

Youth Search The Scriptures

Volume 1



**“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think
ye have eternal life: and they are they which
testify of me” (John 5:39).**

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Search the Scriptures
Volume 1

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Printed in Nigeria by Life Press Limited
2-10 Ayodele Okeowo Street, Gbagada,
P.M.B. 1004, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria
RC 30268

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Lesson

1

CREATION AND ORIGIN OF MAN

**TEXT: Genesis 1:1-31;
2:1-25**

MEMORY VERSE: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

The book of Genesis records the beginning of creation by God. It reveals to us the manifestation of the almighty God, the Creator of everything including man. The whole Bible finds its root in Genesis and every Bible doctrine can be traced to this book. For example, the doctrine of the existence of God (Genesis 1:1), the Trinity (Genesis 1:26), marriage (Genesis 2:18-25), the fall of man (Genesis 3), redemption plan (Genesis 3:15,21), rapture (Genesis 5:24), judgment (Genesis 6:7,12,13; 7:23,24), to mention but a few. Hence, Genesis is the foundation of all Bible doctrines.

The book of Genesis reveals the existence of God; thereby cancelling the theory of atheism. It also faults the claims of perpetrators of evolution theory, since God created the heaven and the earth. There is nothing that existed on its own; they were created by God. In this study, we shall have better understanding of (i) how God created the world; (ii) the power of the spoken word; (iii) the origin of man; (iv) the duties and blessings God has given to man whom He created; and lastly, (v) the need for companionship.

Question 1: *What is the importance of the book of Genesis to a Christian youth?*

CREATION OF THE WORLD (Genesis 1:1-31; Isaiah 40:26; 42:5; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16,17; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:11)

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11). God created heaven and earth and sustained it by His power. The earth was shapeless, empty and dark until the Spirit of God moved upon it. The life of any youth will be meaningless, shapeless and void without the Spirit of God residing in it. Such a youth needs to allow the Spirit of God to reside in him in order to find meaning in life. This is made possible by accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour. **“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”** (Romans 8:9).

It is worthy of note that the first thing God created was light. So also, the first thing a youth needs in life is the light of the word of God; after which other blessings will follow (Matthew 6:33). It is important to note that God separated light from darkness (Genesis 1:4). A Christian youth must understand that there is no relationship between light and darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14). Believers must be separated from the lifestyle of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:17,18).

Question 2: *From our text, list the sequence of God’s creation.*

On the second and third days of creation, God created the firmaments, the land and the sea, including grasses and other plants. Lights were created to determine seasons, days and years on the fourth day, while flying and sea creatures were made on the fifth day. Terrestrial animals and man were created on the sixth day, and God rested on the seventh day.

There are several lessons a youth can learn from God’s creation. One, by God’s utterances, things came into being. The same Word is still powerful today. A Christian youth must realise the power in the word of God and know that his words (as creature in the image of God) are weighty especially when

backed up by faith. Two, God has the time-table that He follows. As a youth, remember that God has time-table for your life and He follows it strictly. Do not run ahead of God. Also, the order in God's creation reproves the carelessness and lack of organisation in the life of any youth. Three, God kept working until He finished and achieved what He had in mind. Don't abandon what you have started, even when there are obstacles. Therefore, if you are born again, you must rest in the fact that, God has no abandoned project and no obstacle can stand before His children (Zechariah 4:7,9). Four, God saw that everything He had made was very good. There is nothing He created that is not useful. It is the wrong use of those things that forms the basis of the problems and commotion in the world today. Five, God 'rested' after He finished His work. Rest here is not a sign of weakness or tiredness, but a pattern for man to know there is need for rest so that his health is not affected. Christian youths should also know that they must finish their task before resting.

Question 3: What lessons can Christian youths draw from the order in God's creation?

THE CREATION OF MAN (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:1-14; Isaiah 45:12; Ephesians 2:10; Psalms 8:3-8; 139:14)

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1: 27). In creating man, God did not just speak man into existence like other creatures. God created man in His own image, meaning that man is a tripartite being, having body, soul and spirit.

Question 4: What can you learn from the fact that you are created in the image of God?

The nature of God is holy; therefore, man being created in the image of God must be holy (Leviticus 11:44,45; 1 Peter 1:15,16). This places a demand for holiness on every Christian youth.

Youths should realise the love that God has for them as

exemplified in creation. God made man after providing all the conveniences, showing His concern for the total wellbeing of man (Genesis 1:28-30; 3 John 2). He also added the blessings of fruitfulness, multiplication and dominion over all other creatures, giving man the privilege to subdue the earth. Every sinning youth should reciprocate God's love by repenting from his sins and accepting Christ into his life (Micah 6:8; John 3:16). Every youth should therefore, aspire for excellence and should not be a mediocre in his studies, spiritual or secular life.

THE NEED FOR COMPANIONSHIP (Genesis 2:15-25; Proverbs 17:17; 18:22; Ecclesiastes 9:9; 2 Timothy 2:22; Amos 3:3)

Every provision or privilege comes with responsibilities. **“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it”** (Genesis 2:15). Working is not consequence upon the fall of man, because Adam was to dress the garden even before the Fall. The only difference is that working would have been with pleasure; but the Fall brought the curse of tilling the ground in sweat. There is no place for laziness in the life of a Christian youth. Laziness is a sin. You must be accountable and diligent in your God-given responsibilities as a Christian youth.

Question 5: *What is the relevance of Genesis 2:18 to you as a youth?*

Marriage is futuristic for the youth; when it is time, God knows how to meet the need by guiding appropriately. **“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”** (Genesis 2:18). God provided the need for companionship. Some youths have run into danger, some missed or failed their examination while others have lost their lives due to the habit of being a lone ranger and not relating with other Christian youths. This however, does not give license to undue closeness with the opposite gender. A girl should find friendship in another Christian girl and likewise should a boy

with another Christian boy. Marriage is for man and woman and not for boy and girl.

Creation of a woman for the man – refutes the sinful act of gay marriage and lesbianism which youths must flee. Also, the intimate relationship between a man and a woman is exclusively for marriage. There is no place for “boyfriend and girlfriend” relationship. **“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart”** (2 Timothy 2:22).

In conclusion, every youth must appreciate the beauty of God’s creation and the love God has for man as the crown of His creation. You must be diligent and shun laziness in spiritual, academic and secular responsibilities as well as house chores. Finally, for every Christian youth, marriage is reserved for the future.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	1:1-25
MON	”	2:1-12
TUE	”	2:13-23
WED	”	3:1-17
THU	”	4:1-11
FRI	”	4:12-25
SAT	”	5:1-12

EVENING

Genesis	1:1-19
”	1:20-31
”	2:1-25
”	3:1-24
”	4:1-15
”	4:16-26
”	5:1-20

Lesson **2**

THE FALL OF MAN

**TEXT: Genesis 3:1-24;
4:1-26; 5:1-3**

MEMORY VERSE: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

Our text begins with the interference of the devil into the affairs of human race. The devil disguised to deceive Adam and Eve and persuaded them to disobey God. He robbed man of his benefits and innocence. The devil succeeded in planting in man the spirit of rebellion which made him desired to live independent of God. The consequence of this is that man disobeyed God and fell from His favour. Instead of human race to continue in the holiness of God, he inherited the adamic nature which is the beginning of moral depravity and lawlessness in the world. Besides, the curse on Adam passed on to subsequent generations. Man will now eat from his sweat and rigorous labour as the land was cursed because of his sins.

In the midst of this set-back, we see the revelation of God’s mercy in the atoning blood of Christ for man’s redemption. God drew the salvation plan, Jesus executed it on the cross and the Holy Spirit convicts men unto salvation.

THE ENTRANCE OF SATAN, SIN AND CURSES (Genesis 3:1-24; Isaiah 14:12-18; Ezekiel 28:12-18; Matthew 7:15; Exodus 32:33; Job 31:33)

The devil was revealed as an anointed cherub who was exalted by God; he had great glory, beauty and position in heaven. All the resources God bestowed upon him made him become proud.

This is seen in some youths today who allow the spirit of pride to possess them because of the gifts (talents, skills, ability and material blessings) that God has given them.

With Satan's proud ambition, he wanted to be like the Most High (Isaiah 14:12-14). In a bid to realise his goal, he waged war against God with a third of angelic beings whom he had deceived to joined in his rebellion (Revelation 12:7-9). Michael and the other angels fought and defeated the devil and his supporters. Having lost his position in heaven, a place of bliss and happiness, the devil came on a revenge mission against all children of God and all that is good.

In order to destroy the plan of God for humanity, the devil disguised himself and came to Eve in the form of a serpent. Today, the devil hatches his evil thoughts in the hearts of corrupt youths. Any skill or wisdom that is not directed towards promoting God's work becomes an instrument in the hands of the devil.

To achieve his aim (John 10:10) with Adam and Eve, the devil set to destroy their faith in God. He then sowed the seed of doubt of God's love and faithfulness into their hearts (Matthew 13:25). Temptation in itself is not sin, but yielding to it.

Question 1: What level will a person reach to be above temptation?

All Christian youths are hereby warned that there is no level anybody can attain in the Christian journey and be exempted from temptations. We can learn some important lessons from the temptation of Eve. Firstly, staying close to the object of temptation will lead one into temptation. Secondly, admiring what is forbidden will lead one into temptation. Ignorance and lack of good understanding of the word of God can make one yield to false teachers. The temptation placed before Eve was in three ways which are the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (1 John 2:15, 16). The devil uses the same method against all youths today to draw them away from God.

Having yielded to the temptation, **"...the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons"** (Genesis 3:7). They lost their righteous stand before God and their love for God was replaced with self – the root of sin. They

tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves which represent the futility of self-righteousness that cannot save (Isaiah 64:6). Such self-righteousness includes doing good works, eating of the Lord's Supper and helping the poor – all without genuine salvation experience.

Spiritual death was the consequence of their disobedience. Similarly, when a Christian sins, he dies spiritually and his name is removed from the book of life (Exodus 32:33); he is cut off from the family of God (Ephesians 2:12; Leviticus 7:21). Another consequence of sin is fear and guilt. Sin makes us to lose confidence before those we should stand up to. Youths who secretly live in sin would not be able to lay hold on God's promises and have dominion over the devil (Proverbs 28:1).

Question 2: What is the solution to the problem of sin, Satan and curses?

God asked Adam and Eve a question in the garden: "Where art thou?" This does not mean that He was not aware of their hideout. He was only expecting them to open up, and acknowledge their sins, confess and repent (Psalm 51:3), so that they could obtain mercy (Proverbs 28:13). Adam and Eve did not acknowledge their sins but gave excuses, passing the blame on one another. This made God to pronounce curses upon them, including the serpent (Proverbs 26:2). This curse came upon all men, but due to His love and mercy, God made a way out through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, **"...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"** who died for Man (Genesis 3:15). God is asking sinning youths today to confess their sins and reconcile with Him.

ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE AND REJECTION OF OFFERING (Genesis 4:1-16; Hebrews 9:22; 11:4; Romans 14:23; Proverbs 15:8; 21:27)

Adam and Eve gave birth to their first born, Cain, and the second son, Abel. It can be observed that Cain and Abel were not lazy people. Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground (Genesis 4:2). Likewise, youths are to be meaningfully engaged in one vocation or the other even when on holidays or out of school. In choosing a vocation in life, we should

consider careers that will give opportunities to serve God.

Question 3: *What can make our services and offerings unacceptable before God?*

To worship God, the two children brought their offerings to Him according to what they had. However, Abel's was accepted, but Cain's was rejected. Considering the reason for the rejection, we can note two things; firstly, Cain's offerings was not based on faith. God had respect to the sacrifice of Abel because he met the standard of God (Leviticus 3:16; Exodus 13:2,12), and he offered it by faith (Hebrews 11:4). For Cain, God had no respect (Genesis 4:5). Secondly, God is not just interested in our offerings and services, but more about our lives and our relationship with Him.

When Cain saw that his sacrifice was not accepted, he got offended and killed his brother due to envy. Envy is like cancer that must not be found in the life of any Christian youth. **"Am I my brother's keeper?"** Cain asked (verse 9). Everyone is required to love and protect his neighbour. This is the demand of love. Cain did not love his brother but killed him; therefore, God placed a curse on him (Genesis 4:11,12).

VITAL LESSONS FROM THE GENEALOGY OF ADAM (Genesis 4:17-26; 5:1-32; Ezekiel 18:1-32)

It is the desire of God that the earth be populated with His children to show forth His glory (Habakkuk 2:14) according to His blessing in Genesis 1:28. Due to his wicked works, Cain became the first murderer (1 John 3:12), and was not considered under the lineage of Adam. While Adam was called the son of God (Luke 3:38), Cain was "of the wicked one", the devil (1 John 3:12). Some youths, like Cain, are inventors of evil things such as ungodly music, polygamy and the likes. They live by the principle of the world; they are covetous (Luke 12:15); they are also pleasure-seeking (Luke 12:19; 1 Timothy 5:6).

God gave Adam another son called Seth who replaced Abel in his family. From the time of Enos the son of Seth, men started to call upon the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26). Most of the sons of Adam lived as ordinary men – they were born; gave birth to sons and daughters, and then died. One of these men was

Methuselah who lived for nine hundred and sixty nine years, the longest period a man ever lived. In contrast to him, Enoch, the father of Methuselah, lived for three hundred and sixty five years. This was a very short life span comparatively. At the age of sixty five years, he started to walk consistently with God until he was taken away. None of us is born a saint, but we must come to a point in our lives when we decide to repent, and give our lives to the Lord. That is the moment our lives begin to have eternal value.

Question 4: *How can a youth live a life in preparation for an eternal joy?*

Yes, all youths are born with the Adamic nature and need salvation. Salvation changes a youth from being a child of the devil to a child of God. Salvation opens the door for more blessings.

Some people's lives amount to mere waste of time and resources before God. It would have been better if some had never lived or existed. This is because they cause grief to parents, society and to God which ushers them into hell. Who are you before God? A Cain or an Abel? A Methuselah or an Enoch? You can make a decision to be an Enoch today, to walk with God consistently.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	5:13-16
MON	"	5:17-20
TUE	"	5:21-26
WED	"	5:27-32
THU	"	5:33-43
FRI	"	5:44-48
SAT	"	6:1-8

EVENING

Genesis	5:21-32
"	6:1-22
"	7:1-24
"	8:1-22
"	9:1-16
"	9:17-29
"	10:1-20

Lesson 3

THE FLOOD AND ITS AFTERMATH

TEXT: Genesis 6:1-22;
7:1-24; 8:1-22; 9:1-29;
10:1-32; 11:1-32

MEMORY VERSE: “And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die” (Genesis 6:17).

From the texts, it is obvious that as God is full of mercy so also He does not spare the wicked who constantly refuse to repent. He meted out His judgment on Adam and Eve for the sin of disobedience. Equally, the generation of Noah also refused the call of God through Noah to repentance and the consequence was grave. Notwithstanding, only Noah and members of his family were found righteous. God said, **“...for thee have I found righteous in this generation”** (Genesis 7:1). Moreover, just as Noah and his family members stood out amongst perverted and polluted generation, God expects Christian youths to also stand out in this present evil world.

Question 1: *Why did God decide to destroy the people by flood?*

“And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them” (Genesis 6:7). God sent Noah to warn them to escape the judgment, but they refused the message and scorned the servant of God. This made God to go ahead to wipe off the inhabitant of the earth

at that time. **“For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged”** (Romans 3:3,4).

GOD’S CALL AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF ITS NEGLECT
(Genesis 6:13,14; 19:19; Ezekiel 18:30; Isaiah 1:18; Genesis 6:1-22; 7:1-24; 18:20,21; 19:13,28,29; Numbers 16:1-5,32; Deuteronomy 9:4,5; Job 11:20; 21:30; Psalm 9:17)

Since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, the whole humanity became corrupt. **“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Genesis 6:5). The multiplied wickedness of men provoked God to destroy man whom He has created from the face of the earth. **“And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth”** (Genesis 6:13). All through the Scriptures, God provided the way of escape for His people. In Sodom, He sent His angels to make a way of escape for Lot and his family. When the Israelites also went into sin in the wilderness and were punished for it, God instructed Moses to raise a brasen serpent on a pole as a way of escape. This is a pointer to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross at Calvary.

In our text, Noah, the righteous servant of God was instructed to build an ark for the people to escape, but they turned deaf ears (Ezekiel 3:18,19). It was quite unfortunate to see ordinary animals and birds entering into the ark while human beings perished in the flood.

Youths must not allow pressure from friends and unbelieving parents to hinder their decision to follow Christ. Christ is the Ark of God today and He calls all wicked and sinful youths to forsake their sins and come unto Him. The standard of God has not changed: the wages of sin is still death! It is very dangerous for a sinning youth to ignore the warning of the preachers today. Instead, they should recognise their sinfulness, repent of their sins, and receive

Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Christian youths, like Noah, must preach the gospel to every creature with all zeal and earnestness. The Scripture testified of Noah: **“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly”** (2 Peter 2:5).

Question 2: How can a sinful youth escape God’s judgment?

Every sinning youth is enjoined not to reject the gospel. **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:16) and **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him”** (Hebrews 2:3).

The people during the time of Noah neglected the call to repent of their sin and escape the wrath to come. Many of them began to give flimsy excuses. Some even mocked Noah, the preacher of righteousness. Some youths give excuses not to give their lives to Christ now but later, while some have erroneously believe that God is too merciful to destroy the whole world that turned against Him. Many are given to the pleasure and care of this world that they neglect the call of God to salvation because of their sinful partner (Matthew 24:38,39). The Bible says, **“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”** (Proverbs 29:1).

Question 3: What should be our responsibility to our parents and elders in and outside the church?

In chapter 9 of Genesis, one of the children of Noah who was earlier counted righteous committed evil. He saw the nakedness of his father and reported it to his brethren. This is an abomination. **“And Ham, the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without... And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed**

be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Genesis 9:22,24,25).

Christian youths must therefore, be watchful and hold fast their salvation. They must not disrespect their parents or elders within and outside the church or make jest of them. Honour should be given to whom it is due (Leviticus 19:32). In addition, they are to flee all appearance of evil, follow righteousness and fight the good fight of faith (1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22).

THE COURAGE AND COMMENDATIONS OF THE GODLY

(Genesis 8:1-22; 9:1-29; 10:1-32; Job 22:30; Isaiah 26:20; 2 Peter 2:7; Daniel 1:3,4; 3:14-30)

"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged" (Genesis 8:1). Despite the terrible flood, God, in His power, delivered Noah from perishing with the wicked. He preserved him in the ark; as long as they abided in it, they were secured and could not be drowned. Our continued security as Christians depends on how long we abide in Christ. **"The rod of the wicked shall not fall on the lot of the righteous"** (Psalm 125:3). Christian youths should be bold to live righteous life and preach the gospel in the midst of pollutions and decadence in the society. Their consecration and commitment should not wane while going through unpalatable experiences but they should maintain personal purity.

"And God remembered Noah..." God has never forgotten any of His children. All that believers need is in Jesus. It is also noteworthy that though the flood had stopped and Noah had tested that it was safe to come out, he continued to wait until he heard, **"Go forth of the ark"** (Genesis 8:16).

