she ended up getting deeper and deeper into disobedience.

Some Christians tend to do the same thing:

- When the Lord asks us to do something (or not do something), we start avoiding Him if we don’t wish to obey. We spend less time with Him, because we feel guilty.
- The less time we spend with Him, the less He is able to check us and correct us. So we end up getting deeper and deeper into disobedience.

The key to ‘abiding’ is therefore “spending time” and “quick obedience.”

- First, the more time we spend with God, the more we start thinking like Him. We will find our priorities changing when our friendship with God grows, and people will start noticing the fruit of the Spirit in our talk and walk.
- Second, the sooner we correct whatever God has pointed out, and get back close to Him, the safer we will be. The longer we delay, the greater the gap that grows between God and us, leading us deeper into all kinds of sin.

Reflect on how you can apply these two steps in your own life this week.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



New Testament

Character of Jesus



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To demonstrate the 'zeal' Jesus had for God and for people.
- To explain 'why' He felt so much zeal.
- To motivate children to have the same kind of zeal.



SCRIPTURE PORTIONS

Malachi 3:1-4; Matthew 26:39; Mark 1:24, 11:17-18, 13:1-2; Luke 4:34; John 2:16-17; Galatians 5:16; Philippians 2:3-4, 20-22; Hebrews 5:8



MEMORY VERSE

Philippians 2:3-4: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of the others."



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Can non-Christians be fruitful apart from Christ? Why or why not?
- How much time did you spend with the Lord this week?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

The New Testament Gospels describe Jesus and His teachings in great detail. They help us gain an accurate picture of the Lord. This is important for us because Jesus said, "... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father ..." (John 14:9).

Nobody has ever seen God with their human eyes. So the only way we can understand God is by studying Jesus. Today we will take a brief look at some key aspects of Christ's character, and see how we can emulate Him in our own lives.

Note to Facilitator

This session dwells briefly on different aspects of Christ's Character:

Primary Level

- While on earth, Jesus was **Forgiving**
- He was Meek and Lowly
- He was **Obedient**

Junior Level

- While on earth, Jesus was Compassionate
- He was **Disciplined**
- He was **Fearless**

Senior Level

- While on earth, Jesus was **Pure and Holy**
- He was **Selfless**
- He was **Zealous**

**ATTENTION GETTER****Video Presentation 1**

Video: Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Duration: 3 minutes 07 seconds

Discuss

Why do you think Jesus reacted so violently at the Temple? Was He overreacting? Why or why not?

(Ask the children to give their opinions on why the violence was justified / not justified.)

What explanation does John 2:16-17 give for Jesus' anger and violence?

Jesus did not have anything against market places. He just did not like people turning His Father's house into a market place. He was 'zealous' and passionate for His Father's house, and didn't want people desecrating it.

If Jesus felt very zealous about His Father's house, why didn't He join His disciples in praising the beautiful temple buildings? Why did He calmly talk about the temple's utter destruction in the near future? (Please refer to Mark 13:1-2).

(Ask the children to give their opinions.)

What explanation does Mark 11:17 offer?

John 2:17 talks about Jesus' great 'zeal' for God's house. But the verse probably doesn't talk about the physical building (which was built by the pagan Herod to win the political support of Jewish leaders).

Rather, Jesus was zealous about what the temple stood for. It was supposed to be “a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17). It was the one place where people could come to seek God’s help and go back satisfied. But this very place was being used to rob and exploit people.

This greatly angered Jesus, and He flogged the exploiters out of the temple courts.

Explain

When we love someone deeply, we care about the things that they care about.

- For instance you, a fifteen year old boy, may care deeply about your baby sister’s grubby little teddy bear.
- This isn’t because you have any special interest in old, tattered soft toys, but simply because you adore your baby sister, and you know how much she cherishes that toy.
- You care about what she cares about ... simply because you love your little sister.

In the same way, whatever was precious to the Father, was automatically precious to Jesus too.

- The one thing the Father treasured most was ‘people.’ And Jesus too felt this same love and concern for people.

When Solomon built the original temple, God declared that anyone who came to pray to Him there, would receive His help. Gradually people from pagan nations began to visit too.

However, because they were not “ceremonially pure” (i.e., they didn’t undergo the Old Testament rituals to become full-fledged Jews) they were allowed to enter only the outer temple courts. They could not enter the Inner Courts.

These outer temple courts were now turned into a thriving marketplace, where merchants exploited visitors, by charging high rates.

This upset Jesus! He and His Father wanted to see the Gentile visitors blessed. He wanted them to have the freedom to pray to Jehovah. But this had become impossible because the temple courts were now being used as a noisy market place—making prayer and meditation difficult.

The focus was now on cheating visitors and making money. It was no longer on helping them communicate with Jehovah and develop a relationship with Him.

This is why Jesus took the extreme step of overturning the money tables and flogging the exploiters.



TEACHING CONTENT

Jesus Had a Zeal for the Fathers' House and for People

Jesus knew what would happen if He drove out the merchants.

Mark 11:18 says, “The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.”

Even though Jesus knew this incident would lead to His crucifixion, He chose to fight for His Father’s House, and for the people.

Jesus Had a Zeal for Purity and Holiness

Malachi 3:1- 4 briefly points towards the incident in the Temple:

“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,’ says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a

launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years."

Jesus is zealous about purity and holiness. So, He went to the temple as a "refiner's fire" and cleaned up the temple courts.

Whenever demons encountered Jesus, though they could have described Him in many ways, they usually described Him as 'holy.'