As Christian youths, we must pray for God's direction before taking any decision in every area of our lives, be it career, marriage, job, school to attend etc. (Proverbs 3:6). After the deliverance from the flood, Noah built an altar and returned glory to God. Whenever God blesses us or delivers us, we must acknowledge that He is responsible for that act

and not man. He alone should be glorified.

Furthermore, God made covenant with Noah, He repeated the blessings which was pronounced upon Adam: **“Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth...”**. The covenant that God made with man is hinged on obedience as a condition. As God has pronounced fruitfulness, abundance and multiplication, so is He expecting every believer to be spiritually and physically fruitful as well. Youth leaders, workers and school fellowship officers are expected to be fruitful and multiply, spreading the gospel and discipling other youths in their communities and schools.

Question 4: What is the condition for inheriting God’s covenant?

“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard” (Genesis 9:20). Noah enjoyed God’s favour, yet he was still hard working (Proverbs 22:29). God expects us to be diligent in our studies before we can achieve success in life.

The unity of consent of the whole earth is also worthy of note, the natural man is always full of rebellion against God’s revealed will, instead of replenishing the whole earth as God has said, they assayed to build a tower as they said **“lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth”**. Youths must note that every form of rebellion in the church against the leadership or the undiluted word of God is rebellion against God and great punishment will always follow it.

Moreover, when they unite with the church leadership, a lot of progress will be achieved. It will lead to growth in the local church; fellowship will grow and prayers will be answered.

THE CONCORD AND CONDEMNABLE ACT OF THE UNGODLY (Genesis 11:1-32; Psalms 133:1-3; 1:1; Proverbs 1:15; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14)

The unity of consent of the whole earth is worthy of note. **“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech”** (Genesis 11:1). They testified that the whole earth

was one language. With this motive, **“they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth”** (Genesis 11:4).

Question 5: *What lessons can youths draw from the unity of the people of Babel?*

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). There are many lessons Christian youths can learn from the unity of these men of Babel. Like the brethren in the Church, (i) They said and had in mind, the same thing (Philippians 3:16). (ii) They had all things common (Acts 2:44). (iii) They related together in singleness of heart (Acts 2:46). (iv) **“...Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own”** (Acts 4:32). (v) **“They had all things”** (Acts 4:32). This is a pointer to every Christian youth that we must be in unity with one another either at home, school, church or fellowship in godly matters only.

Question 6: *How did God react to the action of the builders of tower of Babel and what lessons do we draw from it?*

We must not lose sight of the stand of God towards the act of men of Babel. The original plan of God for man is to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth; however, they wanted to be confined to a location: **“...lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth”** (verse 4).

God was not pleased with their motives; therefore, He scattered them by confusing their language. Christian youths should watch their motives in all things and make it right and in accordance to God’s plan. **“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment”** (Exodus 23:2).

We must not be united in unholy cause. Christian youths are not to join riot, gang up against leaders, take part in unholy projects etc. **“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful”** (Psalm 1:1).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	6:9-15
MON	"	6:16-24
TUE	"	6:25-34
WED	"	7:1-11
THU	"	7:12-20
FRI	"	7:21-29
SAT	"	8:1-13

EVENING

Genesis	10:21-32
"	11:1-9
"	11:10-32
"	12:1-20
"	13:1-18
"	14:1-24
"	15:1-21

Lesson **4**

GOD'S CALL AND COVENANT WITH ABRAM

**TEXT: Genesis 12:1-20;
13:1-18; 14:1-24;
15:1-21; 16:1-16;
17:1-27**

MEMORY VERSE: “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17:1).

The call of Abram is one of the most significant experience in the entire Bible. It points to the ultimate redemption of the whole world that includes adults, youths and children. Abram was called to leave his home and extended family to go to a country that God would show him. Today, Christian youths are also encouraged by Scripture to leave the worldly lifestyle and its allurements and follow Christ. It will be inexcusable for Christian youths to say they are following the religion of their father and remain unconverted. Abram and his entire clan migrated to Haran.

Question 1: *What were the blessings attached to Abram's obedience?*

The covenant between God and Abram has great significance. First, God promised He would make of him a great nation. Second, God gave Abram a great name. Third, God gave him a land and fourth, his seed would be blessed in all the earth. Abram did not argue with God when the call to an unknown destination was given. The obedience of Abram marks the need for Christian obedience and loyalty to his Creator. Christian youths must learn from the obedience of Abram who obeyed God with promptness and without question. Abram eventually got to

the land of Canaan with his wife, Lot (his nephew) and all the people living with him at the age of seventy five.

God is also calling sinning youths to come to repentance. Many blessings yet to be seen and comprehended await Christian youths who obey God's call.

THE CALL OF ABRAM AND LOT'S SEPARATION (Genesis 12:1-20; 13:1-18; 14:1-24; Matthew 4:17-22; 11:28-30)

After the call, Abram went down to Egypt because of the grievous famine in the land. Sarai, Abram's wife was beautiful, he therefore have a plan to spare his own life due to the conceived fear of being killed for his wife. He instructed Sarai to lie that she was not his wife. Though Sarai was his half-sister, she was the daughter of one of Abram's father's wife (Genesis 20:12), it was a half-truth. **"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren"** (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Question 2: *Why should Christian youths not tell lies?*

Christian youths must be careful not to tell lies for any reason. They should know that God who has called them to holiness wants them to remain holy without blemish. Nevertheless, God is ever-faithful to His covenant. He did not allow Pharaoh to touch Sarai. Instead, He plagued Pharaoh and his household because Sarai and Pharaoh later gave her to Abram. Youths must not be afraid of bullies from sinners, knowing that God is ever-present with them.

"Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (Genesis 13:2). Lot who went with Abram was also blessed with flocks and herds that the land could not contain both of them dwelling together, since their substances were great. The blessings caused strife between the herdsmen of Lot and so Abram told Lot, **"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for**

we be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). When the Lord is obediently followed, and there is no sin, there must be blessings.

Abram resolved the problem amicably and there was the need for separation. In the choice of land, Abram displayed humility, faith, godliness and contentment by allowing Lot to choose first. Christian youths should emulate the good example of Abram by not being selfish. Whenever there is misunderstanding, let the matter be resolved amicably. **"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?"** (1 Corinthians 6:1); **"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"** (Hebrews 12:14).

After the departure of Lot, God promised Abram greater blessings. **"...Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever"** (Genesis 13:14,15). However, when Lot and all his households were captured by the alliance of four kings from Mesopotamia, Abram went with three hundred and eighteen soldiers and recovered Lot with all that pertained to him. When Abram returned from war, he met Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem). This gentle Priest and King of Salem blessed him, and Abram gave tithe of the goods that he had taken from the kings. From this, Christian youths should learn to bring all tithes into the storehouse of the Lord so that there may be meat in His house (Malachi 3:10,11).

Question 3: Since Christian youths do not receive salaries, should they still pay tithes and offering? Why?

Every youth needs to respect the command of God on tithe and offerings. Though many are not gainfully employed, they receive stipends, gifts and allowances which they must pay tithe on them.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM (Genesis 15:1-21; 16:1-11; 17:1-14; Proverbs 30:5)

God was aware of Abram's anxiety concerning his lack of children to carry out the fulfilment of the promise (Genesis

12:13,14-17). God is ever faithful to His covenant for those who keep His words. God reassured Abram of His promises that there would be an heir from the fruit of his loins. His descendants would be as the stars of heaven. Abram believed God. Delay is never denial. Christian youths should know that persistence, perseverance and patience in God will make God's covenant come to reality in their lives (Romans 4:4).

Question 4: *What are the dangers associated with shortcut and self management?*

God informed Abram that the fulfilment of the promised land would not be immediate. His descendants would first go into Egypt, and there become servants for a period of four hundred years. Sarai being an old woman at this time, had given up hope that an heir would come to Abram through her. She proposed a solution of her maid, Hagar, to Abram as wife. Abram consented to the proposal without consulting God who had earlier given him the promise of a child. Christian youths must avoid shortcuts or the easy-way-out syndrome on any issue bothering on God's standard. After giving birth to a son for Abram, Hagar became arrogant to Sarai who in turn became bitter toward her. Christian youths must understand that God does not want His glory shared. He is a jealous God. Wait on Him.

Hagar's problems stemmed from arrogance, insubordination and pride. These mark the downfall of any mortal, including youths.

REASSURANCE OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM
(Genesis 17:15-27; Galatians 4:31; Romans 4:11-13)

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, **"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly"** (Genesis 17:1,2). Abram was exhorted to be totally dedicated to El-Shaddai, the Almighty God of heaven.

In this covenant renewal, there was a name changed from

Abram to Abraham which means the father of many nations. Sarai, meaning princess was changed to Sarah meaning the mother of many nations. The rite of circumcision was to be the token of the covenant. If one refused circumcision, he would be cut off from the promises of the covenant.

Sarah laughed, doubting the possibility of child-birth at her old age. The promise was to be the work of God, not man (Romans 9:6-13). It would have been impossible with man, but not with God. God's promises are yea and Amen and not to be doubted. Youths must not doubt God's promises. No matter how long, it shall not tarry; wait for it, it will surely come. God also reassured Abraham that the promise would be fulfilled through his own son (Isaac). Even if we realise the plan and vision of God, there may still be some delay.

Question 5: *What does God require from Christians in order to fulfil His covenant in their lives?*

There is need to be faithful, prayerful and patient with God knowing that He is faithful to keep His promises. **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (2 Corinthians 7:1).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	8:14-22
MON	”	8:23-34
TUE	”	9:1-9
WED	”	9:10-17
THU	”	9:18-26
FRI	”	9:27-38
SAT	”	10:1-15

EVENING

Genesis	16:1-16
”	17:1-27
”	18:1-15
”	18:16-33
”	19:1-11
”	19:12-20
”	19:21-29

Lesson 5

DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

**TEXT: Genesis 18:1-33;
19:1-38**

MEMORY VERSE: “For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it” (Genesis 19:13).

The focus of our study today is on the judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah. This was the country where Lot and his family settled, after he selfishly parted ways with Abraham. Sodom and Gomorrah became warning sign for believers and sinners of all ages. The city of sin is spiritually called Sodom. Lot came to realise the error of his choice of the well-watered plains of Jordan. In the journey of life as Christian youths, we need the guidance of God, by asking for guidance directly from God in prayer, seeking counsel from our spiritual leaders and from our godly parents (Isaiah 46:10).

God delights in the prayer of His children, made for themselves or for other people (Ezekiel 22:30). Intercession is a great privilege by which God wants to rescue nations, turn imminent ugly situations around, deliver families and communities, avert judgment and bring down His glory. Intercession is also potent enough to bring about hindrance or destruction of the operations and works of the devil.

Question 1: *What is intercession and its significance in the programme of God?*

God revealed His mind on Sodom and Gomorrah to

Abraham (Genesis 18:20,21). Sin is reproachful. The whole of Sodom and Gomorrah was given to sin (Genesis 19:4,5). The act of sodomy is an act of abomination where there are sexual immoralities between people of the same gender.

ANGELIC VISITATION WITH ABRAHAM (Genesis 18:1-17,23-33; 19:1-3; Proverbs 11:25; Psalm 65:9,10)

Intercession draws us nearer to God, **“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”** (Hebrews 7:25). Abraham, having heard of the fate that was going to befall Sodom, did not only stand before the Lord, but drew closer to Him as His friend. Abraham became a friend of God because he obeyed His commandment. The Lord Jesus said, **“Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you”** (John 15:14). Every youth can be a friend of God by repenting from sin, believing in the atoning blood of Christ and accepting Him as his Lord and Saviour. It is then, a believer can stand in the gap, lifting up holy hands unto God.

Question 2: List some notable qualities believers should emulate in Abraham as an intercessor.

Abraham was a man who showed love to people. He was selfless in his request. He did not only plead for Lot and his household in Sodom, he also pleaded for all in Sodom. This teaches us as Christian youths that we should not limit our prayers to our loved ones and ourselves, but also extend them to others.

It is mandatory for Christian youths to pray for the unsaved, like Paul did for Israel (Romans 10:1), for persecutors (Matthew 5:44), good governance in our nation (2 Chronicles 6:28,29), for our parents, teachers, leaders, missionaries, kings, guardians, all rulers (Ezra 6:10) and also for the work of God. Our God is faithful; He did not stop granting Abraham's requests until he stopped asking. **“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us”** (1 John 5:14). We have some lessons to note: one, we have liberty in

prayers as believers to approach the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16); two, we should pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17); three, we should pray according to God's will either as revealed in Scriptures or as led by the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:14; Jeremiah 14:11); four, intercessions should be motivated and sustained by love and compassion.

Lot, brought up in Abraham's household, learnt the virtue of hospitality. He welcomed the angels to Sodom and pleaded with them to put up with him in his house for the night. He was very generous in his invitation and entertainment of the angels. Christian youths should learn to accommodate others (Hebrews 6:10). Five, God should be able to vouch for a Christian youth (Genesis 18:19).

DEPRAVITY OF THE SODOMITES (Genesis 19:4-11,30-38; Leviticus 18:1-20; Jude 7; Revelation 21:8)

Lot's choice of Sodom as a place to sojourn in ended up in a disaster. It marked the beginning of a slide into unmitigated spiritual complacency. Christian youths should be warned, **"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"** (Proverbs 14:12). A Christian youth must learn to commit his ways unto the Lord and let Him direct his path (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Lot became careless, and tolerated the evil men of Sodom and their ungodly ways of life. This brought tragedy unto his family. His daughters committed immorality with him and had children for him. **"And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day"** (Genesis

19:34-38), who later became terrors to the children of Israel.

Question 3: *Mention the dangers of taking decisions without prayers or hearing from God.*

As youths, we cannot make our choice of career or institutions or any other areas of our lives based on suggestions from our friends or the internet, without asking God. Do not be deceived by peer pressure syndrome. A song writer wrote **“Many things about tomorrow, I do not seem to understand. But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hands”**.

If you have gone astray and have been involved in such evils like examination misconducts or forgery of documents, you need to retrace your steps in repentance and restitution (Proverbs 28:13). As long as you remain seated at the gate of Sodom which has been marked for destruction, you cannot progress spiritually neither can you prosper academically.

Question 4: *What is Sodomy?*

The wickedness and the wrath in Sodom was unimaginable. Both old and young were bound with cords of lawlessness, abominations and violence. People from all quarters besieged Lot’s dwelling. This immoral relationship between same gender is called sodomy or homosexuality. The Sodomites asked Lot, **“Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them”** (Genesis 19:5). They wanted to defile heaven’s messengers. This shows how depraved and godless they were. Christian youths who give themselves over to uncleanness are in danger of eternal punishment. God hates immorality.

Lawlessness is unacceptable to him. This is why the Bible is filled with several warnings against every form of immorality (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20,22; Mark 7:21-23; Acts 15:29). Scriptural admonition against immorality is clear: **“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part**

in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). Lot's offer of his daughters as prostitutes to bail out his visitors is condemnable. We must never do evil so that good may come out of it. By this time, Lot had become spiritually lukewarm (though not practising sin, he compromised with sinners). Lot's appeal to the Sodomites could not change their hardened hearts. They were bent on executing their design by force: **"And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door"** (Genesis 19:9). All men must heed to the declaration of the Bible, **"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy"** (Proverbs 29:1).

DESTRUCTION OF SODOM (Genesis 19:12-14; Psalm 9:17; Luke 13:5; Revelation 16:9,11)

Sinners are blinded and hardened by the deceitful pleasure of sin, which makes them to reject God's offer of mercy. Seeing the stubborn impenitence of the Sodomites, the angels instructed Lot to seek out, those related to him in Sodom for rescue. This was a unique opportunity of evangelism given to Lot. It is the commission of God for every Christian youth.

Question 5: *How can sinning youths escape judgment?*

"We do not well: ... [if] we hold our peace" (2 Kings 7:9). There is judgment for all sinning youths, and the only way of escape is repentance. **"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God"** (Psalm 9:17). The Sodomites failed to repent; hence, judgment of God came upon them. **"And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace"** (Genesis 19:28). Lot went out at the angels' bidding, to see to the deliverance of those related to him.

Unfortunately, the Sodomites treated his warning with levity and scorn. To them, **“he seemed as one that mocked”** (Genesis 19:14).

Several reasons are responsible to Lot’s strident warning. First, Lot had been spiritually sleeping all along while in Sodom. There is no record of any convert he won from among the sinning Sodomites. Christian youths are supposed to be salt of the earth wherever they are. Salty believing youths make others thirst for Spring of the Living Water.

Secondly, because of his complacency, Lot was no longer a witness for God, thus becoming almost useless for God’s work. The truth is, anyone who intends to make a difference for God in his society must first decide and dare to be different. **“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Romans 12:2).

Thirdly, Lot’s evangelism failed because he left it till it was too late. He had the opportunity to lead them to righteousness but he did not. The opportunity you have today to reach out to your classmates, neighbours and friends will not be there forever. The Bible says, to everything and to every purpose, there is a time (Ecclesiastes 3:1). You must arise and rescue the perishing. Be dutiful as from today. In evangelising the lost, our driving force must be like that of the Master, **“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”** (John 9:4).

Fourthly, Lot’s major stimulus to evangelism was the prodding of the angels. He was not spurred on by an inner conviction, a heartfelt burden to attempt the rescue of the doomed Sodomites. The best evangelism quality is to melt the hardened heart of sinners, stir up hatred for sin in their lives and stimulate repentance and compassion borne out of love for them (Psalm 126:5,6; Matthew 9:36). Reach out with the Gospel to the lost because you love them and you want them to be saved.

Lastly, the Sodomites had become so hardened by sin that they made light of the last offer they would ever receive to repent of their sins and live. They soon perished in the fiery overthrow of their immoral city. Today, many youths who are

repeatedly warned by faithful ministers of God and still continue in their sins, are rushing headlong into certain destruction. You must escape for your life now!

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	10:16-30
MON	"	10:31-42
TUE	"	11:1-15
WED	"	11:16-30
THU	"	12:1-13
FRI	"	12:14-21
SAT	"	12:22-30

EVENING

Genesis	19:30-38
"	20:1-18
"	21:1-21
"	21:22-34
"	22:1-24
"	23:1-20
"	24:1-13

Lesson 6

ABIMELECH RESTORES ABRAHAM'S WIFE

TEXT: Genesis 20:1-18

MEMORY VERSE: “Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine” (Genesis 20:7).

Today's text opens with Abraham moving from Mamre to Gerar. At Gerar, he described his wife as his sister “... **She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah**” (Genesis 20:2). This is half truth. Christian youths should not because of the fear of man enter into falsehood, it has deadly consequences.

Question 1: *Why should Christian youths avoid the fear of man?*

“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25). The fear of man deadens the conscience, weakens the mind, seals the witness' lips, opens doors to temptations and damns the soul. Having being warned by God in a dream, Abimelech accepted to correct his wrong. He therefore gave sheep, oxen, menservants and women servants to Abraham, and restored him Sarah, his wife. This is known as restitution, which God requires from a sincere believer (Genesis 20:7, 14).

ABRAHAM'S DECEPTION AND ABIMELECH'S SIN

(Genesis 20:1-7; 12:10-20; Psalms 11:4; 139:7-12; 101:7; Proverbs 19:5; 1 Timothy 1:8-15; Numbers 15:28)

“Abraham journey from thence toward the south country and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur and sojourned in Gerar” (Genesis 20:1). Christian youths must understand that they are strangers and pilgrims in the world. They may have to move from one place to another for any good cause, but they must always be conscious of God’s omnipresence in any situation (Psalm 139:7-12). Our relocation or the condition of the people in a new location should not alter our Christian conviction. God revealed Himself to Abimelech in the dream like He did to Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. Today, God still speaks and reveals Himself to men through dreams. However, He also speaks in various other ways. For those who hear from God, sincerity is very critical towards enjoying more revelations. **“...Thou art but a dead man...”** (Genesis 20:3). This was a scary thing to hear from God even in a dream. God told Abimelech he was dead because he had been covetous and taken his neighbour’s wife, though he was deceived. Sinners are dead while living, they are also in danger of eternal death. The living-but-dead king pleaded his ignorance because of the agreement between Abraham and Sarah not to let him know that they were more than brother and sister. Despite the failure of Abraham to trust his God for protection, God remained faithful.

Question 2: Why did God count it as sin unto Abimelech despite his innocence?

Ignorance of sin does not make the offender guiltless. Though Abimelech committed the sin innocently, yet, God held him guilty. Every youth must know that ignorance is not an excuse in the sight of God. Therefore, there must be constant self-examination and prompt repentance to avoid God’s judgment. However, God in His mercy kept the Pagan king from committing sin with Sarah: **“for I also withheld thee from sinning against me”** (Genesis 20:6). What a great

mercy to be hindered from committing sin (1 Samuel 25:32,33). Abimelech was not left in confusion; he was given the commandment of what should be done urgently. **“now therefore restore the man his wife”** (Genesis 20:7). This is making right the wrong, the act of restoring things to the rightful owner.

“And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife” (Genesis 20:2,12). Abraham was afraid of being killed because of his wife; therefore, instructed her to tell Abimelech they are brother and sister. This is a lie, and such is not expected of a sincere believer, no matter the pressure. Christian youths are not expected to tell lies of any type or instruct anyone to do so. The Bible says, **“...and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone...”** (Revelation 21:8).

ABIMELECH’S OBEDIENCE AND RESTITUTION (Genesis 20:8-13; Exodus 22:1-14; 1 Samuel 24:5; Luke 19:8; Acts 23:5)

God knew Abimelech would destroy His covenant with Abraham by having his wife; therefore, God said Abimelech would die before his time if he failed to amend his way. He had not even touched the woman nor had anything with her; yet God said, he was a dead man. Sin makes one abominable to God and exposes one to His anger and judgment. God hates sin. No matter how you present it, nobody has any right to violate the law of God. Sin is sin no matter the condition that warrants it. There is no excuse for any youth to tell a lie, commit fornication, backbite, covet, abort, or practice any other unrighteous act. God’s judgment on sinners is real.

Having known that the judgment of God is real and impartial, a youth needs to avoid giving excuses for committing sin. God will not listen to any reason or condition that warrants violating His law and statutes. In Genesis 20:7,17, God did not reverse the judgment He had pronounced on Abimelech, until he obeyed His instruction.

Immediately Abimelech obeyed God and restored Sarah to Abraham, God withdrew His anger and judgment from him and his household. Today, God is still delighted in restitution after one's conversion. Stop giving excuses. Admit your fault to avoid God's judgment. Failure to comply will lead to withdrawal of God's favour.

Restitution is required and commanded by God; therefore, followers of Christ must correct their past without delay. We have other examples of people who did their restitutions like Abimelech, David, Zacchaeus and Apostle Paul. However, restitution should be done prayerfully, with due consultation with mature Christian leader, and it must be done with humility.

Question 3: *What is Restitution?*

Restitution is making amends for the wrongs which one might have done to others. Restitution is expected to be carried out immediately it's been discovered. It should not be delayed. In doing restitution, you may suffer loss, pain, shame or rejection. Never allow Satan or anyone to scare you. God is right there with you and He will definitely see you through to the very end **“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”** (Matthew 10: 28). Don't look at the present or temporal pains but at the eternal and permanent gains.

ABIMELECH'S RESPONSE AND ABRAHAM'S PRAYER (Genesis 20:14-18; Leviticus 6:5; Job 42:8-10; Luke 19:8,9; Exodus 22:1)

Abimelech obeyed the voice of the Lord, and restored Sarah to her husband. It is expected of every Christian youth to restore all materials that do not belong to them to the rightful owner.

Question 4: *What are the benefits of obeying God's instruction?*

“And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee” (Genesis 20:14,15). This action of obedience changed the judgment of God to blessing for Abimelech and his household. **“So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children”** (Genesis 20:17). Abimelech and his household received the blessing of healing immediately he obeyed God. The following are some blessings that accompany righteousness: one, boldness in the Lord; two, freedom from guilt; three, commendation from God; four, clear conscience before man and God; and five, hope of eternal life. The blessings of God are conditional. You must endeavour to be righteous in order to enjoy all the above blessings of God and lots more.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	12:31-37
MON	”	12:38-50
TUE	”	13:1-17
WED	”	13:18-30
THU	”	13:31-43
FRI	”	13:44-50
SAT	”	13:51-58

EVENING

Genesis	24:14-29
”	24:30-49
”	24:50-67
”	25:1-18
”	25:19-34
”	26:1-17
”	26:18-35

Lesson 7

THE BIRTH OF ISAAC: THE HEIR OF PROMISE

TEXT: Genesis 21:1-34

MEMORY VERSE: “For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him” (Genesis 21:2).

The birth of Isaac was one of the historic records of God’s faithfulness to the fulfilment of His promises in the Scripture. From the time God called Abram, He had promised to make of him a great nation. **“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”** (Genesis 12:1-3). God made a great promise to give Abraham and Sarah a son when naturally all hopes seemed to have been lost.

Question 1: *How old were Abraham and Sarah when they gave birth to Isaac?*

At this time, Abraham and Sarah his wife were old and well-stricken in age. The Scripture says: **“Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women”** (Genesis 18:11). Abraham and his wife could not believe the possibility of having a child at their old age. **“Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart,**

Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? (Genesis 17:17; 18:12). Yet, he did not allow this to overturn the faith he had in God. No wonder God visited them and turned their sorrow to joy, even in their old age.

THE BIRTH OF A LONG EXPECTED HEIR (Genesis 21:1-8; 15:2-4; 12:2; 17:15; 18:11,12; Philippians 4:6; Numbers 23:19; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6)

“And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him” (Genesis 21:1,2). Abraham had lived for long without any ray of hope of possibility to get a son that would be his heir. He was wealthy and highly prosperous with great affluence. However, he was not satisfied and fulfilled because he was childless. That was why he did not hesitate to present his reproach of childlessness to God in his early days of covenant with Him (Genesis 15:2,3). Having presented his case before God, a response backed up with a notable promise that would end Abraham’s reproach of childlessness was given (Genesis 15:3,4). The lesson here is that when Christian youths are caught in the web of challenges, they should not forget to make their request known to God. **“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”** (Philippians 4:6).

Question 2: *What lessons can youths draw from the attitude of Abraham to his challenge of childlessness?*

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3). The birth of Isaac in our text attested to the faithfulness of God to His promises. It also established the fact that God cannot lie and that He has power to do all He had promised.

This should motivate Christian youths to trust more in God and believe that He is able to do whatever He has promised (Numbers 23:19). The Scripture declared that Abraham believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6). Christian youths are therefore, enjoined to believe in God for whatever they have requested from Him. This is the simple definition of faith – God said it, I believe it and that settles it. Isaac can figuratively represent our desires, needs or what we are trusting God for. If we believe in God, He will grant it unto us like He gave Isaac to Abraham.

Question 3: *Identify the major attribute in Abraham's life that can prompt Christian youths to receive from God.*

“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be” (Romans 4:18). Christian youths should remain hopeful, even when situations seem hopeless (Hebrews 10:36); they should be patient in tribulation, and continue in prayer (Romans 12:12); and must continue in obedience to God.

THE BANISHMENT AND LAWFUL EJECTION OF HAGAR AND HER SON (Genesis 21:9-21; 16:1-6; Galatians 4:21-31)

Sarah's subject of reproach and ridicule became unbearable after Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. Actually, Ishmael was a product of Sarah's sensual arrangement to bail her family out of a conjugal sorrow. She initiated the process of Abrahamic polygamy and her husband gave his consent (Genesis 16:1-5). What Sarah thought would be the way out of her problem became an object of her problem. Many a times, Christian youths emotionally attempt to help God speed up the process of solution to their problems, and in doing that, they complicate the problems. Till today, the world has felt and will continue to feel the heat of Ishmael, the product of the Patriarch's mistake. Christian youths are therefore, advised not to run ahead of God in their situations

and challenges because this can make their path to be full of thorns and thistles.

Question 4: *What can we learn from the ejection of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's household?*

God's ways are not man's ways. The bond woman and her son (a product of error) became thorns on Sarah's flesh and as such, she demanded their leave. To Abraham, the demand sounded difficult to be met, but God stepped in and instructed Abraham to send away Hagar and Ishmael as it is written: **"in Isaac shall thy seed be called"** (Genesis 21:12). Eventually, Abraham obeyed God and sent them away. Christian youths are admonished to let go out of their lives anything that is not according to God's will.

After all the years spent in Abraham's bosom, Hagar had never learnt how to commune with the God of Abraham. So, when she exhausted her provisions, she never thought of praying to God, neither did she make any move to search for water to save her life and that of her son. Many youths today are like Hagar. We must learn to employ the weapon of prayer to achieve victory in life. Were it not for the mercy of God, Hagar and her son would have perished.

THE BORDERLINE BETWEEN THE ELECT AND THE HEATHEN (Genesis 21:22-34; Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12)

"And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest" (Genesis 21:22). As a result of the blessings of God upon Abraham, people were willing to associate with him and make him friend. That was what led to a covenant between Abraham and Abimelech. Christian youths should desire and pray for the abundance of God's blessing on their lives most especially, in their academics and career. So that when people are attracted to them, they can lead them to Christ. Abimelech entered a covenant with Abraham and the latter was made to swear. **"Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my**

son's son... And Abraham said, I will swear" (Genesis 21:23,24). However Christian youth are not to enter into any covenant with anybody inside or outside the church, neither are they allowed to swear but should let their yes be yes, and no, no (Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	14:1-12
MON	"	14:13-21
TUE	"	14:22-36
WED	"	15:1-20
THU	"	15:21-31
FRI	"	15:32-39
SAT	"	16:1-17

EVENING

Genesis	27:1-17
"	27:18-36
"	27:37-46
"	28:1-22
"	29:1-14
"	29:15-35
"	30:1-21

Lesson 8

GENEALOGY AND BIRTH OF CHRIST

TEXT: Matthew 1:1-25;
2:1-23; Luke 3:23-38

MEMORY VERSE: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

Matthew is the only one of the four gospel writers to begin his gospel with a genealogical record of Jesus. This chapter, though not interesting to many reader, “**...is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**” (2 Timothy 3:16). Christian youths are therefore, enjoined to read every part of the Bible.

Question 1: *What do you understand by the word “Genealogy” and why do Christian youths need to study Christ’s genealogy?*

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). The word genealogy means family tree, lineage or ancestors. Christian youths need the knowledge of Christ’s genealogy to know that Jesus fulfils the Messianic prophecies that He will be a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18) and a descendant of David (Isaiah 11:1,2,10).

Whatever else Jesus may have done, if He was not a descendant of Abraham and David, He could not have become the Messiah. So the gospel according to Saint Matthew directed especially to the Jews, through this

introduction naturally settled the proof of Christ as the Messiah.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S GENEALOGY (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38; Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28)

“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matthew 1:17). Christ's genealogy according to our text, consists of forty-two names from forty-two generations divided into three groups.

Question 2: *Name the three divisions of Christ's genealogy and how many generations make up each division?*

In this genealogy, some names were omitted to establish essential connections. In the same vein, not all youths that passed through a school have their names significant in the records of the school. Significant names in the school records are the prefects, class captains, students with good academic performance and those who represent the school or take part in major events within and outside the school. Christian youths must make themselves relevant in the church, school and community they found themselves.

God promised that the Messiah would come from the loins of David. **“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”** (Isaiah 11:1; 9:7). Jesus, being in the lineage of David has legal right to the throne of David.

There were lessons to be learnt from Christ's genealogy: (a) God always keeps His word. His promise to Abraham and David was fulfilled in Christ. (b) Godliness is not inherited.

David was a godly father but that was not transferred to Solomon.

SCRIPTURAL FACTS CONCERNING THE BIRTH OF JESUS (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Psalm 132:11; Luke 1:31-35, 76; John 14:30; 19:4, 6; 1 John 3:5; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22)

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:18). One of the most important facts concerning Jesus Christ is that He was born of a virgin. The Virgin Birth confirms Christ’s deity (Divine nature) and clearly distinguishes Him as the only sinless man conceived without Adamic depravity.

Several predictions were recorded in the Bible concerning the virgin birth of Jesus. **“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”** (Isaiah 7:14). Disputing this cardinal doctrine is by implication, denying Christ’s Deity and His distinctive nature. It was this distinctive spotlessness that disqualified every other man from satisfying God’s demand at Calvary. He, therefore, became the spotless Lamb of God found in fashion as a man.

To receive and believe the record of Christ’s birth by a virgin mother is to settle the whole question of the miraculous. God was the first to unveil the virgin birth of Christ; when He referred to Him as the “seed of the woman” (Genesis 3:15). The word “virgin” in this reference, means a woman that has not known a man.

The angel even bore witness that, **“that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost”** (Matthew 1:20). **“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”** (Luke 1:35). The virgin birth is therefore, a unique sign from the Lord.

Question 3: *What is the importance of the Virgin Birth of Christ to Christian youths?*

The Virgin Birth of Jesus confirms His Deity and distinguishes Him as the only sinless man conceived without any taint of the sinful nature inherited by all men through Adam. **“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens”** (Hebrews 7:25,26).

The birth of Jesus occurred at Bethlehem, the birthplace of David (1 Samuel 20:6), and wise men came from the East to pay Him homage. When they saw the young child Jesus, they fell down and worshipped Him, acknowledging His Deity. Having fulfilled their mission, they did not go back to Herod because they had been warned by God that he was planning to harm the new Child. Feeling betrayed by the wise men, Herod ordered the slaughter of all children from two years old and under in hope that Christ would be among them. Before he carried out his evil programme, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph to take the child Jesus to Egypt in fulfilment of another scriptural prophecy (Matthew 2:13-15).

Question 4: *What can you learn from the way Jesus was protected from the murderous intention of Herod?*

Having received the message from God through angel Gabriel, Joseph took full responsibility to ensure adequate security of Mary and the child, Jesus. From this, we learn, one, that our protection as Christian youths depends on obedience to God’s guidance. Two, we must respond promptly to divine guidance. Three, challenges and problems are inevitable facts of life. Four, God works all things for the good of youths who love Him. Five, Satan is always working against the purpose and programme of God, but His counsel will always stand (Proverbs 19:21). Six, God always watches over His children and knows how to deliver them. Seven, He permits certain things in a Christian youth’s life to accomplish His purpose.

After the death of Herod, Joseph and Mary returned with the child Jesus to the land of Israel and they dwelt in the city of Nazareth.

SINGULAR PURPOSE OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS (Matthew 1:21; John 1:29; Acts 4:12; 5:31; Galatians 4:4,5; Hebrews 2:14,15)

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The angel who announced His birth said, the name “Jesus” means “Saviour” or “Salvation of Jehovah or Jehovah is Saviour”.

Question 5: *How can a sinning youth benefit from the birth of Christ?*

The purpose of Jesus coming into the world is to save mankind from the ruin of sin. This, He accomplished through His vicarious death on the cross at Calvary. Any youth who repents from sin and comes to Him for salvation will receive pardon and cleansing through His blood, no matter how vile.

DAILY BIBLE READING					
MORNING			EVENING		
SUN	Matthew	16:18-28	Genesis	30:22-43	
MON	”	17:1-13	”	31:1-21	
TUE	”	17:14-21	”	31:22-55	
WED	”	17:22-27	”	32:1-15	
THU	”	18:1-10	”	32:16-32	
FRI	”	18:11-20	”	33:1-20	
SAT	”	18:21-35	”	34:1-19	

Lesson **9**

MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

TEXT: Matthew 3:1-17;
Luke 3:1-22

MEMORY VERSE: “For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”(Matthew 3:3).

John the Baptist as expressed in our text came as a forerunner of Jesus Christ. This happened after the silent years of about four hundred years without prophets or prophecy in Israel (between the book of Malachi and Matthew). Many Old Testament prophets prophesied about the coming of John the Baptist.

Question 1: *What can you say about the message of John the Baptist?*

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me...” (Malachi 3:1). John the Baptist had his commission from heaven and not from men. He appeared with a stunning message of repentance to all the people to enable them prepare the way of the Lord and make His path straight. His message was fiery, well directed, effective and convincing. No wonder many people came to him in response to his message. John summarily had a short but fulfilled ministry. Youths should learn from the life of John the Baptist. They should effectively beam the light of the gospel to people around them.

THE MAN, JOHN THE BAPTIST (Matthew 3:1-6; 11:11,12; Luke 3:1,2; 7:28,33; Malachi 3:1)

John the Baptist was born by a priest called Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. His ministry was prophesied before his birth by Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:16,17) that he shall be instrumental to the preparation of the heart of men to receive the gospel of Christ and be converted. John the Baptist was born as a result of the prophecy given to his father. His father was old but still busy in the service of the Lord though in need of a child. Zechariah did not allow the challenges he was passing through to affect his service and commitment to the service of the Lord. This is a lesson to youths and leaders. Many Christians are in search for ease and comfort at the expense of eternity and their consecration to God. God sees and knows whatever we may be passing through.

Question 2: *What lessons can youths draw from the birth and consecration of John the Baptist?*

Christian youths have the following lessons to draw from the birth and consecration of John the Baptist: (1) He did not disappoint God nor his parents. (2) He was a disciplined preacher with a distinguished lifestyle from others in his days (Matthew 3:4). (3) He was a humble man, **“He must increase, but I must decrease”** (John 3:30; Luke 3:16). (4) His humility also reflected in his objection to baptise Jesus and acceptance to do so after Jesus explained the reason it must be so (Matthew 3:14,15). (5) He worked within the scope of his ministry; he lifted Christ in his messages and pointed even his disciples to Him. **“John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29). John lived a secluded and devoted life. Also, he was a light to the people of his days. The life of John the Baptist is worth emulating by youths. His birth came as prophesied and as he grew up, he lived his life to ensure that everything that God said about him came to

pass.

THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (Matthew 3:5-12; Luke 3:3-20; Isaiah 40:3-5)

“As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Luke 3:4). The mission of John the Baptist on earth was solely to prepare the way of the Lord. Since Israel had been without a prophet for over four hundred years. There was need for him to come and make way for Jesus. The essence was to create the consciousness of God into the heart of the people. He emerged to fill every valley of those who have degenerated spiritually; to make low every mountain and hill; that is, bring those who have gone into arrogance spiritually back to God; to straighten the crooked paths and rough ways (Isaiah 40:3-5). He was to bring all to the knowledge of salvation made available by God through Jesus Christ.

Question 3: *What is the mission of John the Baptist?*

It is instructive that our messages should be Christ-centred, showing repentance and faith in the atoning blood of Christ.

All Christian youths are commanded to faithfully **“preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort...”** (2 Timothy 4:2). John the Baptist did the same, together with other apostles. You can do more.