Mark 1:24: "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

Luke 4:34: "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

Reflect

We have now studied two aspects of Jesus' character,

- His zeal for God and people.
- His zeal for holiness.

Having studied this, our next question should be:

- Do I have the same kind of zeal for God and people that Jesus did?
- Do I have the same kind of zeal for holiness that Jesus did?

Self Assessment

If I had to assess my Zeal for God (zeal for things that matter to Him such as fellowshiping with Him, witnessing, serving, etc.), what would be my zeal-measurement, on a scale of 1 to 5? Mark your position on the Scale below:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

No Zeal

Some Zeal

Full of Zeal

If I had to assess my Zeal for People (how often do I make personal sacrifices to bring joy or satisfaction to others), what would be my zeal-measurement? Mark your position on the Scale below:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

No Zeal

Some Zeal

Full of Zeal

If I had to assess my Zeal for Purity and Holiness, what would be my zeal-measurement? Mark your position on the Scale below:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

No Zeal

Some Zeal

Full of Zeal

This Scale gives you a fair idea of where you stand. Now work towards improving your position, so that you move more and more towards the higher end of the scale



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 2

Video: Selfishness

Duration: 7 minutes 15 seconds

Some Christians find the things of God boring and dull. Does this video provide any clues why they feel this way?

Harvey points out that some people care only about themselves. They don't care about others.

So the things that matter to them personally seem very interesting, while things that matter to others seem boring. Therefore selfishness lies at the root of a lot of boredom. Because there's no love for God or

love for others, things that matter to God and to others, are dismissed as boring and dull.

Note: Many also find the things of God boring because they have not yet discovered the marvelous truths in the Scriptures. This happens either because they haven't spent time with God or discovered these things, or because they have been taught wrong things by their pastors.

Does this video teach that we should 'pretend' to care about things that we don't care about?

Pretending is what some Christians do. They 'pretend' to care about the things of God, when in fact they find them boring. The video is not encouraging us to do this.

David did not 'pretend' to find the job of choosing songs exciting. But he decided to place his sister first, and 'cheerfully' helped her with a positive attitude. This is why his sister says towards the end of the video, "Thanks for having such a great attitude about helping me. I know it's not really your thing."

Choosing songs was not "David's thing." He didn't do it because he naturally enjoyed it; rather he did it to help his sister—to show her love even when he didn't feel like it.

So we don't do things for God and people because we 'enjoy' it. We do it because we care about them, and we're willing to do whatever it takes to be a blessing to them. We do it because God's interests, and the interests of others, come first; our own interests come last.

We don't need to pretend to enjoy certain things. If we love God enough, we will do it 'joyfully' for Him, even when we don't feel like it—because we love Him that much.

Philippians 2:20-22: "I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy

has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.”

Philippians 2:3-4: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of the others.”

Why did Jesus have such a great zeal for God, for people, and for holiness? Do you think the video provides an answer to this question?

Jesus was not selfish and self-centered. He was Selfless. He placed God first, and focused on God’s interests rather than His own personal interests.

Matthew 26:39: “Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’”

Jesus didn’t ‘pretend’ to enjoy being crucified. Yet He did it ‘willingly’ (not grudgingly with a sulky attitude) because He loved His Father and loved people. He did it out of love—not because He enjoyed it.

Similarly, because Jesus placed God first, He gave up many things to maintain a pure and holy life. Every time He had to say ‘no’ to temptation, it caused pain and suffering. Yet He chose to say ‘no’ because He loved God more than He loved Himself.

Hebrews 5:8: “Although he was a son he learned obedience from what he suffered.”

So if you and I want to have a greater zeal for God and people, the key is ‘love.’ The more we love someone, the more we will be zealous for their interests. We will ignore our own interests so that we can benefit them.

**What do I do if I don't have a deep love for God and people?
How can I get over my selfishness?**

Spiritually speaking, love is NOT a noun ... it's a 'Verb.' It's not a feeling but an action.

The Bible expects us to show love in action, irrespective of our feelings. For instance, Jesus commanded us to forgive those who hurt us. He didn't say we must forgive only if we 'feel' love towards them. Irrespective of whether or not we feel love, we are expected to forgive.

When we do this, "we live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16). When we make this deliberate choice to ignore the selfish demands of our 'flesh' and instead follow the Spirit, the Holy Spirit produces in us the fruit of love, forbearance and kindness.

So this is the process to overcome selfishness:

- We choose to place God first, others second and ourselves last.
- Irrespective of whether or not we enjoy doing something, we do what benefits them, rather than what benefits us.
- In this way we consciously choose to crucify our selfish 'flesh' (Flesh is that part of us which loves to sin and focus on self).
- When we follow the Spirit by doing this, He begins to produce in us the fruit of His Spirit. We find ourselves 'feeling' love, forbearance and kindness towards others.
- So the "selfless action" comes first. The feelings come later, on their own.

People, who do this on a daily basis, provide their spiritual muscles with a lot of spiritual exercise. They are the ones who become more and more Christ like.

The rest lazily continue to wish for magical change inside them ... But real change doesn't happen magically; it's something that takes place only when we crucify 'self' on a daily basis.



APPLICATION

Selfishness is the root of all sin. The only way to kill selfishness is by deliberately choosing to place the interests of others before our own interests.

If we choose to do this on a daily basis, the fruit of the Spirit will begin to show up more and more in our lives. Love, joy, peace and forbearance towards others, will begin to overflow out of us, and we will be filled with zeal for God—just like Jesus.