THE MIGHT IN JOHN’S MINISTRY (Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21,22; Acts 1:8; 4:33)

The ministry of John the Baptist witnessed a tremendous support from heaven. This was as a result of his level of commitment to the ministry and holy living. The response of

the people, that is (the soldiers, publicans, Sadducees and Pharisees) to his message proved the great power of his ministry.

Question 4: *What is the effect of power in the ministry of every youth minister?*

It is evident that the power of God in the life of every minister makes the difference and this was confirmed in the ministry of John the Baptist who, right from his mother's womb was filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:15).

Jesus Christ, on the other hand, with higher ministry than that of John surrendered Himself to be baptised by Him. This is a lesson to every minister of the gospel in the youth ministry to be submissive when a younger minister is ministering.

John did his best to prepare the way for the first coming of the Lord Jesus. He will soon be back, how are you preparing His way in reaching out to the dying sinners; restoring the backsliders and edifying the saints?

John knew his purpose in the world and was faithful to the ministry committed to his hand. **"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God"** (Isaiah 40:3). He presented his message in a clear and distinct way that left his hearers convicted and converted. John was an affectionate preacher, who did not hide the truth from the people. He was a practical preacher blunt with the truth to all the different categories of his listeners. His preaching attracted multitude into his ministry including the Scribes and Pharisees. He was a sincere and uncompromising preacher whose focus was never diverted.

John's messages were purposeful, powerful, penetrating and pungent. His messages were Christ-centred and life-transforming. Sinners were unable to resist them: **"And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And the soldiers likewise**

demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:10,12,14).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	19:1-15
MON	”	19:16-26
TUE	”	19:27-30
WED	”	20:1-16
THU	”	20:17-28
FRI	”	20:29-34
SAT	”	21:1-11

EVENING

Genesis	34:20-31
”	35:1-15
”	35:16-29
”	36:1-19
”	36:20-43
”	37:1-17
”	37:18-36

Lesson 10

TEMPTATION AND COMMENCEMENT OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

TEXT: Matthew 4:1-25;
Luke 4:1-44

MEMORY VERSE: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4:1).

In the previous chapter, God made a public approval of Christ at His baptism in Jordan (Matthew 3:17). In this lesson, we shall consider how Christ was tempted three times by the devil and how He overcame in the three temptations, as well as how He commenced His three-fold earthly ministry.

Question 1: *What can believers learn from the way the devil tempted Christ shortly after His public approval by God?*

Christian youths can learn from the experience of Christ that temptation can come at anytime, "**Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall**" (1 Corinthians 10:12). It is therefore, dangerous for a Christian not to be watchful and vigilant at all times, as the devil would strike when least expected. An important consolation believers have in Christ's temptations is that Christ overcame all and Satan could not hinder Him from commencing and finishing His God-ordained earthly ministry. So, believers who trust in Christ and are watchful and careful will overcome all temptation and will not be hindered from fulfilling their God-ordained ministry in life (1 Corinthians 10:13).

THE THREE-FOLD TEMPTATION OF CHRIST (Matthew 4:1-10; Luke 4:1-13; Deuteronomy 8:3; 16:6; Psalm 91:11; Colossians 3:16; Romans 3:25)

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:1-4).

After a prolonged fasting, Christ, became very hungry and Satan wanted to take advantage of His physical need to tempt Him. Christian youths should take note that Christ was tempted by the devil immediately after fasting and praying for forty days and nights. There is still need to be watchful after embarking on fasting and prayer. Remember, Jesus was led by the Spirit to embark on the long fasting.

Question 2: (a) What is temptation? (b) Can believers accept any suggestion or counsel from the devil? Why?

After realising that Christ must have been hungry, Satan wanted to become a counselor and adviser to Him. Christ however, gave the devil the first disgraceful defeat by quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3, **“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”** (Matthew 4:4). It is important to know that temptation itself is not sin, but yielding to it is sin. Temptation is just a suggestion or enticement from the devil to make believers sin against God. A Christian youth should not accept any suggestion or advice from Satan because he is an enemy of God and can never give any good suggestion or advice to a child of God.

“Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, if thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time

thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:5-7).

Satan tempted Jesus the second time by taking Him to the pinnacle of the temple and asked Him to cast Himself down (Matthew 4:6). Jesus resisted him by quoting from the word of God. This is how believers can overcome the devil. The word of God should fill us so richly that at appropriate occasion, we, like Jesus, could quote appropriately from the Bible to confound the tempter (Colossians 3:16).

Satan had craftily promised Christ a worldwide rule, if only He could fall down and worship him (Matthew 4:8-10). Satan failed to know that Jesus as the Messiah had been promised a kingdom without his suggestion and without bowing to him. Jesus could only be given that by offering Himself as a propitiation for the sin of the world.

A Christian youth therefore, should not bow to Satan because of anything in life: academic success, power, fame, healing, gift, protection, etc. Jesus overcame the devil by quoting again from the book of Deuteronomy 6:13. Jesus did not want to continue to entertain further fruitless conversation with the devil, so He ordered him to **“Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him”** (Matthew 4:10,11).

So, Christians should not go into controversy or dialogue with the devil or his agents for any reason whenever he comes with his temptations. **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”** (James 4:7).

Question 3: How can a Christian youth resist temptations?

In the three-fold temptation of Christ, Christ He had victory by quoting from the Scriptures. Christian youths should always resist the devil in all temptations. This is because when we overcome any temptation, the Holy Spirit will come to strengthen us as He did to Jesus Christ.

THE THREE-FOLD MINISTRY OF CHRIST (Matthew 4:12-17; Luke 4:14-32; Acts 3:19; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9; Luke 10:10-12)

“Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim” (Matthew 4:12,13). As soon as Christ overcame the three-fold temptation brought by the devil, He began His three-fold ministry of teaching, preaching and healing. Jesus’ three-fold ministry was an empowered ministry. It is the Holy Spirit that gives power and unction.

“From that time Jesus began to preach and say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Jesus gave a three-fold call to sinners. One, a call to repentance. Two, a call to discipleship. Three, a call to service. Without repentance, there is no entrance into the Kingdom. God has promised to forgive any sinner that sincerely repents of his sins. No matter the enormity of our sins, once we have a wholehearted confession, God has promised to forgive (1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13).

Question 4: *What should be the reaction of a Christian youth when his message is rejected in places he went to minister?*

Christ was rejected in Nazareth and for that reason, departed from there to Capernaum. Christ would not stay too long anywhere He is not welcomed. The same thing He told His disciples when He sent them two by two on a missionary work (Luke 10:10-12). He would not force Himself on anyone. Anybody who rejects Christ, rejects light and life. **“And [they] rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way, And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days”** (Luke 4:29-31).

The healing ministry of Jesus was revealed as He healed a

man who had an unclean spirit, who cried with a loud voice as He was preaching and teaching on a Sabbath day (Luke 4:33-36).

The three-fold ministry of Christ was carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit. His preaching and teaching ministry was accompanied with signs and wonders. There were healings, deliverances and other miracles in diverse places. The miracles showed Christ to be a controller and conqueror of Satan, a healer of diseases who had come to destroy all the works of the devil. **“...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”** (1 John 3:8). The miracles were further to make the people believe in Christ’s messages and Messiahship (Luke 4:40).

THE FIRST DISCIPLES OF CHRIST (Matthew 4:18-25; Luke 4:33-41)

“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him” (Matthew 4:18-20). Two of the four disciples mentioned in the above three verses are Peter and Andrew. The other two – James and John are mentioned in the next verse: **“And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him”** (Matthew 4:21,22).

It is important to note that Jesus called common fishermen to be His disciples. He could have gone to call the rich men and women of renown status, but He did not do that (1 Corinthians 2:26-29).

The message here is significant. It is a privilege therefore, that God has called you among many people to spread the goodness to other youths around you.

“They immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him” (Matthew 4:22). The prompt response of the disciples to Christ’s call is equally instructive. Nothing

should be too precious nor any relationship too dear to sever in order to answer the call of the Master. Christian youths should be prepared to forsake sin and sin-partners and follow Christ. Our discipleship should be for the rest of our lives. **“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”** (Luke 9:62).

As Christ’s ministry was three-fold, the ministry of any Christian youth could also be three-fold: preaching, teaching and healing by wholly dedicating their lives to prayer, obedience and faith in the word of God.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	21:12-22
MON	”	21:23-32
TUE	”	21:33-46
WED	”	22:1-14
THU	”	22:15-22
FRI	”	22:23-30
SAT	”	22:31-46

EVENING

Genesis	38:1-16
”	38:17-30
”	39:1-23
”	40:1-23
”	41:1-16
”	41:17-36
”	41:37-57

Lesson **11**

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

TEXT: Matthew 5-7;
Luke 6:17-49; 13:22-30

MEMORY VERSE: “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying” (Matthew 5:1,2).

The Sermon on the Mount is a practical message or discourse which our Lord Jesus Christ gave to His followers and disciples. This sermon covers chapters five to seven of the book of gospel according to Saint Matthew. It is known as the longest recorded sermon of our Lord.

Question 1: *Why do we call this message of Christ ‘Sermon on the Mount’?*

Jesus preached this message on a mountain. The sermon was directed to the multitude that was gathered to hear Him. Jesus Christ used the opportunity of the gathering of the crowd to minister unto them. Christian youths must (like Christ) use every opportunity to preach wherever crowd are gathered, be it at football field, morning assembly ground in schools, bus stops, marketplace or any other place where crowds are.

The Sermon on the Mount describes what the Christian life of youths should be like while we live here on earth, in our thoughts, words and actions. The Sermon on the Mount is aimed at exposing man’s sin, pointing him to Jesus Christ, demonstrating a way to happiness, showing him how to live a

life that is pleasing to the Lord. It is an exposition of the doctrines of the kingdom of God, pattern of godliness expected of kingdom citizens and precepts for daily Christian living. Our Lord Jesus Christ in this sermon, used both symbols and imagery to emphasise basic truths about Christianity so that youths may understand the demands of God's kingdom and requisite qualifications for heaven.

THE PRECEPT AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF KINGDOM LIFESTYLE (Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 6:20-23; Psalm 42:1,2; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Peter 1:15,16)

“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying” (Matthew 5:1,2). The Lord Jesus began to teach the people about life in the Kingdom. Youth gathering or programme in the church is not for entertainment, but to preach and teach the word of God. Bible-based preaching brings sinners to repentance, transforms lives, matures young converts, establishes believers and grounds them in the faith.

The Lord's sermon on this mount began with what is generally referred to as the “Beatitudes”.

Question 2: *What do you understand by the word “Beatitude”?*

The word “beatitude” has been translated, ‘blessed’, ‘happy’ ‘fortunate’ or ‘highly favoured’. It explains the spiritual state of those who practice the precepts of the Kingdom and live out the practical holy lifestyle.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit....” (Matthew 5:3). The first of the beatitudes teaches on poverty of the spirit. The poor in spirit are youths who are quick to acknowledge their sins, genuinely repent of them and turn to God with their whole heart. Such humble minds, like King David (Psalm 51:3,4) and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) received pardon from the Lord. When a youth acknowledges his or her sins and genuinely turns away from them, he or she becomes

qualified for heaven.

“Blessed are they that mourn...” The second beatitude focuses on those who mourn or cry for sin. The mourner who is blessed is heart-broken because he sees the effect of sin in his life. God’s promise for the mourners is that **“they shall be comforted”**.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”. The third is on meekness. A meek youth is gentle and does not retaliate or revenge when offended. God commended Moses for being meek (Numbers 12:3). God wants His children to be meek (Matthew 11:29).

Fourth, **“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”**. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to have intense desire for more of God. It is to pant after the nature of God with great passion. **“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”** (Psalm 42:1,2). Knowing more of God should be the burning desire in the heart of every godly youth.

The fifth beatitude teaches about mercy. **“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”**. Believers should show mercy even to the undeserving, just like God showed us when we were sinners (1 Peter 1:3).

The Sixth is purity of heart. **“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”**. God demands holiness because He is holy and all those who want to see Him at last must be holy (1 Peter 1:15,16).

Seventh, **“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”**. Believers are also called to be peacemakers and to follow peace with all men. One who preaches to reconcile sinners to God is a peacemaker.

Lastly, **“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”**. Persecution is part of the Christian life (Mark 10:30; 1 Peter 2:21); when it comes, we are to take it in good fate. If anyone suffers as a Christian, he or she should rejoice because there is reward for such in heaven.

THE POSITION OF THE LORD ON CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AND THE LAW (Matthew 5:13-48; 6:1; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; 11:33; Ephesians 5:11,13)

The Lord likens believing youths to salt. As salt, our lives should possess its properties; (i) being white and pure; (ii) being able to prevent decay and corruption; (iii) seasoning by making the world a better place to live. Our Lord also refers to believers as the light of the world. Light shows the way (Nehemiah 9:12). We are to be examples of righteous living in our homes, schools and society. We are not to join multitude around us in their sinful practices, but be distinct so as to be able to point the way. Light also reveals. When light comes, it exposes things kept in the dark. **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** (Matthew 5:16).

Furthermore, the Lord corrected the erroneous belief that He had come to destroy the law: **“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil”** (Matthew 5:17).

Question 3: What does the Law refer to in this context?

The Law here refers to all the five books of Moses and its commandments. The prophets include all the books written by the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and other prophets, major or minor. There are three types of law viz: sacrificial law, ceremonial law and moral law. Jesus actually came to fulfil the Law. All the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Testament foreshadowed Him (Hebrews 10:1). He is the perfect Lamb that was sacrificed for the sin of the whole world, to fulfil the requirement of the Law. However, the moral law remains and its commands are actually restated and reemphasised by Christ in the New Testament. Hence the Lord expects that we keep and teach them. **“...whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:19).

The Lord warns against shallow and pretended righteousness as practised by the Pharisees. Strict adherence

to the dos and don'ts of the ceremonial and sacrificial law in negligent of the moral law attracts the displeasure of the Lord. Focusing on outward forms of righteousness without inward purity makes an individual a hypocrite because there is a disconnection between what is seen by others and what is practised in the secret.

PROPER PERCEPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW (Matthew 5:21-7:29; 19:18; Galatians 5:19; Matthew 19:3-19; Luke 6:27; 11:2)

The Lord proceeds to interpret some Old Testament commands which the Pharisees, by their carnal and selfish interpretation, had corrupted. His interpretation of the Old Testament exposes the hollow and self-serving interpretation of the Pharisees and lays emphasis on the spirit of the word rather than the letter.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment...” (Matthew 5:21,22). All killings have anger at its root. Through anger, Cain slew his brother. To overcome the problem of anger, one must be genuinely converted. Anger must be dealt with before it brings the victim into danger.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27,28). Here the Lord talks about what constitutes adultery (Matthew 5:27,28). Lust in the heart brings adultery (James 1:14,15). Our Lord explains that those who committed the real act and those who did it through mere thought are alike guilty before God. That also calls for a regeneration of the heart, a determination to mortify the deeds of the flesh through the Spirit (Romans 8:13), a decision to remove and refrain from objects that can inflame the passion, like pornographic materials, or getting

too close to the opposite gender. It is in that sense that the Lord commands us to “pluck” out the eyes or “cut” off the hands that could lead us to sin.

Besides, divorce and remarriage while the other partner is still alive constitutes adultery. **“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery”** (Matthew 5:31,32). In contradiction to the prevalent practice of divorcing the wife for every cause, Jesus taught that marriage is a life-time commitment and should not be tampered with. It is one man one wife without divorce or remarriage and no unscriptural co-habitation (Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:2; John 4:16-18).

Our Lord proceeds to correct the false interpretation on the law of swearing. People in the Old Testament were forbidden to lie or swear falsely. Today, Christian youth are commanded, **“Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne”** (Matthew 5:34). It is profane to swear with anything God has made or our life because it belongs to God. Rather, our words should be our bond.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Matthew 5:38). Though this was given as a rule to guide the judges in their dispensation of justice, it teaches non-retaliation for children of God. It should not be extended to private conduct where an individual takes the law into his or her hands. Turning the other cheek is an expression suggesting that the believer should be ready to suffer or go the extra-mile for righteousness’ sake (1 Peter 2:19,20).

The chapter wraps up with the message on love. **“Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies...”** (Matthew 5:43,44). To many, this is strange because enemies should be hated or set up for destruction. But in the kingdom of God, this is not so.

Question 4: *Why should believers love their enemies?*

Loving our enemies makes for the possibility of conversion (Romans 12:20). It also makes us to be like our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:44,45). If Stephen and other apostles of Christ had prayed for the destruction of Saul who later became Paul, Christendom and humanity would have been at a great loss.

True believers are to imitate their heavenly Father's disposition towards all men, be non-discriminating, ready to be kind and benevolent to all. By so doing, we shall be **“perfect, even as [our] Father which is in heaven is perfect”** (Matthew 5:48).

Jesus also denounced the undue emphasis on outward religious practices among the religious groups of His day. A practice He condemned as hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is the bane of Christian living and service. It is doing a good action before men with a design to gain praise and honour to ourselves. Christ addressed the subjects of almsgiving, prayer and fasting, etc. While these should be practised by believers regularly, the Lord calls attention to the possibility of not attracting any reward from God because of the disposition and intent of the heart while doing them.

God sees our hearts, while men only see the outward expression of piety. Alms should be given because we want to help the poor, not because we want public praise or to draw attention to ourselves. In the same vein, prayer should be a sincere request from the heart, otherwise, there will be no reward.

From verses 9-15 of chapter 6, the Lord gives us a model of prayer as a pattern to guide us on what our focus and priorities should be when we pray. This Lord's prayer is not meant to be recited on every occasion or as an attachment at the end of our prayer session.

Question 5: *What lesson can we draw from the content of the Lord's prayer?*

The lessons to be drawn from the Lord's prayer include:

One, recognising the Fatherhood of God; knowing that He is willing to listen to and answer our petitions as a loving Father (Matthew 7:11). Two, giving honour and reverence to the King of kings. Three, desiring that His kingdom and Lordship be established on earth. Four, prioritising God's will above other things. Five, submitting to do His will here on earth. Six, asking Him to provide the necessities of life for us. Seven, seeking pardon for our sins and mistakes. Eight, expressing our readiness to forgive other people's offences against us so that we also can be forgiven. Nine, praying to be preserved from temptations and evil by our heavenly Father.

The Lord also taught that fasting should be done to draw heaven's attention to our needs and not as an act of outward piety. Fasting was instituted as a means of drawing closer to God. Moreover, the Lord admonishes believers to be heaven-minded, laying much emphasis on their spiritual lives and how to get to heaven than to spend all their lives getting earthly wealth that shall perish (2 Peter 3:10-12). Single-minded pursuit of the things of God would make a believer serve God with undivided attention.

Matthew chapter six closes with warning against worry and anxiety. **"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"** (Matthew 6:25). The Lord supported this warning with comparisons between His children and lesser creatures – birds of the air and lilies of the field. If God cared for them, He will care for us. Ours is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and other things shall be given to us (Matthew 6:33).

Moving to the third and last chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ warns believers against being critical or judgmental (Matthew 7:1-5). **"Judge not, that ye be not judged"** (Matthew 7:1). Rather, we are to judge ourselves and make sure we are constantly looking forward to the coming of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:31; 4:5). Besides, when we get busy judging others, we ignore our own faults that should be corrected.