Make a conscious commitment to start killing your selfishness today onwards!



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



New Testament

God Prunes Us



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain why pruning is necessary.
- To give examples of Bible characters who were pruned.
- To correct wrong beliefs about pruning.



SCRIPTURE PORTIONS

2 Kings 21; 2 Chronicles 31-33; Matthew 19:16-22; Deuteronomy 28:21; Galatians 3:13; Romans 3:24-26, 5:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 12:5, 11; James 1:4



MEMORY VERSE

Hebrews 12:11: “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- What is the process to overcome selfishness? Do you remember it?
- How did you 'crucify' your selfishness this week? Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

Over the last four weeks, we studied different aspects of who Jesus is. We saw His deity and His humanity. We studied the different symbols He used to describe Himself (His I Am Sayings). And we looked at His character. Over the remaining weeks, we will look at some important teachings of Jesus on key themes. This week we will cover New Testament teaching on Fruit Bearing.

Note to Facilitator

This session dwells briefly on a few key aspects of Fruit Bearing, at different age-levels:

Primary Level

- How Fruit of the Spirit grows in us

Junior Level

- Lessons from the cursed Fig Tree

Senior Level

- How/Why God prunes us



ATTENTION GETTER

Why Prune?

(The Student Workbook contains a plant exercise. Ask the students to write down their answers.)

Which of these branches needs pruning? Why?

Explain

Branch D seems to be infested with ants and other bugs. It must be pruned to get rid of the infestation, so that the branch can become healthy and bear flowers and fruits.

Branch C doesn't have bugs; but it's too long. If a branch is too long, it is weak and easily broken. You don't want it to break in the middle of summer or when it has fruit on. So it's better to prune it now itself.

Branches A and B seem to be healthy. However they too must be pruned, because pruning stimulates greater growth, and yields more fruit.



TEACHING CONTENT

How God Prunes us

Jesus said, “[My Father] cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (John 15:2).

Jesus used the example of plant pruning to explain how God makes us more fruitful in our lives.

- God prunes us to get rid of sinful behaviors and attitudes that we may have.
- He prunes us in areas where we have grown weak (due to over-dependence or over-attachment to the wrong things).
- He also prunes us to make us more fruitful in areas where we are already fruitful—so that we become even more fruitful.

Let us look at some Bible Characters who underwent a pruning process.

King Manasseh of Judah (2 Kings 21 / 2 Chronicles 33)

King Manasseh was one of the most evil kings of Judah. He sacrificed his own son to a demon-god! He placed idols inside the Jerusalem

Temple! He killed so many people that the streets were covered with blood!

Then God decided to prune him. He rebuked and warned Manasseh, urging him to change his wicked ways. But Manasseh refused to listen.

When Manasseh chose to ignore God's pruning and correction, the Lord stepped back and allowed him to endure the consequences of his foolish actions.

2 Chronicles 33:10-11: "The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, **but they paid no attention.** So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon."

The Assyrian army invaded Jerusalem and captured Manasseh. Their king put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon. While lying in prison in that terrible condition, Manasseh cried out to the Lord to forgive and help him.

When the Lord saw Manasseh's repentance, He helped him return to Jerusalem and rule as king.

How this applies to us

Sometimes, like Manasseh, we too choose to live in deliberate sin against the Lord. The same way a bug-infested branch cannot bear fruit, a sin-infested person cannot bear fruit either.

When God see us in this 'unfruitful' condition, He begins to rebuke and correct us. If we choose to ignore this pruning, God steps back and allows us to suffer the consequences of our actions.

As a result of our sinfulness, Satan brings suffering upon us; and people ill-treat us because of the wrong steps we have taken. However, if we choose to repent, the Lord restores and blesses us once more—just as He did Manasseh.

The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-22)

The second example is of a man who wasn't evil like Manasseh. He was a rich young ruler who had faithfully kept God's commandments from a young age. When Jesus saw how godly and sincere this young man was, His heart overflowed with love towards the man (Mark 10:21).

However, Jesus noticed that the ruler was 'overstretched' in the area of wealth. The man loved wealth a bit too much. He seemed to be trusting it more than he trusted God. Jesus realised this weakness would prevent the ruler from bearing fruit in his life. Therefore, Jesus asked the man to sell all his wealth and follow Him.

But the ruler trusted his wealth too much. He didn't think Jesus would be able to take care of his needs, if he became penniless. Moreover, he loved his riches; he felt reluctant to give them up.

So he walked away and failed to follow Jesus. He chose to die with his wealth and go to hell.

How this applies to us

Sometimes, like the rich ruler, we too are weak in certain areas of life. We tend to love something or someone more than we love God.

This weakness will cause us to break one day—the same way an over-extended branch breaks off after a while. Therefore the Lord chooses to cut short all the extras that we have grown dependent upon, such as over-attachment to a hobby, over-dependence on money, etc.

For instance if I love my friends more than I love God, the Lord may allow circumstances into my life that will show me God is more reliable than people. Sometimes God allows circumstances to prune us so that we can bear more fruit!

King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 31-32)

The third example is of a man who was neither evil like Manasseh, nor over-attached to money like the rich young ruler.

King Hezekiah was a wonderful God-fearing king. He repaired and re-dedicated the Jerusalem temple which had been neglected by his ancestors. He helped many of the people in his kingdom to repent of their sins and return to God.

However in spite of his great faithfulness towards God, the Assyrian army came to Jerusalem and surrounded it. The army was too large for the Israelites to defeat and King Hezekiah became afraid.

But God used this event to prune Hezekiah. The Lord used prophet Isaiah to build up Hezekiah's faith. Then the Lord sent an angel into the Assyrian army camp and killed 185,000 soldiers. The terrified Assyrian king withdrew from Jerusalem, and the city was saved.

How this applies to us

Sometimes, as in the case of Hezekiah, negative things happen to us even when we are sincerely serving God. The Lord does not explain why He allows these things to happen to us, but He does help us to overcome them.

Hezekiah's faith was strengthened as a result of what happened. He got pruned in the process of facing this experience.

In this way, God uses both the positive and negative experiences that enter our lives to prune us, so that we can become even more fruitful.



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: Why we don't have to be afraid of God's pruning.

Duration: Play only up to 1 minute 40 seconds (Playing beyond this may confuse the children, as multiple points are being taught in the video).

According to this video, God never uses sickness to prune and discipline us. Do you think this is biblically correct?

(Ask the children to express their opinions frankly.)

Most Christians believe that God puts diseases like cancer upon us to prune us and make us more holy. Do you think this is true?

God is not the author of sickness and diseases. He is Lord our Healer, who heals all our diseases. He declared this in giving us His covenant-name “Jehovah Rapha” the Lord our Healer (Exodus 15:26). If He says He is our healer He cannot give us sickness.

In Deuteronomy Chapter 28, the Lord recorded a long list of curses that would come upon the Israelites if they sinned against Him. Sickness was one of the curses mentioned in this list (Deuteronomy 28:21).

However, on the cross, Jesus became a curse for us, and took all the curses of Deuteronomy 28 upon Himself. According to Galatians 3:13, all those who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, are redeemed from the curses of Deuteronomy 28.

So it is foolishness to believe that God would put cancer on a believer to make him grow spiritually.

A believer may fall sick due to genetic defects in his human body, or due to wrong eating habits, or because he happened to pick up some bacteria or virus. In some cases, the sickness may be caused due to a direct attack from Satan. However, whatever the cause may be, the believer will receive healing if he exercises his spiritual authority in Christ.

God never puts sickness upon a person deliberately, to prune him and make him grow spiritually.

Let’s assume that I have been regularly cheating and copying at school. Will God cause my house to be robbed, to prune and discipline me?

God does not deliberately harm us and our families to discipline us. This isn’t the kind of disciplining He uses in New Testament times.

In the Old Testament it is true that God expressed His wrath against sinful humans, using methods like consuming fire from heaven, raiding armies that killed and destroyed, etc. But when Jesus chose to take the sins of the world upon His body, God poured out His wrath on Jesus (Romans 3:24-26). So now God no longer pours out His wrath upon us when we sin. Rather God simply allows us to suffer the consequences of what we have done.

So if I constantly cheat and copy, God will not send dacoits to my home. If I refuse to pay attention to His correction again and again, He will simply step back and let me suffer the consequences.

These consequences are usually of two types:

The consequences may be natural:

- I may be unable to copy in the final exam because of strict supervision, and end up failing miserably.
- Or I may get caught copying and be expelled from school.

The consequences may be Satanic:

Sin allows Satan to gain control over my life. So Satan may do things to harm me and my family—as long as I continue to remain in sin.

In other words, my sinful actions may open the door for Satan to harm my family. But God Himself will not deliberately harm me or my family, just to prune or discipline me. He is a God of love!

If God does not use sickness and hardships to prune and discipline us, then how does He do it?

God prunes and disciplines us through His Word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

- If we have a sinful attitude, He reminds us of Bible verses that correct us.

- If we are getting distracted from placing God first in our lives, He speaks to us through the Scriptures and rekindles our love for Him.
- If we are faithfully following Him, He begins to reveal new things to us in His Scriptures, so that we move to a higher level in our walk with Him.

God uses Scripture to prune, trim and shape us.

If we fail to respond to His Word, then we expose ourselves to Satan, who brings all kinds of hardships into our lives. Or we end up facing the natural consequences of our actions.

If God does not use sickness and hardship to prune and discipline us, then what is the ‘painful discipline’ mentioned in Hebrews 12:11?

In Hebrews Chapter 11, the writer speaks of people who endured great hardships to stay obedient to God.

- For instance, Daniel was willing to be eaten by lions rather than give up his prayer-time (Hebrews 11:33).
- Stephen was willing to be stoned to death rather than forsake Christ (Hebrews 11:37).
- Jesus was willing to endure the suffering of the cross rather than disobey (Hebrews 12:2-3).

All of these people went through great hardships to obey God’s Word.

After giving many such examples, the writer urges the Hebrew believers to have a similar attitude. He tells them to “Endure hardship as discipline” (Hebrews 12:7).

Obedying God is painful; we don’t feel like doing it. But if we choose to do it anyway, then we will enjoy great peace and righteousness later (Hebrews 12:11). The rich young ruler was not willing to go through this painful disciplining.

So the writer does NOT say that God disciplines us by bringing hardships upon us. Rather God rebukes us and corrects us through His Word.

Hebrews 12:5: “... My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you.”

We may find it very painful to submit to such rebukes and disciplining. But if we cheerfully endure the hardship involved in obeying God, we will enjoy a great reward.

So the “painful discipline” mentioned in Hebrews 12:11, talks about the pain involved in submitting to God’s disciplining and obeying Him. Hebrews 12:11 does NOT say that God prunes and disciplines us by bringing cancer upon us or by causing robbers to attack us.