Then the Lord turns His attention again to the subject of

prayer. He had warned that it should not be employed as a means of outward piety or show but as a duty towards God. Here, He reveals prayer as a means of obtaining our requests from God. He said, **“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”** (Matthew 7:7). The believer should come to God with a positive attitude of receiving every request according to His will (1 John 5:14). We are admonished to keep asking until the needs are met. This is immediately followed by what is termed generally as the Golden Rule. **“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”** (Matthew 7:12). Adopting this as a rule of life is said to make an individual impartial, honest, candid, just and fair.

Christ also shows that there are but two gates into eternity; the one which leads to eternal life is “strait” or narrow; and the other to eternal damnation is “broad” or wide. The narrow way does not accommodate the vices that heaven forbids (Revelation 21:27). Everyone is admonished to enter through the narrow gate because it is the way that leads to life eternal. Another warning is that we should be careful of false prophets. False prophets will multiply as we move close to the end (Matthew 24:4,5,11). Satan will send a lot of his agents into the world to deceive as many as possible so that they might be damned. False prophets are known by their works; they deceive through their words (Matthew 24:5); and they engage in false worship which is designed for show (Matthew 23:5).

Finally, the Lord draws attention to the danger of self-deception. Many hear the word of God but do not do it; yet, they claim they are children of God. True worshippers and candidates of heaven both hear and obey the word of God. That is the meaning of building our houses on the rock. **“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”** (Matthew 7:24). But hearers only build their houses on sand. **“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it”** (Matthew

7:27).

When the Lord was done with the sermon, every one present recognised the power and authority in the word of God. Believers are to do no less through the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit so that our hearers can be blessed.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Matthew	23:1-12
MON	"	23:13-24
TUE	"	23:25-39
WED	"	24:1-20
THU	"	24:21-31
FRI	"	24:32-51
SAT	"	25:1-13

EVENING

Genesis	42:1-17
"	42:18-38
"	43:1-20
"	43:21-34
"	44:1-14
"	44:15-34
"	45:1-16

Lesson 12

JESUS: THE HEALER

TEXT: Matthew 8:1-17,
23,34; 9:1-38

MEMORY VERSE: “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick” (Matthew 8:16).

Healing is a divine gift given to man whereby the sick are made whole and their infirmities taken away. It remains an important subject in the Scriptures which practically illustrates the will of God for our wellbeing. The loss of Adam’s right to the tree of life which was for the healing of nations (Revelation 22:2) made healing an indispensable phenomenon in the life of man. Sin brings sicknesses and sufferings contrary to God’s initial plan for humanity. As a result of the Fall, man becomes exposed to various types of diseases that generate ill-health. Jesus therefore, came to redeem man from sin and rescue the world from sicknesses.

The great multitude of people that followed Jesus Christ carried diverse burdens – some were sick, possessed of the demons, poor, lonely and hopeless. The wealth of the centurion in our text could not heal his servant who lieth at home sick of palsy and grievously tormented. The wisdom of man in all areas will fail at the face of fierce battle of life.

Question 1: *How can a youth benefit from the healing virtue of Jesus Christ?*

In times like these, you need a Saviour and an Anchor. Jesus still heals today, and any youth who trusts in Him for healing will not be disappointed. **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”** (Hebrews 13:8). To enjoy this privilege of healing, youths should surrender their lives to Christ. It is as they surrender that they are able to activate and enjoy the numerous healing virtues in Christ.

ANOINTING OF CHRIST OVER THE INFIRMITY OF MAN (Matthew 8:1-17; Acts 10:38; Matthew 4:23,24)

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). Christ’s anointing and power is infinite. During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ went from city to city, from town to town, from village to village and from one synagogue to another, preaching the gospel and healing all manner of sicknesses and diseases. Jesus is Lord; He is the power and wisdom of God, the Eternal One and the power behind the creation of the universe. He is the Master (Matthew 8:19). Jesus is the embodiment of God through which all things were created. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made”** (John 1:1-3).

Question 2: Highlight the various challenges that characterise an average youth life.

Christ’s anointing was so great. No one had an encounter with the power of God and went back the

same. Jesus made the blind to see. He made the lame to walk and the dead to rise. Christ cleansed the leper. He put an end to issues of blood of many years. He healed the demonic and insane; performed all manners of mighty miracles during His earthly ministry. He still does these today.

Meanwhile, the life of an average youth is engulfed with troubles, sorrows, afflictions and all sorts of challenges. In actual fact, an average youth passes through the time of ‘storms and stress’. **“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble”** (Job 14:1). However, we thank God for the anointing of Christ that is capable of providing solutions to infirmities of men. Man would have remained in perpetual woes, catastrophe and multi-dimensional disaster, were it not the provision, power and anointing of Christ that rescued and still rescuing many today.

THE AWFUL CAUSES OF INFIRMITIES IN MAN (Matthew 9:1-8; Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:23; John 5:14)

“And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matthew 9:1,2). Man was created originally in a consistently perfect state of health, without diseases or infirmities. Unfortunately, man fell into the deception of the devil and disobeyed his Creator. As a result, man began to face the consequences of his transgression among which is sickness. So many diseases that are common among youths are closely connected to one sin or the other.

Question 3: *What are the causes of sickness in the life of the youth?*

Satan exercises authority on the unregenerate youth. Sin has been defined as Satan Identification Number or Satan Imparted Nature. It exposes its perpetrators to satanic oppressions of various kinds and as a result, many youths whose lives are void of Christ are mostly found to be carriers of these deadly diseases. Although diseases can as well come as a result of carelessness, our environment and type of activities we engage in could also pose danger to our health. Christian youths are enjoined to keep their environment clean. They are to also observe their work habit. Eating of balance diet at appropriate time, regular exercise and good rest will keep you healthy.

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST OVER INIQUITIES AND INFIRMITIES OF MAN (Matthew 8:23-34; 9:1-8; Isaiah 53:6; Mark 2:5-12; Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11; John 1:29)

The authority of Christ is all-encompassing. Christ died on the cross at Calvary not only to deliver humanity from sin but also to set them free from all consequences of sin. The main purpose of Christ's mission on earth was to set man free from sin. **"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins"** (Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11; John 1:29). The authority of Christ over iniquities is indisputable **"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house"** (Mark 2:10,11). The freedom enjoyed from Christ's offer of salvation, however, is not limited to freedom from sin but also covers freedom from Satan and sicknesses. Thus, we can conclude that Christ saves from Satan (source of sin), sin and sicknesses (consequences of sin).

Question 4: *What are other benefits saved youths can receive from Christ?*

Youths suffering from any form of infirmities are therefore, admonished to look up to Christ, the Saviour, Deliverer and Healer (Numbers 21:8; John 3:14). Even nature obeys Him, the storm ceases at His command, and the supernatural forces are controlled by His authority. His ministry has brought into the world liberation from all forms of operations of the devil as they manifest in different global dimensions. There was never a case of anyone who came to Christ and was disappointed. **“And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak”** (Mark 7:37). Therefore, faith remains the connector for receiving from Christ.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Matthew 25:14-30	Genesis 45:17-28
MON	” 25:31-46	” 46:1-26
TUE	” 26:1-13	” 46:27-34
WED	” 26:14-29	” 47:1-13
THU	” 26:30-46	” 47:14-31
FRI	” 26:47-56	” 48:1-11
SAT	” 26:57-68	” 48:12-22

Lesson 13

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

TEXT: Matthew 8:18-22;
Mark 8:31-38;
Luke 9:57-62;
14:25-35

MEMORY VERSE: “And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

The cost of a material is the price placed on it, and it determines its value. Products with high value attract high cost. In addition, willingness to pay high price depends on the buyer’s understanding of the value of such product. The greatest thing that can happen to any youth on earth is to be among the disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the cost of being Christ’s disciple is less than the benefits. The cost of discipleship is determined by God for any youth that aspires to be a disciple.

Question 1: *Who is a disciple?*

A disciple is a believer who learns the basic principles of how to be like his Master, our Lord Jesus Christ; and ready to pay any price to be like Him. The Scripture says: **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”** (Matthew 11:29). Therefore, to become a disciple, youths must consecrate all to God in order to

please Christ in everything, every time and everywhere.

CALL AND CONVERSION TO GENUINE DISCIPLESHIP (Acts 3:19; 5:30,31; 8:12; Matthew 8:18-22; 18:3; Mark 8:31-38; Galatians 5: 22, 24)

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). The response of youths to God’s call should be done promptly, intelligently and unquestionably.

Question 2: *What are the marks of a genuine Christian youth?*

There should be no unwillingness when God calls you. Christian youths discipleship begins with genuine conversion experience. All youths are born in sin, so in order to properly respond to God’s call to salvation, they must, one, confess their sins to God; two, believe in the death of Christ for the remission of their sins as their only means of salvation; three, accept Christ as their only Saviour and four, forsake all their confessed sins.

When a youth is genuinely converted, the fruit of the Spirit will be evident in his life. Since Christian youths are followers of Christ, the marks of Christ, must be seen in their lives. Some of these marks are: one, selfless love for God and their fellow human beings. Two, joy of salvation due to freedom from guilt and condemnation. Three, peace with God and their fellow human beings. Four, longsuffering during persecution. Five, gentleness and having concern for others. Six, full of good works like God the Father. Seven, faith in God and His words as the final authority in everything. Eight, meekness like Christ unlike unbelievers who are proud like Satan. Nine, self-discipline without

extravagance in anything.

CONSECRATION AND COMMITMENT OF GROWING DISCIPLE (Matthew 8:18-22; 19:28-30; Galatians 6:7-9; John 6:67-69).

God delights in continuous fellowship and relationship with Him. He has given us a perfect example to follow in Christ Jesus. Being a disciple is not optional for Christian youths but mandatory. Any Christian youth that is not making progress spiritually is retrogressing indirectly. There is no room for stagnancy in Christianity. When a Christian youth is committed to Christ, such a life will have the following marks: one, supreme love for Christ (Luke 14:26); two, constant denial of self (Matthew 16:24); three, deliberate choosing the way of the cross (Matthew 16:24); four, zealously following Christ (Matthew 16:24); five, fervent love for Christ's followers (John 13:25); six, exaltation of God's word above human opinions (John 8:31); seven, prompt and complete obedience to God's word (John 15:7-8); and eight, consistent fruit-bearing (John 15:5).

Question 3: *What are the marks of true discipleship?*

CONDITION AND CROWN FOR DISCIPLES (Matthew 19:27-30; Mark 10:28-31; John 14:1-3; Luke 18:28-30; Revelation 2:10)

For overcoming and victorious Christian youths, abundant rewards await them in this world and in eternity. Peter declared: **"Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"**

(Matthew 19:27). This is an indication that Christ's demands from all His disciples are not impossible. Peter and other disciples when Christ was physically here on earth were able to fulfil the demands of discipleship. Since they were able to fulfil the conditions, Christian youths today can also do the same.

Question 4: *What are the rewards for being a genuine disciple?*

The greatest thing to be on earth is to be one of Christ's disciples. The more of His grace in Christian youths, the more such youths will experience God's supernatural power, success, healthy life, provision, promotion, strength, protection, peace of mind, breakthrough, wisdom, victory over all enemies and eternal life. Truly, **“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him”** (1 Corinthians 2:9).

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Matthew	26:69-75	Genesis	49:1-18
MON	"	27:1-14	"	49:19-33
TUE	"	27:15-28	"	50:1-14
WED	"	27:29-44	"	50:15-26
THU	"	27:45-56	Exodus	1:1-22
FRI	"	27:57-66	"	2:1-10
SAT	"	28:1-20	"	2:11-25

Lesson 14

GOD TESTS ABRAHAM

**TEXT: Genesis 22:1-24;
23:1-20**

MEMORY VERSE: “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am” (Genesis 22:1).

Tests, assignments, examinations and trials have been used in schools as instrument of evaluation to assess the grade, quality, strength and performances of students. It may be in form of objective, theory or even practical used to determine the ranking of such students. God, therefore, tested Abraham and today He has been using tests to determine and evaluate faithfulness, loyalty and commitment to do His will.

Question 1: *What is test and what are the purposes of tests in schools?*

“For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things” (2 Corinthians 2:9). God has always used tests in different instances; One, demand great sacrifices (Genesis 22:1,2). Two, lead men in difficult way (Deuteronomy 8:2). Three, give opportunities for choice (1 Kings 3:5). Four, proposing hard tasks (John 6:5). Five, prove the condition of the heart (Exodus 20:20).

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am” (Genesis 22:1).

Question 2: *Why did God test Abraham?*

The word “tempt” in this text means “test”; to discover or proof the quality of Abraham’s loyalty to God. The other meaning is to draw someone to do evil or sin. This is coined from the word “temptation”. It is a subtle weapon being used by the Devil to draw people to sin. **“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed”** (James 1:13,14).

God tested Abraham, not to draw him into sin but to discover the quality, strength and genuineness of his faith. There is a clear difference between “test” and “temptation”. Test comes from God but temptation from the devil. The ultimate aim of test is promotion while that of temptation is to sin against God.

THE COMMAND TO OFFER ISAAC (Genesis 22:1-10, Proverbs 23:26; Deuteronomy 8:2,16; Malachi 3:10)

A command is an order given by a higher authority and it is subject to be obeyed. The highest authority over all mankind is God. All youths are created by God for His own purpose alone. Youths are not the owners of their lives; they all belong to God. Therefore, God owns them and all that they have.

God makes demands from youths today as He did from Abraham, and His demands are not optional but mandatory.

Question 3: *What are the benefits of passing God's tests?*

“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways” (Proverbs 23:26). In spite of the earlier promises given to Abraham in the previous chapters, **“seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation...”** (Genesis 18:18,19). God commanded him to offer the dearest possession he had – his only son – as a sacrifice. No reason was given and no alternative was available; yet, God’s promise to Abraham was that in Isaac shall his seed be called. God was to prove what was in Abraham’s heart through this test to promote him to a higher spiritual level and use him as a model for generations to come (Deuteronomy 8:2,16). God always tests His children in order to promote them. Once you pass His test, He will take you to higher level.

Question 4: *Mention some demands God is making from the youths today.*

Some of the commands of God for a youth today include: One, **“Ye must be born again”** (John 3:3). Two, **“Be ye holy for I am holy”** (1 Peter 1:16). Three, **“If sinners entice thee, consent though not”** (Proverbs 1:10). Four, **“Love not the world”** (1 John 2:15-17). Five, **“Flee fornication”** (1 Corinthians 6:18). Six, **“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15). Seven, **“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse”** (Malachi 3:10). These and other scriptural commands are to be strictly obeyed by every Christian youth.

THE COMMENDATION OF OBEDIENCE TO INSTRUCTIONS (Genesis 22:11-19; Galatians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10)

“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Genesis 22:12).

Question 5: *List the blessings Abraham received as a result of his obedience to God.*

God commended Abraham for his implicit obedience to Him in readiness to offer his only child to Him as sacrifice. As a result of Abraham's obedience, God declared to him: one, I will bless you. Two, I will multiply you as the stars of heaven. Three, I will multiply you as the sands which is upon the sea shore. Four, your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. Five, in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Isaac's cooperation and obedience to his father is highly commendable and instructive. It would have been difficult for Abraham to obey God without the cooperation of Isaac. He did not run away, unlike many ungodly youths today. He did not accuse the God of his father as being callous, uncivilised and wicked. The faith of his father was also in Him and no wonder he inherited great blessings. God promises for obedient youth is still the same today. If you make up your mind to obey God, your promotion, protection and prosperity cannot be hindered by anyone. God will declare His unchanging “I will” upon your life.

The Bible is replete with saints who obeyed God in the face of challenges to their faith in God. We have Daniel (Daniel 6:1-10); the three Hebrew men (Daniel 3:15-

18,23-30); Job (Job 1:8-12; 42:10-16) and others. Christian youths must realise that test of their faith come in their journey of life. They must hold on to their conviction to prove the quality of their relationship with God. **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF SARAH (Genesis 23:1–20; Hebrews 9:27; Mark 8:36,37; Psalm 91:14-16)

“And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her” (Genesis 23:2). Everything that has a beginning must surely have an end. Sarah, the great grandmother of Israel came to the end of her life at the age of one hundred and twenty seven years. Truly we have no continued city here. No matter how longer we live on earth, we shall surely leave this world, either by death or rapture.

The attitude, comportment and reaction of Abraham when he lost his wife Sarah to the cold hands of death was a test case for him. Death is the ultimate end of all mortals. Sarah had finished her course on earth and so she exchanged mortality for immortality because the Bible declared **“...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). This negates re-incarnation and purgatory. However, God has promised all converted youths long life and protection from sudden death: **“...With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation”** (Psalm 91:14-16).

Question 6: *What are the lessons youths can draw about death?*

The affection that Abraham had for his wife could be seen in the way he mourned her passage. There are lessons for Christian youths on Sarah's death; one, at death, mortality is exchanged for immortality. Two, it is an all-leveler for both the rich and poor. Three, all the secret works of men are uncovered. Four, the righteous have a glorious death. Five, our deeds follow us at death. Six, the destiny of the unrepentant sinner is hell. Seven, the believer goes to heaven.

Abraham's conduct among the people was a shining example (Matthew 5:16). There was no extravagance; burial time is a period of sober reflection on the brevity of life. **"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart"** (Ecclesiastes 7:2). How prepared are you for eternity? **"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"** (Mark 8:36,37).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Mark	1:1-8
MON	"	1:9-15
TUE	"	1:16-31
WED	"	1:32-39
THU	"	1:40-45
FRI	"	2:1-12
SAT	"	2:13-22

EVENING

Exodus	3:1-12
"	3:13-22
"	4:1-17
"	4:18-31
"	5:1-14
"	5:15-23
"	6:1-9

Lesson 15

ISAAC MARRIES REBECCA

TEXT: Genesis 24:1-67

MEMORY VERSE: “And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death” (Genesis 24:67).

In this chapter, Abraham demonstrated great concern in ensuring that his son, Isaac, had a godly marriage. He commissioned his eldest servant and gave him the responsibility of finding a good wife for Isaac. The faithful servant prayed to God before embarking on the trip. God in answer to his prayers led him to Rebekah, who through her gracious virtues endeared herself to the servant’s heart. Eventually, the marriage processes and procedures were finalised and a good wife was brought to Isaac.

Question 1: *In this contemporary times, who should dictate the choice of marriage?*

The Bible says: “**Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour from the LORD**” (Proverbs 18:22). God instituted marriage and desires that His children depend on Him in the choice of whom to marry.

ABRAHAM’S PASSION FOR ISAAC’S MARRIAGE (Genesis 24:1-9; 2:18,22-24; Jeremiah 29:11-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Abraham saw the need for Isaac to be settled in marriage

and have a happy and godly home. As at this time, Isaac was now mature and ripe for marriage. It is important for youths to acknowledge the fact that marriage is not for boys and girls. **“Therefore shall a man [not a boy] leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife...”** (Genesis 2:24). Therefore, youths must be mature spiritually, physically, financially and emotionally before getting married.

Question 2: Highlight different areas in which maturity is required before going into marriage.