If God does not use sickness and hardship to prune and discipline us, then why do James 1:4 and Romans 5:3-5 say that suffering produces patience?

Jesus said to His disciples, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Jesus explained that as long as we are living on this earth, we will face troubles—because we live in a fallen world. However Jesus tells us to “take heart” and not feel discouraged because He has overcome the world, and we can have victory through Him.

- So it is NOT Jesus’ Will for us to have troubles.
- His Will for us is to overcome them.

Therefore, James urges his readers to “Consider it pure joy ... whenever you [we] face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2).

- We must treat these trials as a ‘test’ or ‘exam.’
- We must firmly place our faith in Jesus who promised He will help us overcome, and we must refuse to give up until we have overcome.

When we adopt this kind of faith-filled attitude, not only do we overcome the trouble itself, but the fruit of perseverance also gets built up inside us. In this way, we grow strong and mature, not lacking anything (James 1:4).

- So James 1:2-4 does NOT teach that God sends trials like cancer into our lives.
- Rather it teaches that IF a trial like cancer comes, we must face it joyfully, because the trial is not God's will for us. God's will for us is to overcome the trial. If we stand firmly on this truth and exercise our spiritual authority, we will overcome the trial and perseverance will be built up inside us.

Similarly, when Romans 5:3 speaks of suffering that produces perseverance, it talks about the suffering involved in humbly submitting to Jesus and obeying Him. It does not say that God will make us suffer by bringing us cancer or some other kind of harm.



APPLICATION

Is God pruning you?

- Are you living in sin like Manasseh? If God has been convicting you of your sins, then do you choose to repent?
- Have you grown over-attached or over-dependent on something or someone, giving them more importance than God? If God is correcting you about this, be willing to give up that thing or that person.

On the other hand, are you living a life that pleases God? If you are facing problems in spite of this, then 'Rejoice!'

- It is God's will for you to overcome these troubles. So stand on God's promises and claim your victory boldly.
- By doing this you will grow spiritually strong, fully equipped to accomplish great things for God.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



New Testament

Beatitudes



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain the last three Beatitudes.
- To teach the right way to respond when we are ill-treated.
- To show how a person can stay pure and holy.



SCRIPTURE PORTIONS

Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:22-24; Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 3:9-11; Psalms 119:9,11



MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 5:8-10: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Does God put sickness and troubles on us, to prune us and make us more holy?
- What does God use to prune us? How does He do it?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

In the first four weeks, we studied different aspects of who Jesus is. We saw His deity and His humanity. We studied the different symbols He used to describe Himself (His I Am Sayings). And we looked at His character. Then we began to study some of Jesus' teachings, starting with His teaching on fruit-bearing. This week we will take a closer look at the Beatitudes that Jesus taught during His Sermon on the Mount.

Note to Facilitator

Different Beatitudes are being covered at different age-levels:

Primary Level

- Blessed are the poor in spirit.
- Blessed are those who mourn.

Junior Level

- Blessed are the meek.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- Blessed are the merciful.

Senior Level

- Blessed are the pure in heart.
- Blessed are the peacemakers.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: Hinglish

The Student Workbook contains three conversations between an Indian and a foreigner.

- What is the Indian trying to say?
- What does the foreigner understand him to be saying?

Discuss the language-gap involved in the three conversations.

Helpful hints:

Foreigners would probably interpret these Indian terms as follows:

- Cheap: shoddy and of low quality
- Mugging: type of street robbery
- Pass out: Faint; become unconscious

Explain

Language is a very subjective thing. A phrase or term may mean something to one person, and it may mean something else to another. For instance, the phrase “It’s cool” may mean that something is wonderful or awesome. On the other hand, it could mean that something has cooled down and is no longer hot.

On the mountain near Galilee when Jesus said, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” what exactly did Jesus mean?

- Was Jesus saying, “I’ll bless you with good things only if you become poor.”
- Or was He saying, “Poverty is a blessing. So you shouldn’t try to get rid of your poverty.”
- Or was He saying, “Even if you’re poor and suffering a lot, I will still bless you.”

What did Jesus mean when He called poor people ‘blessed’?

(Ask the children for their viewpoint.)

Video Presentation 1

Video: Beatitudes

Duration: Play only up to 1 minute 23 seconds (Playing beyond this may confuse the children, as multiple points are being taught in the video).

Explain

According to Bible scholar, Aaron Eby, the word ‘blessed’ is NOT referring to the blessings that we normally think about.

- Rather Jesus was saying, “Things might seem difficult for you poor people right now; but don’t worry. It’s going to be worth it in the long run.”
- Jesus said (according to the scholar), “Good for you if you’re poor, for I will give you the kingdom; Good for you if you’re mourning, for I will comfort you.”

Taken in this sense, the Beatitudes can be read this way:

- Even if you are spiritually bankrupt (*poor in spirit*),
- Even if you are overwhelmed by the sadness of life in this world (*those who mourn*),
- Even if you are the kind of person who doesn’t stand up for yourself or assert your rights (*meek*),
- Even if you are fed up with and broken by injustice (*those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*),
- Even if your heart is soft, you are always giving to others, and easily taken advantage of by needy people (*merciful*) [Source: The Beatitudes: Virtues or Proclamations? by Chaplain Mike]

... even if this is your condition, Good For You! Why? Because it’s going to be worth it in the long run!



TEACHING CONTENT

Good for You If You Are a Peacemaker!

In Matthew 5:9 Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”

In other words, Jesus seemed to be saying, “Every time people ill-treat you or speak badly about you, do you make an effort to be a peacemaker? Do you choose to maintain peace rather than hit back? Good for you if you’re a peacemaker! Why? Because then I’ll call you my child!”