Abraham was greatly concerned about Isaac’s future. He took it upon himself to ensure that Isaac had a godly marriage. As a youth, you should appreciate the concern of your godly biological and spiritual parents. The Scripture says: **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end”** (Jeremiah 29:11). God desires that you get married, even more than you desire it, when you are ripe for it. After God created Adam, it was not Adam that agitated for marriage. It was God Himself who declared that **“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”** (Genesis 2:18). Godly youths must desist from ungodly and desperate means of finding a life partner. Ungodly methods such as dating and engaging in ‘boyfriend-girlfriend’ relationship displease God and lead to an inevitable danger. **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”** (Hebrews 13:4).

Question 3: In what areas should Christian youths avoid unequal yoke with unbelievers?

Abraham called his eldest servant and specifically charged him to **“...go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac”** (Genesis 24:4). He declared it in clear terms that, **“thou shall not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites”** (Genesis 24:3). The Canaanites were known to be ungodly and idolaters.

Abraham would therefore, not want his godly seed to mingle and be yoked together with idolaters. This is quite instructive. A child of God must not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?”** (2 Corinthians 6:14). In fact, it would be an unwise decision for a believer to be intimately related with unbelieving youths in evil association. Amos declares that **“Can two walk together except they be agreed?”** (Amos 3:3).

Abraham instructed his servant to swear to him by putting his hand under his thigh (verses 2,3,9). This was a means of obtaining the servant’s commitment to the task that Abraham gave him. New Testament believers are, however, commanded to **“...swear not...”**. Rather, **“let your communication be, Yea, yea: Nay, nay...”** (Matthew 5:34-37).

APPROPRIATE PROCESS FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (Genesis 24:10-14,21-60; Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 19:14)

Having committed himself to the task assigned to him by Abraham, the servant immediately swung into action. The first step he took was to pray to God for divine guidance (verse 12-14). The servant must have learnt the importance of prayer from his master, Abraham.

Abraham’s servant called on the name of God for direction. He made specific requests to God to confirm His leading and answers to his prayers. Believing youth must realise at the point of making decision, they must pray to God for leading. God is the perfect matchmaker and He alone can find a suitable partner. During the Old Testament dispensation, believers utilised different means of hearing from God. In the case of Gideon, he had to depend on the sign of the fleece (Judges 6:36-40). When the apostles were to select a replacement for Judas Iscariot, they cast lots (Acts 1:23-26). However, in the post-Pentecostal dispensation, we now have the Holy Spirit as our Guide. **“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come”** (John

16:13).

Believers today can recognise God's voice and perceive divine guidance in marriage or any other decision in life through the following: inner witness of the Spirit and peace of mind (Hebrews 10:15); divine restraint by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6,7); divinely-ordered circumstances (1 Samuel 9:16-20); revelation through dreams and visions (Acts 16:9,10); divine impression of God's word (Psalm 119:105,130); strong and pure feeling of love for the man/woman (Song of Solomon 8:6,7); spirit-led counsel by godly leaders (Proverbs 11:14).

Question 4a: Does God still speak/lead His children today in area of marriage? 4b: Mention ways through which God speaks to His children today.

God answered the prayer of Abraham's servant through a divinely-arranged sequence of events. The servant met Rebekah at the well of water and her kind virtues were easily spotted out. She showed hospitality to the servant and his camels. Thereafter, in verse 22, proposal was made to Rebekah in accordance with their tradition. In a Bible-believing church as ours, it is important that laid down procedures are adhered to in order to avoid chaos and confusion. After praying to know God's will, a brother/sister is not expected to just walk up to the sister, and vice versa, to make his/her proposal. He/she must exercise patience and must be ready to go through the laid down procedures. Thereafter, the intending couple would undergo a courtship period of between six to nine months. After the period of courtship, the marriage is then consummated after the required dowry and bride price have been paid.

"And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord" (verse 26). With the servant's prayers obviously answered, he glorified God. As a youth, you must cultivate the habit of praising God when your prayers are answered. God inhabits the praises of his people. In verse 27, the servant blessed God and could boldly confess that **"...I being in the way, the LORD led me..."**. As believing youths, we must be able to boldly say in all circumstance that we were

led by God (Romans 8:14).

After the servant's proposal encounter with Rebekah, she ran home and narrated all what happened to her family members. Parents must be able to cultivate a relationship of openness with their children. Children must also be open-minded to their parents. Rebekah's parents gave their consent to the marriage proposal in submission to God's will. Her consent was also sought and she affirmatively responded **"...I will go"** (verse 58). Her parents thereafter, blessed the union before sending Rebekah to her husband.

ACCEPTABLE PORTRAIT FOR CHRISTIAN YOUTHS (Genesis 24:15-20, 61-67; Proverbs 31:10-31; 18:22)

From today's study, it is clear that the possession of a godly character is essential and not negotiable for intending couples. There is no shortcut to success other than preparation. Abraham's servant had prayed to God and had requested some events which he prayed would happen as confirmation of God's leading (verses 13 and 14). In verse 15, Rebekah was right on time at her duty post. She was hardworking and obedient. If she had disobeyed her parents and had decided not to come on this day, she would have missed God's will for her life. Also, she is described as **"very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her"** (verse 16). Despite her beauty, she was chaste and virtuous. This is a great challenge for today's youths. Chastity is a virtue which we must cherish and hold on to dearly.

Question 5: Mention and explain the virtues which a youth must develop and possess in preparation for a successful future marriage.

Some other virtues demonstrated by Rebekah which youths must emulate include hospitality, humility, diligence, etc. Rebekah joyfully let down her pitcher and gave drink to the servant and his camels upon request. This endeared him to the servant and he further established a relationship with her. Also, she was cheerful in her dealings with strangers.

She delighted and was willing to go extra mile in assisting others. Youths must be careful when dealing with strangers today. Also, it is not proper for a boy or girl to start running after the opposite gender under the guise of trying to help.

All these virtues demonstrated by Rebekah eventually led her into God's will. God expects youths to possess the gracious character of the virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:10-31). These virtues are for a blissful marriage life.

As soon as Rebekah saw Isaac her husband, she demonstrated great humility by alighting from the camel that brought her and covered herself with a veil (verses 64,65). Isaac eventually took Rebekah home and she became a source of comfort to him. Marriages contracted in God's will and way eventually leads to marital bliss.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Mark	2:23-28
MON	"	3:1-12
TUE	"	3:13-21
WED	"	3:22-35
THU	"	4:1-20
FRI	"	4:21-29
SAT	"	4:30-41

EVENING

Exodus	6:10-30
"	7:1-13
"	7:14-25
"	8:1-19
"	8:20-32
"	9:1-12
"	9:13-35

Lesson 16

ESAU SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT

TEXT: Genesis 25:1-34

MEMORY VERSE: “And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?” (Genesis 25:31,32).

Our study today introduces us to the consideration of the end of Abraham’s life. The text reflects on his loneliness due to the death of Sarah, his wife. It also shows his care and concern for his children. The passage highlights the problems, patience and prayer life of Isaac’s family. It is obvious from Isaac’s family experience that there is no problem that can defy God’s intervention. Though the wife had delay in child bearing, “...**Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived**” (Genesis 25:21).

Question 1: *What lesson does the life of Esau pose to a Christian youth that desires a fulfilled life?*

Esau, though a clever hunter by profession represents careless, foolish and visionless youths who demonstrates carefree attitude to the pursuit of their future goals. On the part of Jacob, his life was not plain, but cunning and deceptive. He used food to obtain the birthright of his brother. A Christian youth cannot emulate such a character. God wants us to be our brothers’ keeper, instead of being a supplanter.

CARE AND CONCERN OF ABRAHAM FOR HIS CHILDREN

(Genesis 25:1-18; 18:18,19; Matthew 5:45; Ephesians 6:1-3; Romans 12:18)

After the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah, Abraham decided to take a wife named Keturah, who gave birth to six children namely Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. The life of Abraham poses a great challenge to the youths of today on the necessity of foresight in the fulfilment of their dreams. Abraham showed concern for Isaac, the covenant child, and his other children. Thus, he gave large portion of his inheritance to Isaac (Genesis 25:5). He also gave sizeable gifts to his other children for their sustenance (verse 6) before sending them away from Isaac to avoid unhealthy rivalry and conflict.

Question 2: *What lessons do we draw from Abraham's concern and preparation for his children's future?*

The cooperation of Abraham's children at his burial confirmed the acceptability of his care and concern for them. How instructive is this to youths on the importance of preparation for the future. There are fundamental lessons to be learnt such as: one, just like the children of Abraham utilised what he gave them to make a fortune, we should make use of what our parents can afford now to achieve our desired destiny. Two, proper preparation prevents poor performance. Youths must cooperate with their parents to prepare adequately for a glorious future (Ephesians 6:1-3). Three, youths whose parents are unbelievers that are polygamous should take a cue from Isaac who related well with his half-brothers. The Bible encourages us to live peaceably with all men as much as it lies within us (Hebrews 12:14; Romans 12:18).

CONFLICT OF CHARACTERS: ESAU AND JACOB (Genesis 25:19-27; 27: 6-10; Hosea 12:3; Hebrews 10:36)

After twenty years of marriage with no child, Isaac turned to the Lord in prayer for his wife and God answered (Genesis

25:21). Though Isaac was a child of promise, he still needed to pray for the fulfilment of God's promises (Ezekiel 36:37).

Question 3a: *How should youths handle the challenges of life facing them today?* 3b: *Enumerate the importance of prayer in the life of a Christian youth.*

Many youths suffer today and remain below God's expectation for their lives because they failed to pray. The prayer of Daniel broke the hold of the prince of Persia over Israel (Daniel 9,10). In like manner, when the children struggled in Rebekah's womb, she prayed and sought the face of God. The result of that prayer brought up a revelation that lasted through many generations. A song writer said, "O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear - All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer".

The revelation God gave to Rebekah showed a conflict of two nations which she would give birth to later. This Scripture by extension reveals to us the fight for supremacy and unnecessary rivalry among the children of men. They are unmindful of the biblical truth that, **"It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy"** (Romans 9:16). God has a plan for all His children. It is needless for us as youths to engage anyone in a conflict over temporary things of this world. Christian youths should not strive over the selection of school prefects, school fellowship leadership or any other leadership position. **"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another"** (Psalm 75:6,7).

Question 4: *Outline the character differences between Esau and Jacob.*

The prophecies concerning Esau and Jacob are: (1) One will be stronger than the other. (2) The elder shall serve the younger. At birth, Jacob grabbed his brother's heel. As they grew older, their personalities became more prominent. Esau was a cunning and good hunter while Jacob was a man dwelling in tents, probably helping the mother with domestic

chores. Esau was hairy, while Jacob had smooth skin. Youth should realise that we are all created with different character traits that is meant to complement one another.

THE CARELESSNESS OF ESAU WITH HIS BIRTHRIGHT

(Genesis 25:28-34; Ecclesiastes 11:9,10; Acts 1:17-20; Hosea 8:3; Proverbs 1:10; 23:23)

A temporary hunger made Esau to despise his birthright because he relegated its importance. The position God has given him as first born is exchanged for a pot of pottage. Christian youths need to control their appetite for food and material possession.

Question 5: *What can Christian youths liken to be their birthright today?*

What we can liken to our birthright today includes: (a) Christian experiences such as salvation, sanctification and Holy Ghost baptism. (b) Standard scriptural doctrines of the Bible. (c) Spiritual gifts. (d) Our moral integrity and honesty (Job 2:9). (e) Your God-given talents and dreams. These birthrights should be held tight and must not be traded for anything; because, more often than not, Satan in his subtle way desires to take away our godly inheritance (1 Peter 5:8).

Question 6: *How can a youth trade off his spiritual birthright?*

From the life of Esau, youths should be careful not to lose their birthright in the following areas: (a) Careless visitations. (b) Undue closeness to opposite gender. (c) Lack of patience in material possession. (d) Bad influence from friends. (e) Lack of self-control. (f) Lack of spiritual examination and evaluation (1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Examples abound in the Bible of people who lost their birthright such as Reuben, Amnon, Samson and King Saul. Many had to live the rest of their lives in sorrow due to the loss, like Esau who sought it with tears. **“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel**

of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears". (Hebrews 12:16,17). The consequence of losing one's birthright is grave. For Saul, it cost him total removal from the lineage of kingship. Other consequences are the loss of God's presence, power, plan and protection from such individual (Acts 1:17-20; 1 Samuel 31:3-6).

To keep our birthright, we must be determined like Joseph (Genesis 39:7-9), Daniel (Daniel 1:8), The Rechabites (Jeremiah 35), and consecrated like Joshua and his family (Joshua 24:15). Christian youths should live after these good examples, but not like Esau.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Mark	5:1-20	Exodus	10:1-20
MON	"	5:21-34	"	10:21-29
TUE	"	5:35-43	"	11:1-10
WED	"	6:1-13	"	12:1-15
THU	"	6:14-29	"	12:16-28
FRI	"	6:30-44	"	12:29-36
SAT	"	6:45-56	"	12:37-51

Lesson 17

GOD PROSPERS ISAAC

TEXT: Genesis 26:1-35

MEMORY VERSE: “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great” (Genesis 26:12,13).

This chapter unfolds the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic covenant. **“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee”** (Genesis 17:7). Isaac, the inheritor of the promise did not get the promise fulfilled on the bed of roses, he gave it what it needed (industry) and was able to experience an hundred fold success.

Question 1: *What singled out Isaac for an hundred fold success?*

“Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him” (verse 12). Moreover, he displayed some godly virtues such as forgiveness and integrity. A Christian youth must have desire, discipline, diligence and be determined coupled with God’s promises to be able to succeed.

GOD’S SECURITY AMIDST CHALLENGES (Genesis 26:1-11, 24; 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 22:16-18; Matthew 5:13-16; Ephesians 4:25; Proverbs 29:25)

“And there was a famine in the land, beside the first

famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar" (verse 1). Doing the will of God does not mean that there will not be trials, and because there are unfailing promises of God does not mean that our faith will not be tested. Isaac, despite the promise of God had trial but God did not leave him alone. **"And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of"** (verse 2). To assure him of His abiding presence, God appeared to him. As God appeared to Isaac in the time of his predicament to guide and stop him from going down to Egypt, so He does today to His children who seek His face and do His will in times of famine and trouble. Therefore, Christian youths should seek God's guidance before they make any move especially in times of trials.

God reaffirmed His promise to Abraham and gave the reason for the fulfilment, thereby encouraged Isaac to also follow after his father's steps. **"Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws"** (verse 5). Abraham was blessed because of his obedience to God's call (Genesis 12:1,4; 22:2,3). Isaac, no doubt, obeyed God. **"And Isaac dwelt in Gerar"** (verse 6). Today, obedience is still bringing blessings and favour of God.

Question 2a: What can Christian youths learn from the obedience of Isaac by not going down to Egypt? 2b: Should a Christian youth lie to protect himself?

God's will may look humanly unwise, but obedience to it is always the best. Christian youths are to walk by faith not by sight.

"And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her" (Genesis 26:9). Christian youths need to trust in the Lord for protection of their lives and properties no matter the danger, and never yield to pressure to lie or cover up the truth. God hates lying. **"He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight"** (Psalm 101:7). We should be the light in the world (Matthew 5:13) **"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world"** (Philippians

2:15).

THE SECRET OF ISAAC'S PROSPERITY (Genesis 26:12-23; Ecclesiastes 4:4; Proverbs 16:7; 27:4; Matthew 5:41)

Isaac was prompt in obeying God like his father Abraham. This led to supernatural breakthrough and super-abundance from the Almighty God. **“Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him”** (verse 12). God blesses efforts. An obedient heart opens the door of heaven. Isaac was industrious and enterprising. Laziness, idleness and slothfulness or procrastination had no place in his life.

“And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great... and the Philistines envied him” (Genesis 26:13,14). Seeing the blessings of God upon Isaac, the Philistines envied him. Therefore, they conspired together to stop him. However, we should remember that, **“The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it”** (Proverbs 10:22). The man that God has blessed can no longer be cursed or stopped by anyone.

Question 3: As a Christian youth, what lesson can you learn from the envious attitude of the Philistines?

“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:16). Envy is sin, it leads to constant opposition and strife. It should not be mentioned among Christians. Isaac was chased from one well to the other, but he demonstrated godly character. He did not strive with them but moved to another place, valley of Gerar. There, his herdsmen dug two wells which were violently taken away, named Esek and Sitnah – meaning contention and hatred respectively – which represent unholy behaviour in the world today. God is love, those who are born again cannot be contentious and hateful. Finally, Isaac moved away from there, **“And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land”** (verse 22).

Question 4: Point out some salient lessons in Isaac's path to prosperity.

Life is full of challenges. Christian youths who persevere and put their trust in God in spite of challenges will definitely overcome. Isaac prospered because of the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic covenant. This account of Isaac's prosperity teaches us the faithfulness of God (Genesis 26:3,4). God renewed the Abrahamic covenant with Isaac and blessed him.

GOD'S SUCCOUR FOR THE FAITHFUL (Genesis 26:24-35; Galatians 3:13,14; Psalm 25:12-14; Matthew 19:29; Romans 2:4; Proverbs 16:7; Revelation 21:7)

After God had settled Isaac and his household in the valley of Gerar, He appeared to him in the night to reassure him of the Abrahamic blessings and His presence. **"...I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake"** (Genesis 26:24). It is worthy of note that it was not only at the time of trial that God appeared to Isaac. He also appeared to him in time of abundance. We need God's fellowship in times of trial and triumph. In response to God's reassurance and faithfulness, Isaac built an altar, dedicated himself and affirm his total allegiance unto God.

Question 5: *In what way should sinners, backsliders and believers respond to the goodness of God?*

God is also merciful to all sinners, backsliders, and believers alike. Our response to His ever loving care and benevolence and gracious providence should drive us to the altar of salvation and consecration to His course. To become heirs of His kingdom, sinners and backsliders must come to Christ in repentance. While believers should dedicate their lives unto Him till the end.

Abimelech came to Isaac in the company of Ahuzzath and Phichol to make peace, having discovered the mighty presence of God with him. **"And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee..."** (verses 28,29). Being a peace loving individual, Isaac entered into a covenant with them after which they feasted and parted in peace (verses 30,31). The evidence of God's grace is seen in the life of Isaac. He received his enemies and persecutors, entertained them and made covenant of peace

with them. Like Isaac, every Christian youth should learn to show love to their enemies and persecutors (Matthew 5:44).

The blessing and comfort of the Lord did not stop flowing in the life and family of Isaac as more wells were discovered and dug. (verses 32,33). Again, Isaac and Rebekah showed a displeasure in respect of the marriage of Esau (Genesis 26:34,35). **“In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not”** (Psalm 15:4). Christian youths should always be grieved at the sight of every iniquity and flagrant disobedience to God’s holy standard in marriage and other areas of life.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Mark	7:1-13	Exodus	13:1-16
MON	“	7:14-23	“	13:17-22
TUE	“	7:24-30	“	14:1-12
WED	“	7:31-37	“	14:13-31
THU	“	8:1-13	“	15:1-18
FRI	“	8:14-26	“	15:19-27
SAT	“	8:27-33	“	16:1-17

Lesson 18

THE TREACHERY AND FLIGHT OF JACOB

TEXT: Genesis 27:1-46;
28:1-22

MEMORY VERSE: “And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me” (Genesis 27:19).

Isaac had preference for his first son, Esau because he always enjoyed meat from the field which Esau always provided for him. **“And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob”** (Genesis 25:28). **“And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son...”** (Genesis 27:5). This made Jacob to deceive his father based on his mother’s counsel. Jacob obtained the blessing intended for his twin brother, Esau, through deception.