Who is a Peacemaker?

- Read Romans 12:18 and explain the term ‘peacemaker.’
- Read Hebrews 12:14 and explain the term ‘peacemaker.’
- Read Titus 3 9-11 and explain the term ‘peacemaker.’

Good for You If You Are Persecuted!

The last beatitude, mentioned in Matthew 5:3-12 and Luke 6:22-24, contains the following points:

- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10).
- Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil (Luke 6:22).
- Blessed are you when people ... falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me (Matthew 5:11).
- Rejoice and be glad (Matthew 5:12).
- Leap for joy (Luke 6:23).
- Rejoice in that day ... because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets (Luke 6:23).
- Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets (Luke 6:26).

Ask

Have you faced any persecution for righteousness' sake?

(Ask the children to describe situations in school, in their neighborhood, etc., where they were persecuted because they stood up for righteousness.)

Examples

- Friends who are offended when you refuse to let them copy from your exam sheet.
- Classmates who look down on you because you don't use the popular 'cuss words' that stream from their mouths.
- The anger you face when you insist that salvation is through Jesus alone.
- Sacrificing time with your friends, so that you can make friends with a lonely person and be a blessing to them.
- Being excluded by your friends because you refused to join in, when they were skimming through a dirty magazine.

Please Note: If you have never been persecuted for righteousness' sake, you probably have never made any effort to be righteous. Please check and make sure whether or not you were ever "born again" into a new creation. New creations tend to behave like new creations at least some of the time!

**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.*

In Matthew 5:8 Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." What do you think we must do to become pure?

(Encourage the children to give their views.)

Video Presentation 2

Video: Maintaining Purity after Salvation

Duration: Play only up to 4 minutes 04 seconds

According to this video, how can young people keep themselves pure?

All of us are born impure and sinful. When we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour we are “born again” into a new righteous creation. This video talks about how to maintain our purity after salvation.

We can stay pure on a daily basis only by ‘hiding’ God’s Word in our hearts. We do this in three practical ways:

- We read God’s Word and meditate on it. We ask ourselves what lessons the Bible passage conveys, and we think of ways we can apply these lessons to ourselves during that specific day. So we think about it and dwell on it in our minds.
- We also ‘feel’ it. We choose to get excited about what we have read; and we choose to believe that what God is saying to us is for our best. We accept it not just in our minds but also in our emotions.
- Finally we accept it with our ‘will’—which is the decision making part of us. We choose to put it into practice and DO it.

If we choose to practice these three simple steps each day, we will be able to keep ourselves pure and holy.

Psalms 119:9, 11: “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

If I am not able to stay pure every day, then will I fail to see God?

At the time of salvation our sinful spirit is “born again” into a new and righteous spirit. So after we die, we will definitely get to see God in heaven.

But many Christians live like blind people while they're still on this earth. Because they allow sin to rule in their lives, they suffer from spiritual blindness.

- They are unable to take right decisions in their personal lives because they can't hear God's directions.
- They are unable to resolve the huge problems that come into their lives, because they lack the faith and strength needed to hold on to God.
- They are spiritually weak and unable to claim all that belongs to them in Christ, including healing and victory.

So yes; in a sense they are unable to see God because of the impurities ruling their hearts. They fail to fulfill the beautiful purpose that God has for their lives.

**Do you think it's really possible to stay pure on a daily basis?
Is God expecting something impossible of us?**

At the time of salvation our sinful spirit is "born again" into a new and righteous spirit. So we're utterly pure and holy in our spirits, having the very righteousness of Christ Himself.

But our minds are not transformed into pure and holy minds at the time of salvation. We need to start training our un-renewed minds to think in line with the Bible. So because of this, nobody becomes utterly perfect while living in the human body.

However God expects us to make progress on a daily basis. It's like dribbling a football across the field to the goalpost at the other end. As you are running with the ball, it keeps veering off in the wrong direction. Each time the ball veers away, you nudge the ball back towards the right direction. You do this again and again until you reach the opposite end of the field.

It is the same with maintaining your purity and holiness. A hundred times during the day, you may catch yourself veering off in the wrong direction:

Beatitudes

- Maybe you'll catch your mind thinking a thought of hatred towards someone maybe you'll hear yourself speaking a lie to escape a certain situation.
- Maybe you'll catch yourself watching something on the TV screen that's sinful.

Purity lies in taking immediate action and nudging yourself back in the right direction:

- Immediately cut the hateful thought and ask God to richly bless the person in their studies, etc.
- Immediately stop the lie coming out of your mouth and choose to speak the truth.
- Immediately change the TV channel.

Purity is NOT being sinless. It's catching yourself when you find yourself veering off, and choosing to immediately rectify the sinful thing that you're doing. The more you do this, the more efficient you will become at doing this. You will no longer be like those unstable Christians who can't stay steady "in Christ" for even five straight minutes!

So yes; staying pure is definitely possible. It simply involves a firm choice not to be lazy, but to correct yourself immediately. "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).



APPLICATION

We have covered some very important things today. Take time to reflect on these truths and apply them to your personal life.

- How do you usually respond when someone insults or mistreats you? Do you make war or peace?
- Are you a peacemaker who talks positively about people behind their back?

- Or are you a warmonger who enjoys spreading gossip and creating rifts?

Also, what is your response when people persecute you for righteousness' sake?

- Do you take a stand for righteousness? Or do you drift along with the crowd?
- How do you treat the people who hate you and exclude you from their friend-circles?
- What do you do when people make false allegations against you? Do you speak badly about them in return?
- Do you rejoice when you have to suffer for the sake of righteousness? Do you feel glad?
- Do you leap for joy when someone mocks you for following Christ?

Finally, in which areas of life have you veered away from righteousness?

- What changes do you need to make, to get back on the right track?
- Are you meditating on God's Word, and absorbing it into your thoughts and emotions?

If you can answer these questions correctly, then Good for You! Why? Because then:

- You will see God—not just in heaven but even during your everyday routine.
- You will be called His child.
- You will receive a great reward in heaven.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



New Testament

Kingdom of God



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain what the Bible says about God's Kingdom.
- To warn that fake Christians closely resemble genuine Christians.
- To teach that only genuine Christians will enter God's Kingdom.



SCRIPTURE PORTIONS

Genesis 1:28, 12:2-3; 1 Samuel 8:6-18; 2 Samuel 7:12-17; Psalms 47:7; Isaiah 11:4-5; Matthew 13:24-43, 26:29; Luke 17:20; John 12:31; James 1:14-15; Revelation 20:1-4



MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Who is a peacemaker?
(Encourage the children to recollect what was taught in the previous class, rather than provide some vague meaningless answer on world peace, etc.)
- What are the three steps to ‘hiding’ God’s Word in our hearts?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

In the first four weeks, we studied different aspects of who Jesus is. We saw His deity and His humanity. We studied the different symbols He used to describe Himself (His I Am Sayings). And we looked at His character. Then we began to study some of Jesus’ teachings, starting with His teaching on fruit-bearing. This week we will take a closer look at Jesus’ teachings on the Kingdom of God.

Note to Facilitator

Different aspects of the Kingdom of God are being covered at different age-levels:

Primary Level

- Invisible Kingdom of God

Junior Level

- Power of the Kingdom of God.

Senior Level

- What is the Kingdom of God?
- Who is part of the Kingdom of God?



ATTENTION GETTER

Group Discussion: Kingdom of God

Ask the students to look up each Bible reference and explain what it says about the Kingdom. They can answer the questions in their Student Workbook.

Which kingdom is 2 Samuel 7:16-17 talking about? Whom does this kingdom belong to? Name him.

This was a message that God asked the prophet to convey to David. God promised David a kingdom that would endure forever. This verse refers to David's political kingdom on earth.

In Luke 17:20 which kingdom did the Pharisees ask Jesus about?

God had promised David a political kingdom on earth that would endure forever. The Pharisees wanted to know when this kingdom would be established.

What was Jesus' answer in Luke 17:21? What kind of kingdom did Jesus talk about?

Jesus talked about an invisible kingdom that was already there among them. He was referring to the spiritual kingdom of light which He was establishing on the earth (i.e., the Kingdom of Light as opposed to the Kingdom of Darkness).

In Matthew 26:29 which kingdom does Jesus refer to? Is He talking about an earthly political kingdom or a symbolic spiritual kingdom?

Jesus is referring to the new earthly kingdom that will be established on the new earth at the end of time.

As we can see, the Bible refers to several different pictures of the Kingdom of God. Today we will try to understand these in greater detail and discover how it applies us to us personally.



TEACHING CONTENT

What is the Kingdom of God?

(Use a discussion mode to convey the Kingdom-facts to the students. Ask them to guess the answers to the following questions by looking up the Bible references given in the Student Workbook.)

Who is King of all the earth? (Psalms 47:7)

God

To whom did God delegate the authority to rule? (Genesis 1:28)

Adam and Eve

Why did Jesus refer to Satan as the “prince of this world”? Do you think God appointed Satan as a prince? (John 12:31)

When Satan deceived Adam and Eve into sinning against God, they lost their position of authority. Satan stole the ruler-ship from them.

Why do you think God established the earthly kingdom of Israel? (Genesis 12:2-3)

So that all peoples on earth would be blessed through the Israelites.

Who was the king of the earthly kingdom of Israel? (1 Samuel 8:6-7)

God

Why were the Israelites not happy with their king? What did they want? (1 Samuel 8:6-7)

They wanted a human king whom they could see and touch. They thought they would feel more confident if they could physically see their king leading them into battle, rather than trust in an invisible king—even though He was the King above all Kings and Lord of Lord's.

What did God warn the Israelites about the kings of Israel? (1 Samuel 8:10-18)

They wouldn't be like God who was a righteous king. The human kings would exploit the people and ill-treat them.

What did God promise King David? (2 Samuel 7:12-13)

God knew that the human kings in David's lineage would not remain faithful to Him. So He promised David a descendant in the future who would be utterly righteous, and who would remain king forever and ever.

What kind of a Kingdom will the Messiah King establish? (Isaiah 11:4-5)

A kingdom of righteousness, justice and deliverance for the poor and oppressed.

Who will be the citizens of this kingdom? (Matthew 13:41-43)

Only the righteous can be a part of this kingdom of God.

Why did Jesus not establish a political kingdom after He came to the earth? (James 1:14-15)

Jesus first wanted to prepare people for His kingdom. Jesus' kingdom would be a kingdom of righteousness. So He first wanted to prepare a people of righteousness.

When will Jesus' political kingdom be established on earth? (Revelation 20:1-4)

In the End Times Satan will be bound for a thousand years. During that time Jesus will rule on this earth as King. This is called the Millennial Rule of Jesus.