This led to great enmity between the two brothers which eventually forced Jacob to flee from his family and hometown (Genesis 27:42,43). Jacob got the blessing but paid dearly for it. He ran away for fear of being killed by his brother and could not come back until many years after his mother had died.

Question 1: *What are the consequences of sin?*

The consequence of sin is always greater than what sinners bargained for. It may delay progress, destroy joy and relationship, cause untimely death and eventually lead to eternity in hell.

THE DAMNABLE EFFECT OF DECEPTION (Genesis 27:1-30; 2 Samuel 13:6-14, 21-33; 2 Kings 5:21-27; Proverbs 11:21)

“And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse my son; only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands and upon the smooth of his neck” (Genesis 27:13,16). Rebekah accidentally heard her husband’s conversation with Esau and devised a plan to have the blessing diverted from Esau to Jacob. Isaac was surprised at the quick arrival of the dainty food. “Who art thou, my son?” Isaac asked. But Jacob lied that he was Esau.

Question 2: *From our text, explain in what way Jacob profaned the name of the Almighty God.*

“And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me” (Genesis 27:20). Again, Jacob lied, but this time against God; thereby profaned God’s name and broke the third commandment: **“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain”** (Exodus 20:7). The Scripture warns that hell is the destiny of all liars (Revelation 21:8). Therefore, all heaven-bound youths should always tell the truth, no matter the consequence.

Question 3: *Give examples from the Bible of those involved in sin of deception and the consequences.*

Godly youths need to know when to say “Yes” or “No”. Jacob was negatively influenced by his mother into deception. The Scripture warns in Proverbs 11:21 that **“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished”**. Deception, craftiness, disguise or falsehood are condemned by God and will definitely attract great punishment.

Covetousness and lies are twin brothers of deception. We

have various cases of deception in the Scripture. Amnon deceived his father, David to fulfil his lust on his half-sister, Tamar. Although, Amnon's evil plan was successfully hatched, his life went for it. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha was not left out in the sin of covetousness and deception. The man that was being discipled to be a prophet of the nation, deceived Naaman, collected two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of garments and eventually was afflicted with the leprosy of Naaman. **"Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell"** (Proverbs 9:17,18).

Jacob narrowly escaped the discovering of his deception by his father. He escaped his brother Esau from meeting him with his father after he had received the blessing. This could have led to a great catastrophe.

THE DESPERATION OF ESAU FOR BLESSING (Genesis 27:31-46; Hebrews 12:17; 1 Samuel 15:25-28)

Christian youths should learn from the desperation of Esau for blessing. The beginning of Esau's problem was when he despised his birthright. No youth should abuse the privileges he has in Christ Jesus. He should not cast away the precious things God has given him (Hosea 8:3).

Esau refused to give up, even when he heard that his brother had taken his blessing. **"And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. ...Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"** (Genesis 27:35,36). Youths should not give up on praying. They should persist until their request is granted (Genesis 32:26).

On the other hand, God is merciful, Christian youths should not lose hope when faced with an unfortunate situation (Romans 10:13).

Question 4: *How should Christian youths behave when deeply hurt by people?*

Although Esau received some blessings, yet he hated his brother deeply and this led to his decision to kill Jacob.

Hatred and anger are dangerous and sinful. Ephesians 4:30,31 says **“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice”**. Hatred grieves the Spirit of God and hinders believers’ prayer. Whatever evil anybody might have done unto us, we should pray for grace to forgive and never to retaliate.

THE DREAM OF JACOB AT BETHEL (Genesis 28:1-22; Acts 7:2,3; Hosea 12:12)

“And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother and was gone to Padan-aram” (Genesis 28:7). Isaac called Jacob and blessed him before he (Jacob) left for Padan-aram. Jacob obeyed his parents to leave and on his journey, he saw a vision. He lighted upon a certain place and spent all night, because the sun was set. And he dreamt and beheld a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it (Genesis 28:11,12).

Question 5: *Enumerate God’s promised blessings for a godly youth.*

Jacob’s obedience to his parents during his crisis is commendable. It is an evidence of submission. It opens door to God’s revelation and blessing. Obedience brings blessing. There are blessings attached to obeying our spiritual and biological parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). God promised Jacob these blessings: (1) The land where on thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. (2) Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth. (3) Thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. (4) In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (5) I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest.

Question 6: *Why should believers pay tithes?*

Jacob’s encounter with God was transformative and life-

changing. The Lord reaffirmed the Abrahamic covenant with him. In this encounter, Jacob re-established his relationship with God and made a vow of allegiance to worship and serve God. Erecting a stone of memorial to God, he promised to “**give the tenth**” of all that the Lord would give to him (Genesis 28:22). This is a reminder that believers should honour God with their tithes and offering (Malachi 3:10).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Mark	8:34-38
MON	“	9:1-13
TUE	“	9:14-29
WED	“	9:30-41
THU	“	9:42-50
FRI	“	10:1-12
SAT	“	10:13-22

EVENING

Exodus	16:18-36
“	17:1-16
“	18:1-13
“	18:14-27
“	19:1-8
“	19:19-25
“	20:1-17

Lesson 19

JACOB'S SOJOURN IN LABAN'S HOUSE

TEXT: Genesis 29:1-35;
30:1-43; 31:1-55

MEMORY VERSE: “And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month” (Genesis 29:14).

Jacob left his family to seek for refuge with his uncle, Laban, as a result of the consequences of his deceptive conduct to obtain his father's blessing. Esau hated Jacob and sought for his life (Genesis 27:41). This threat to his life made his parents resolved to send him away to his uncle, Laban, who lived in Haran. In the previous chapter, Jacob had an encounter with God, who promised to protect and prosper him in a strange land (Genesis 28:1-5; 28:10-22).

JACOB SERVES IN LABAN'S HOUSE (Genesis 29:1-30; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 1 Kings 11:28; Proverbs 22:29; Galatians 6:9)

When Jacob got to the land of the people of the east (Genesis 29:1), he saw a well in a field and three flocks of sheep lying by it (verse 2). In a polite, courteous and friendly manner, he made inquiries concerning Laban. The shepherds answered all his questions. Youths should be inquisitive about their environments and the people around their homes, schools and work places.

Question 1: *Mention some good qualities found in Jacob.*

It is essential to note that Jacob was polite to the shepherds in the field (verse 4). He was not rude, rash or unsociable in

his communication. However, Christian youths should be careful in giving direction and personal information to strangers (verses 4-8).

Jacob showed genuine concern about the total well-being of Laban and his entire family (verse 6). He helped Rachel to roll the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban (Genesis 29:6,9,10). Hence, Christian youths should cultivate the attitude of helping others both at home, church or in the society. It was the friendly and helpful disposition of Jacob that made him to get the necessary information that affected his future positively. Some Christian youths find it difficult to give helping hands to elderly one around them. This might be one of the reasons they cannot get helpers when necessary. If you belong to this group, you have to learn from Jacob.

There must be a thorough and satisfying investigation about the identities and backgrounds of strangers, classmates, peers who are of the same gender with us before we commit ourselves to them in friendship, while intimate friendship with opposite gender should be avoided by all means in order to avoid temptations.

Every youth should emulate the virtue of Rachel who kept her father's flock. They must be willing to get involved in some domestic works. Rachel assumed a leadership position like David by taking care of her father's flock. It is the responsibility of Christian youths to do task assigned to them by their parents without delay.

Jacob introduced himself to Rachel and greeted her with a kiss. This was in line with the culture of the people (verse 11, 13). It was greeting devoid of immoral desire. Jacob did not hide his identity from his mother's relations unlike many youths today who are not willing to reveal their identity to other children of God.

JACOB SUCCEEDS IN LABAN'S HOUSE (Genesis 29:15-35; Matthew 19:4-6; Genesis 2:18)

After spending one month, Laban asked Jacob to be his hired labourer and he agreed. Youths must always be willing and ready to work with their hands (Genesis 29:15,27; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13). He decided to serve Laban for seven

years for his daughter Rachel whom he loved. Jacob was focused. He knew why he was sent to Haran. It was for him not to marry from the children of inhabitants where Isaac sojourned and to avoid being killed by Esau his brother. At this time, the inhabitants of the land were godless. The same applies to Christian youths today. The Bible says, **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”** (2 Corinthians 6:14,15). Saved youths should therefore, be focused on the necessary things whether on academic pursuit, work or marriage, they should put on their best to achieve it.

After serving for seven years, Laban gave Leah to Jacob in marriage unknown to him. Jacob was displeased with him when he discovered it. He decided to serve another seven years for Rachel. This was how Jacob went into Polygamy.

Question 2: *What is polygamy?*

Polygamy is marrying more than one wife. It was a common practice in the Old Testament. Some men still do the same today. But this is against the will of God. Christ revealed in the New Testament, **“...that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female”** (Matthew 19:4). Polygamy brought Jacob into many troubles. His home was filled with rancour, rivalry, quarrel, frustrations, tension, jealousy, hatred and terrible wickedness (Genesis 37:4,8,18,20). No one who is heavenly-minded should practice polygamy. Meanwhile, Rachel was barren. From her barrenness, we should understand that marriage can sometime experience challenges. It was through prayer that Rachel conquered. Any believer who may experience delay in child-bearing should seek the face of God fervently. And the God that answered Rachel will not disappoint (Genesis 30:2,23).

Apart from marriage, Jacob also had many children in the house of Laban. It was from these children that the Patriarchs originated. These children with the two sons of Joseph became the twelve tribes of Israel. Working for Laban

was not without challenge for Jacob. He changed his wages ten times. But he did not behave unseemly. He was still dedicated to his work. Christian youths should learn from it. Though Laban treated him unfaithfully, Jacob was later blessed by God. He had so many cattle and sheep. He became so rich in Laban's house. **"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands"** (Genesis 32:10). Whenever you are hard working, coupled with fear and faith in God, certainly, He will prosper you. **"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"** (Psalm 1:3).

Christian youths should know that God is interested in whatever they are going through (Genesis 31:12). Laban thought to continue to exploit Jacob but God blessed his diligence and patience. God brought the many years of oppression, and servitude to an end. He generously and graciously complemented the losses he had suffered while serving Laban (1 Peter 2:18; Colossians 3:23,24).

JACOB FLED FROM LABAN'S HOUSE (Genesis 31:1-55; Luke 15:11-13,18)

"And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before. And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee" (Genesis 31:2,3). Jacob observed that Laban was no longer happy with him. And he felt it was dangerous to continue to live with him. As he thinks on this, the Lord told him to return home with a promise of being with him. How instructive for Christian youths to have all their lives under the guidance of God on their choice of career and in all their endeavours here on earth.

Having informed and obtained the support of the wives, he commenced the journey without informing Laban. **"And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled"** (verse 22). And Laban pursued after him (Genesis 31:22-24). Later,

he overtook them after seven days of pursuit. But God warned him in a dream not to hurt Jacob or to speak to him at all. God protected Jacob (Genesis 32:24). He knows how to deliver His children from troubles. Christian youths should not be afraid of the rage of man. As long as they remained on God's side, no one can lay their hands on them. **"For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city"** (Acts 18:10).

Question 3: What should be the posture of Christian youths when pursued by an enemy?

When saved youths are being chased by the enemies, they should maintain a fearless posture. The Bible says, **"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"** (Romans 8:31). They should pray to God for protection and deliverance from the wicked. They should also know that God will fight their battles for them. They should trust God even if the situation at hand is frightful. God is in control and will cause the storm to be over soon.

As Jacob left with his wives and children, Rachel stole the idol of his father. This simply means that Rachel has no faith in the God of Israel. This is contrary to the case of Ruth who forsook her country's god. She went with Naomi because of her faith in the God of Israel. Rachel paid for this. She told a lie of not stealing the idol. Jacob had placed a curse of death on whomsoever it would be found. Though it was not found with anybody, Rachel died when she was about to be delivered of Benjamin.

Question 4: What is the implication of stealing?

It is sinful to steal, and anyone who steals will pay for it. **"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Romans 6:23). Apart from eternal damnation in hell for the unrepentant thief, it brings shame, disgrace and imprisonment when found guilty in a law court.

Question 5: What do you learn from Jacob's quick reaction to the accusation of Laban?

There must be thorough investigation into a matter before we jump into conclusion. Jacob was impatient and hasty in his response to Laban's accusation of his missing idols (Genesis 31:36-42). After the rage of Laban over his missing idol, he reconciled with Jacob. This reconciliation ended up in a covenant between them (Genesis 31:43-55; 26:26-31; 21:22-32; Numbers 25:12). When a Christian youth has any case with anyone, he should seek for reconciliation. He should not allow it to lead to hatred and withdrawal from such person. There should be complete forgiveness from the heart. True believers should strive to live in peace with everyone and follow peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14; Romans 8:21; Psalm 34:12-16; 1 Peter 3:10-13).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Mark	10:23-31
MON	"	10:32-45
TUE	"	10:46-52
WED	"	11:1-14
THU	"	11:15-26
FRI	"	11:27-33
SAT	"	12:1-12

EVENING

Exodus	20:18-26
"	21:1-17
"	21:18-36
"	22:1-15
"	22:16-31
"	23:1-13
"	23:14-33

Lesson 20

JACOB PREVAILS AT JABBOK

**TEXT: Genesis 32:1-32;
33:1-20**

MEMORY VERSE: “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28).

After sealing a non-aggression pact with Laban, Jacob continued his journey homeward. He met “angels of God” on his way and recognised that “This is God’s host”. Jacob sent a message of appeasement to his twin brother, Esau. The feedback that his brother was coming to meet him with 400 men of war brought fear and distress. He came to his wit’s end; danger was looming large and near in his thoughts and imagination. Death and destruction would soon be unleashed on the women, children, servants and flock. It was this painful premonition that drove Jacob to pray with unparalleled intensity and wrestling with a divine personality at Jabbok.

God answered his prayer by turning his aggrieved brother to a friend. The account teaches the benefits of obeying God, absolute dependence on God at difficult times and the possibilities of effectual, fervent prayer of importunate seekers of divine intervention. God is a very present Help in trouble. Life’s challenges will turn to testimonies to the glory of God if we tread the path of obedience and pray with fervency.

JACOB SENDS PRESENTS AND MESSENGERS TO APPEASE ESAU (Genesis 32:1-21; Matthew 5:23,24; 18:15-18; 2 Peter 1:4; Nehemiah 1:8,9)

The purpose of Jacob's gifts was to pacify Esau. He sent messengers ahead with presents. Christian youths must not employ carnal methods to solve their problems.

Question 1: *What are some carnal methods youths employ to get rid of their challenges today?*

Youths facing academic failure hire mercenary to write examinations for them and engage in other malpractices. Those facing financial difficulty resolve to have boyfriends, sugar daddies and mummies to have their needs met. Some girls give their bodies to get marks from teachers and lecturers, etc.

Jacob's goodwill message of his sojourn with Laban and his peaceful return with wealth was of no value to his offended brother, Esau. His servants returned with frightful news of Esau's coming to meet him with four hundred men. Jacob thought within himself, **"I will appease him with present that I sent before me, and afterward I will see his face"** but he was wrong. **"And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him"** (Genesis 32:6). Time does not always heal hurts and injuries done to our fellow youths. What is the use of gifts without repentance and restitution? Thus, scriptural principles must be followed to mend soured relationships (Matthew 5:23,24; 18:15-18).

Jacob responded to the imminent calamity by dividing the people that were with him, including the flocks, herds and camels into two bands; **"And said, If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape"** (Genesis 32:8). But all these could not solve the problem because of a lingering reconciliation he was yet to carry out. Youths are enjoined to exercise themselves **"...to have always a conscience void of offence toward**

God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). The word of God commands that we should follow peace with all men.

Confession, repentance and full restitution must be done in order to be reconciled with the offended person before we can enjoy the promises of victory and protection from the Lord. Restitution is an act of making amends for wrongs done against our fellow men, restoring stolen items to their rightful owners, paying debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confession to the offended, and apologising to those slandered so as to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men (Genesis 20:1-8; Leviticus 6:1-7; Matthew 5:23,24; Acts 23:1-5; 24:16; James 4:17).

Question 2: *What should be our attitude as Christian youths when faced with challenges?*

Unsatisfied with his strategy, Jacob resorted to praying. This was a commendable response in the light of the Scriptures (Psalm 56:3). When faced with challenges, youths should endeavour to seek for divine help through prayer. Jacob was humbly thankful as he expressed his unworthiness of God’s favours saying, “**...with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands**” (Genesis 32:10). He asked God to deliver him and his family from being wiped out by Esau. “**Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children**” (Genesis 32:11). His prayer was hinged on God’s promises (Genesis 32:12). Christian youths are to pray with God’s promises in His word. We need to search the Scriptures and find promises that relate to our situations as Christians. To remind God of His promises is the privilege we enjoy in prayer.

JACOB’S POWERFUL AND LIFE TRANSFORMING ENCOUNTER WITH AN ANGEL (Genesis 32:22-32; Hosea 12:3-5; Matthew 15:22-28)

Jacob separated himself from his family, his servants and

his livestock. He decided to do this in order to free himself of distractions in prayer. This indicates that he meant business with God. **“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day”** (Genesis 32:24).

Question 3: What can Christian youths learn from the prayer of Jacob?

Christian youths are to emulate Jacob by not allowing anything or anybody to distract them from praying earnestly and fervently. His resort to prayer teaches us that if a godly desire has not been met, we should pray more and depend on Him. Jacob’s prayer was more resolute, concentrated, intense and involving. As a result of his importunity, he received an unexpected guest, a divine touch and an eventual divine intervention (Genesis 32:25; Hosea 12:4; Isaiah 63:9).

The prayer encounter offers valuable lessons for New Testament believers. One, though Jacob had received divine promises and assurances, this encounter was necessary to transform and purge his life and character of any trace of crookedness. God always desires perfection in those He favours. Two, God was not in a hurry to bless Jacob. Recall that Abraham waited a long time before the promised child came. David waited for some years before his anointing culminated into his coronation. The disciples waited some weeks after Christ’s ascension before the promised Holy Spirit baptism manifested. Contemporary believers have need of patience to inherit the promises (Isaiah 30:18; Habakkuk 2:3; Mark 14:34; Luke 24:49; Hebrews 6:11,12; 10:35-37; James 5:7,8). Three, the wrestling was tough and long; it lasted till daybreak. This man was desperate for divine blessing and elevation.

Four, the divine wrestler weakened Jacob physically and left him with a dislocation of his hip; **“...he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him”** (Genesis 32:25). It was also to indicate that lasting victory is not won on the basis of physical strength or human schemes: we must overcome in

the strength which God Himself bestows (Psalm 33:16; 2 Corinthians 12:10). Five, it appeared the angel attempted to leave without dropping the much desired blessing but Jacob would not let go. Believers must learn to be purposeful in their quest for divine intervention in life and ministry (2 Kings 2:1-12; Luke 24:28,29).

Six, the angel asked a pertinent question: **“What is thy name? And he said, Jacob”**. His response was not required for information but for contrition and confession. Recall that Jacob’s answer to a similar question about twenty years earlier was a calculated falsehood through which he deceptively obtained blessings from his father. Christians must tell the truth at all times. God had unilaterally determined that the covenant blessing was meant for Jacob. Claiming a different appellation was only a shortcut to needless delays, suffering and lifelong insecurity. Seven, having been considered successful in the night encounter, the Lord blessed Jacob, changed his name and commended him. **“Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed”** (Genesis 32:28).