Conclude

After the thousand years, Satan will be released and given one final chance to wage a war against God. He will be obviously defeated and thrown into hell. After this, Jesus will establish a new heaven and a

new earth, and establish His kingdom. This will be the final Kingdom of God, and its citizens will have the privilege of living eternally with the Lord!



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.*

Who is part of the Kingdom of God?

(Have the children take turns reading out the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). Then discuss the following questions:)

In this Parable what is the Kingdom of God being compared to?

A field with both wheat and tares.

According to verse 38 and 41 what kind of people are there in God's earthly kingdom?

People whom Jesus has sown, as well as those who do evil.

According to verse 26 when did the servants realise that there were tares among the weeds?

They realised it only when the wheat sprouted and heads of grain appeared.

Why do you think the servants were able to differentiate between the wheat and tares when they started sprouting?

(Ask the children for their opinions.)

Video Presentation

Video: Wheat and Tares

Duration: Please play only the first 2 minutes 40 seconds of the video (the rest of the video is not relevant to our discussion).

Based on this video, what do you think is the key difference between genuine citizens of the Kingdom and fake Christians?

The key is the fruit. True citizens will bear good fruit and gradually become more Christ-like. Anyone who doesn't show signs of change and growth is probably not a genuine believer.

According to Matthew 7:21-23 what will happen to fake Christians?

Jesus will reject them and they will be thrown into hell. Some 'tares' resemble genuine Christians to such an extent that they can even cast out demons! But they will be thrown into hell in spite of all their Christian deeds.

How can we know whether we are genuine Christians or fake Christians?

(Ask the children for their opinions.)

What does 2 Corinthians 5:17 say about genuine Christians?

They are a new creation, and all old things have passed away.

What does 1 John 3:9-10 say about genuine Christians?

They do not go on sinning, because they have been born of God. Because they are now a new creation and old things have passed away, they don't behave anymore like the old persons they used to be. They do what is right and they treat people lovingly—even when people are not nice to them.

Does this mean we gain salvation and enter God's kingdom through good deeds? What does Ephesians 2:8-9 teach on this?

Salvation is through faith. Those who believe that Jesus alone can save them and make a commitment to follow Him, become citizens of God's kingdom. A person can't enter heaven by doing good deeds.

According to James 2:14-20, do we enter God's kingdom through good deeds? Are deeds important or not?

Salvation is not through good deeds. It's only by placing our faith in Jesus and committing to follow Him.

However good deeds 'prove' whether a person is a new creation or not.

Those who make a genuine commitment will become new creations. They will find themselves changing and becoming Christ like. Those who don't make a genuine commitment will be like tares. They will look very Christian, but their secret thoughts and deeds will be sinful and unchristian. They will finally go to hell because they did not become new creations.



APPLICATION

Everybody wants to be part of God's future kingdom. Nobody wants to end up in hell with Satan. However the privilege of being a citizen in God's Kingdom will be accorded only to those who are new creations.

Examine Yourself—Are you Wheat or a Tare?

Take a good hard look at your thought life, the words you speak daily, your attitudes and your actions.

- Do your thoughts seem to be like those of a new, holy creation?
- Do the people who hear your words feel that they're listening to a true disciple of Jesus?
- Do you have the attitude of Christ when it comes to serving, forgiving and trusting God?
- Are the deeds you do in secret God-honouring deeds?

If you don't see yourself gradually moving in this direction and become more Christ-like, then maybe you are not a new creation yet! Maybe you don't have God's seed (God's DNA) in you. Maybe you're still a sinful child of the first Adam (with Adam's sinful DNA) and never became 'born-again.'

Those who do not have God's DNA inside them, those that haven't become a new creation will NOT enter into God's kingdom! Jesus will personally reject them—even if they have cast out demons using Jesus Name!

So please make sure that you're not a tare who only resembles the wheat!



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Additional Notes for Lesson 2

Jesus emptied Himself

Philippians 2:5-8 (NKJV): “Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Note the steps in the incarnation:

- Christ was in the form of God.
- Christ was equal with God.
- He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.
- He made Himself of no reputation.
- He took on the form of a bondservant.
- He came in the likeness of man.
- He was found in appearance as a man.

Let us consider each:

Christ was in the form of God

The word ‘form’ used not to denote something that is outward or external. It refers to the being, attributes and the essential nature. So Christ existed as God, possessing and being all that pertains to the divine nature.

Christ was equal with God

We learnt in the previous lesson that Jesus was co-equal and one with God.

He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God

The literal Greek reads: “Did not deem being on equality with God as something to grasp” or to “hold on to.” Though Jesus was co-equal with God and had the right to be honoured and worshipped as God—He did not hold on to this glorious estate and heavenly privilege.

He made Himself of no reputation

The literal Greek reads: “But emptied Himself.” Christ emptied Himself—indicating condescendence (voluntary descent from one’s rank or dignity). He emptied Himself not in the sense of laying aside His essential nature as Deity, but rather in willingly refraining in the exercise and expression of divine attributes (that of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence). He laid aside His position of equality with God.

He took on the form of a bondservant

He left His place of equality with God, to assume the state of a servant. A servant is one who willingly submits to another. He willingly offers obedience, devotion and service, and subjects his will to that of his master. Speaking of Jesus, Hebrews 10:7 says: “Then I said, ‘Behold I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do your will, O God.’” Jesus came to do the Father’s will (John 5:30).

Being made in human likeness.

Christ entered into human existence His humanity was genuine. In all aspects, He submitted Himself to the limitations of human experience.