JACOB’S PERMANENT REUNION AND RECONCILIATION WITH HIS BROTHER (Genesis 33:1-20; Proverbs 17:8; Hosea 12:4)

Having met God in prayer, Jacob was then prepared to meet Esau physically.

Question 4: *What are the results of waiting upon God in prayer?*

As Esau approached with his four hundred men, Jacob marched straight to him. **“And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother...”** (Genesis 33:3,4). It is obvious that Jacob obtained the virtues of humility and absolute faith in God. He discarded all arrangements he had put in place out of fear. Jacob lifted his eyes and saw Esau approaching with

his men. His warm embrace, hug, kiss and tears were evidence that God had softened his heart (1 Samuel 26:2,25; Proverbs 16:7). Although Jacob knew he could not buy his way out, he still prevailed on Esau to receive his presents. He accorded him the honour of a superior. Esau was pleased and Jacob's family and flocks were spared. The lesson here is that God's favour is upon the meek. And when we pray for grace, there would be strength to carry out difficult but necessary restitution.

After the reconciliation, Esau offered to leave some of his men as escort for Jacob, but the latter considered it unnecessary. He politely declined. **“Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir”** (Genesis 33:14).

Tarrying in prayer unto God for precious blessings like sanctification of the heart and Holy Ghost baptism should last until the answer is given. We should learn to pray until the fire falls.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Mark	12:13-17	Exodus	24:1-18
MON	“	12:18-27	“	25:1-22
TUE	“	12:28-34	“	25:23-40
WED	“	12:35-44	“	26:1-14
THU	“	13:1-23	“	26:15-30
FRI	“	13:24-37	“	26:31-37
SAT	“	14:1-11	“	27:1-21

Lesson **21**

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

TEXT: Matthew 10:1-42;
Luke 9:1-10; 12:1-12

MEMORY VERSE: “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matthew 10:1).

In our text this week, Jesus Christ called His twelve disciples to a great duty of preaching the gospel. Likewise, Jesus has chosen every born again youth today to go and preach the gospel to everyone. While sending them forth to preach, He also gave them the power and authority to heal the sick and deliver those who were oppressed. Jesus told them that they would be persecuted, but assured them of the assistance of the Holy Spirit for comfort and strength. He encouraged them not to fear whatever may confront them.

Question 1: *What qualification must be found in those who are to preach the gospel today?*

The disciples' prompt response to Christ's mandate is very instructive to born again youths today. They are expected to urgently take the gospel message to sinners around them. Delay can be very dangerous. Great rewards await youths who promptly and passionately respond to the preaching of the gospel.

CHRIST'S MANDATE TO THE REDEEMED (Matthew 10:1-15; Luke 9:1-5; Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; 2 Timothy 4:1,2)

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:1,7). From the passage above, Christ’s mandate to all saved youths is very clear and unmistakable. They are to **“...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15). This mandate is the ultimate reason believers are still living on earth after their conversion experience. Christian youths are to note that this assignment demands urgency. **“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest”** (John 4:35).

Question 2: *What is Christ’s mandate to believers today?*

As Christian youths, we are charged to go and preach to all the people around them with no exception. We are to pray for power to preach effectively.

Question 3: *What is the importance of the Holy Spirit baptism in preaching the gospel?*

The power of the Holy Spirit makes our preaching to be effective. The Holy Spirit brings conviction on sinners, and leads them to conversion.

Due to their limited experience and level of spiritual maturity, Christ limited the outreach of His disciples to the lost sheep of Israel. We learn here that God will never give us an assignment beyond His grace in our lives. Christian youths must pray for more grace in order for God to increase the coasts of their usefulness in life and ministry. They were contented with the limited assignment given to them by the

Master. At the appropriate time as recorded in Acts 1:8, the Lord gave them an unlimited mandate to reach the whole world. Obedience in small matters brings great blessings.

CHRIST PREDICTS THE PERSECUTION OF HIS DISCIPLES (Matthew 10:16-39; Luke 9:6-12; John 16:33; 15:20)

“It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” (Matthew 10:25). Jesus told His disciples that they would face persecution. However, He gave them the assurance that they would overcome. The earlier apostles were threatened, scourged, imprisoned but they were not discouraged. They kept on preaching the gospel.

Our Lord Jesus expects us to apply wisdom when we go out to preach by: one, when we meet oppositions, we must obey the injunction of the Lord. He said, **“But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come”** (Matthew 10:23). Two, youths of the same gender should go out to preach in groups. Three, youths should not go to preach in questionable places.

Question 4a: *Mention some biblical characters who suffered for the truth.*

4b: *What should be the attitude of Christian youths during persecution?*

We should not recoil or retreat when we are faced with persecution. We should not resort to self-pity, but must rejoice and be glad because we are partakers of Christ's sufferings. Christian youths are therefore, enjoined to continue to preach the gospel, no matter the level of persecution or suffering they are exposed to. In fulfilment of His prophecy, the early apostles were persecuted by the high priests, Sadducees and Pharisees. Yet, they were not deterred. Peter was imprisoned, and Paul and Silas were also

jailed in Philippi (Acts 5:17,18; 7:54-60; 12:3,4; 16:25).

They were able to stand because Christ prepared their minds earlier for the persecution. He preached the whole truth to them. The truth they learnt from Christ made them strong and steadfast in the faith even in the midst of danger.

CHRIST'S REWARDS TO HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS

(Matthew 10:40-42; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10; Luke 19:16,17; Matthew 25:20,21; Luke 12:42-44)

“And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere” (Luke 9:6,10). The response of Christ’s disciples to the mandate He gave them to preach the gospel was quite inspiring. They urgently responded to the mandate and touched every nook and cranny of every town and village around them with the gospel message. Christian youths should also emulate this attitude by promptly and passionately taking the gospel to all and sundry. We should not delay in reaching the lost for Christ. The Lord who worked with the disciples of old has not changed. He also promised to work with us. Therefore, as we go out and preach the gospel, the rewards are great.

Question 5: What are the rewards awaiting those who faithfully respond to the preaching of the gospel today?

The joy of seeing souls saved should encourage every believer to put all efforts towards preaching the gospel. When we faithfully engage in obeying the Lord’s command to preach, there are many blessings the Lord has promised us while we are here on earth and when we get to heaven. One, we have our prayers answered (John 15:16). Two, we have the joy of obeying the Lord (Psalm 40:8). Three, we will not suffer the same fate with unbelievers (Luke 12:46). Four, our lives are strengthened by the gospel we preached because we will receive spiritual purging (John 15:3). Five, we will receive the Master’s welcome and well-done when we see His face (Matthew 25:34). Six, crown of righteousness awaits us (2 Timothy 4:8). Seven, becoming pillar in God’s temple

(Revelation 3:12). Eight, we have power over nations (Revelation 2:26). Nine, sitting together on the throne with Christ in His kingdom (Revelation 3:21). Ten, starry crown await us when we get to heaven (2 Timothy 4:8). Eleven, we shall shine like the brightness of the firmament (Daniel 12:3).

There is no effort no matter how great or small that will go unnoticed and unrewarded by the Lord. **“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises”** (Hebrews 6:10-12). The Lord has given every member in the church the same opportunity as the disciples to labour for souls and receive rewards. At the end of our faithful service to the Lord here on earth, He has promised us uncountable rewards. Wise youths must therefore, arise and preach the gospel now.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Mark	14:12-25
MON	“	14:26-42
TUE	“	14:43-52
WED	“	14:53-65
THU	“	14:66-72
FRI	“	15:1-14
SAT	“	15:15-23

EVENING

Exodus	28:1-14
“	28:15-29
“	28:30-43
“	29:1-20
“	29:21-37
“	29:38-46
“	30:1-10

Lesson 22

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

TEXT: Matthew 11:1-30;
Luke 7:18-35

Memory Verse: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).

The life of John the Baptist poses a great challenge to boys and girls today. John's commitment to ministry and martyrdom shows a pattern of faithfulness to divine vision and defense of the faith. The Saviour's testimony about him confirms the fact that nothing can be hidden from God (Psalm 139:2). He was steadfast and accustomed with uncommon ruggedness that distinguished him among the prophets of God as well as Christ's forerunners (Matthew 11:12). It is instructive to Christian youths to make use of every God-given opportunity to advance the kingdom of Christ.

Question 1: *Enumerate the challenging characters posed to Christian youths by the life of John the Baptist.*

Christ testified of John the Baptist during His earthly ministry and those testimonies are challenges to the contemporary Christian youths. He spoke about John's simplicity in personality and lifestyle (Matthew 11:8). He declared his position as one with exceptional performance among God's prophets and messengers (Matthew 11:9).

Christ's testimony that John was more than a prophet implies that what the older prophets predicted, John actually saw and experienced them (John 1:31-34). Christ's commendation of John **"...Among them that are born of women..."** (Matthew 11:11) showed that whatever is done for the kingdom of God will never go unnoticed.

JOHN SENT HIS DISCIPLES TO JESUS (Matthew 11:1-6; Mark 6:14-29; 14:1-12; 2 Timothy 4:7-10)

Jesus called and ordained His disciples in the previous chapter (Matthew 10) with power to preach and so also His followers today. Every instruction from Jesus to His disciples in all ages are commandment to be obeyed. **"And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities"** (Matthew 11:1). Whether before kings, governors, or commoners, the word of God commands believers to **"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine"** (2 Timothy 4:2).

Question 2: *Mention some Bible characters who fearlessly declared the message given them by God.*

John's courage was similar to that of Nathan, the prophet whom God sent to rebuke King David for his sins and backsliding in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Samuel 12:1-14). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3:3-20), Paul the Apostle and Barnabas preached the gospel to Sergius Paulus and had to withstand the onslaughts of Elymas, the sorcerer (Acts 13:6-12). Again, Paul witnessed for Christ boldly before Felix and his wife Drusilla, Festus, Agrippa and Bernice his wife (Acts 24:24,25; 26:1-28).

Christ's conclusion over the contribution of John the Baptist to world evangelisation is worthy to mention. **"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force"** (Matthew 11:12). The idea here is that before John the

Baptist, the kingdom could only be viewed in the light of prophecy, but now that it is being preached, men press into it with ardour resembling violence or desperation. It expresses the earnestness and fearlessness that every genuine Christian must have in getting rid of sin, all satanic powers, and the world's monopoly over the souls of youths, and in standing for the truth when the gospel is opposed (Matthew 10:34-39). Christian youths are to preach the gospel at all cost and free sinful youths from all confusions.

Question 3: *Explain how Christian youths can overcome confusion.*

“And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” (Matthew 11:3). At a point while John the Baptist was in prison, he needed clarification whether Jesus was Christ or not. This was the same John that conducted water baptism exercise for Jesus and heard the heavenly testimony about Him, **“...saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”** (Matthew 3:13-17). Imprisonment and challenges could bring difficulties leading to confusion as you journey to heaven. John did well by sending his disciples to the right person for clarification and was not denied. The answer from Christ was sufficient for him.

A Christian could at a point be in confusion of heavenly revelations. All to be done is to revisit Calvary for clarification or confirmation. You need to pray intensely on those points or seek deeper understanding from your leader who have right standing with God. **“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me”** (Matthew 11:6).

JESUS TESTIFIED OF JOHN (Matthew 11:7-19; 3:1-17; John 1:15-36; 3:22-36; 5:32,33,35)

“And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?”

behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet" (Matthew 11:7-9). The testimony that Christ gave about the life of John the Baptist was to show his divine approval and a pattern worthy of emulation for Christian youths (John 5:32,33). It is worthy of note that both Christ and John the Baptist gave testimonies about each other (Matthew 3:3,11,12; John 1:15-18,29,30). There was no conflict nor confusion about their God-given mission and ministry. While John was a forerunner of his Lord, Christ also testified of John's divine approval. They both complemented each other's ministries in ensuring the expansion of God's kingdom on earth (1 Corinthians 3:6-8).

Question 4: *State some godly qualities in the life of John the Baptist.*

It is instructive for boys and girls to understand from the life of John the Baptist that though he had a godly parentage and heritage yet, he had relationship with God. This is fundamental to becoming an instrument in the hand of God (2 Timothy 2:19-22). There cannot be godliness without conversion. The second work of grace is sanctification, before the enduement of power from God (Luke 1:5-6,13-15,59-66, 80; John 17:17; Acts 1:8). John steadily and consistently walked with God. Sequel to this was his consecration and running away from appearance of evil. Christian youths that desire God's approval must be wholly consecrated to Him and be totally separated from worldly amusements. **"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"** (2 Corinthians 6:14).

The hallmark of the Christian life and ministry, which is humility, was clearly exemplified by John the Baptist, apart from other gifts that manifested in his ministry. As youths with promising future, humility before ascending the ladder of success is inevitable. Humility was demonstrated in John's relationship with Christ. **"He must increase, but I**

must decrease” (John 3:30).

John’s ministry began in obscurity as a minister of God while the nation of Israel was in the dark concerning the Truth of the word of God. He boldly preached the gospel message and successfully won multitudes to the Lord (Matthew 3:1,2,5,6; Luke 3:3,7-9). As the fore runner of our Lord Jesus Christ, John raised high the divine call and commission. He knew his place in God’s programme for Israel. Finally, he did not only preached, his life supported his message. Through his radiant and righteous life, he attracted and influenced all those who came to him (Luke 3:10-14). His life was so Christlike to the point that, “**...the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not**” (Luke 3:15). Of a truth, “**It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord**” (Matthew 10:25). Christ’s conclusion concerning John’s life and ministry is what every Christian youth today should emulate to reflect over and reproduce in schools, at home, community and the world at large. “**He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light**” (John 5:35).

JESUS CONDEMNED UNBELIEF (Matthew 11:16-30; Luke 7:30-35; Matthew 1:21; Jude 7; John 3:36)

Christ rebuked those who would not allow themselves benefit from the gospel because of unbelief. He illustrated the stubbornness of men by a parable of children in their play, who would respond neither to the joy of piping, nor the gloomy call of mourning. Christ’s parable sets forth the different approaches to the same end, represented by Christ’s and John’s ministries. John’s austere and quiet lifestyle fitted the message he preached but, it did not move them to repentance.

On the other hand, Christ came eating and drinking, relating friendly with all people, devoid of John’s strict lifestyle; yet, His approach would not bring them to the faith of the gospel. One would have thought that those who were put off by John’s reserved lifestyle would be attracted to

Christ's inclusive friendliness and sociability.

Question 5: *Who are the condemned today and what is the way out?*

The Scribes and the Pharisees refused to accept neither the forerunner nor Christ. They accused the Baptist of being demon-possessed and Christ of gluttony and drunkenness **“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”** (John 3:17,18). However, Christ's claims and divine approval were verifiable in the unprecedented miracles He performed, the perfection of His life and the transformation His doctrine made in the lives of those who believed. “But wisdom is justified by her children” indeed. Though many in today's world refuse to acknowledge Christ as the Saviour sent by God to **“save his people from their sins”** (Matthew 1:21), the holy lives of true believers provide eloquent testimony of the truth and the power of the grace of salvation in Christ.

In the days of Christ's earthly ministry, no cities had more privilege of hearing His teachings than the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Notwithstanding, they stubbornly cleaved to their sinful ways in unbelief. The Lord warned that those cities that rejected Him would, on the judgment day, receive worse punishment than Tyre and Sidon or Sodom and Gomorrah, cities which were **“set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”** (Jude 7). Unbelief or the refusal to submit to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour will confine men to the torment of eternal burnings (John 3:36). To escape God's judgment everyone must heed Christ's call to **“Come unto me”**, repent of sin, receive Him as Saviour and thereafter, continue to learn from Him on how to please God and live with Him in heaven forever.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Mark	15:24-34	Exodus	30:11-21
MON	“	15:35-47	“	30:22-38
TUE	“	16:1-8	“	31:1-18
WED	“	16:9-20	“	32:1-14
THU	Luke	1:1-17	“	32:15-35
FRI	“	1:18-33	“	33:1-11
SAT	“	1:34-56	“	33:12-23

Lesson 23

CHRIST'S TEACHING ON SABBATH

TEXT: Matthew 12:1-21;
Luke 6:1-16; 13:10-17

MEMORY VERSE: "How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days" (Matthew 12:12).

The Pharisees concentrated on monitoring the movement of Jesus Christ with the goal of truncating His divine purpose. They sought to find fault which they accomplished in His disciples who were plucking the ear of the corn and eating as they went on the way of duty. The accusation of the Pharisees became an opportunity for Christ to establish some fundamental truth about the Sabbath, **"But he said unto them, Have ye not read... But if ye have known what this meaneth..."** (Matthew 12:3,7). It is unfortunate to read the Scriptures but still remain adamant to the revelation of divine truth through hardness of heart (Hebrews 3:12). Ignorance of the Scriptures is often the root cause of harsh and uncharitable criticisms of fellow brethren by many so-called Christians (James 4:1).

Question 1: *How can a believer denounce false teachers and doctrines in our contemporary day?*

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).

Just like Jesus did with the Pharisees and the Scribes, we can only silence false teachers and prophets and set people free from their bondage of religious rituals and misdirected zeal through appropriate interpretation of the word of God (Nehemiah 8:8).

Spiritual and academic progress is always a product of readiness to look away from past victories and failures. This is also applicable to the level of our connection with God who is the source of strength to those that know Him.

CLARIFICATION OF MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SABBATH (Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5; 13:10-17; Matthew 7:28,29; 22:29; Mark 2:27,28; 3:1-8; Acts 18:26)

Question 2: *State major reasons for the divine institution of the Sabbath.*

The Greek word “sabbaton” translated Sabbath does not mean “seventh” but “rest” or “ceasing”. Though God instituted, sanctified and blessed it (Genesis 2:2,3; Leviticus 24:8), yet His purpose of instituting it was to afford man a day in the week to rest from his labours and have special opportunity for worship, prayer and fellowship with Him. However, in the New Testament, the first day of the week (i.e. Sunday) was observed and called the “Lord’s day” (Revelation 1:10). It was on such days that the early believers came together for special worship and fellowship (1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 20:7). Furthermore, the first day of the week acquired special significance by reason of the resurrection of Christ, and the accomplishment of our salvation (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). Therefore, after the resurrection of Christ, the Jewish Sabbath of the seventh day became the first day of the week for

believers in Christ which is referred to as the “Lord’s day”.

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He used every opportunity to denounce all the hypocritical bigotry that keeps people in bondage rather than giving freedom. He used such opportunities to shed light into the darkened hearts of men by His clear exposition of the word of God (John 8:32; 9:5).

Question 3: Explain why the Pharisees judged the action of Christ’s disciples as unlawful.

The Pharisees were bitterly opposed to Christ because He did not conform to their traditions on Sabbath regulations. They claimed to be Moses’ disciples (John 9:28), holding to the letters of the Mosaic Law including the observance of Sabbath. With their tradition of keeping the Sabbath, they accused the disciples of Jesus Christ of not keeping the Sabbath because they plucked some wheat or barley heads and rubbed them in their hands to eat on the Sabbath day. The disciples were not accused of stealing because what they did was allowed in the law. A hungry man passing by the corn field of his neighbour could pluck and eat, so long as he did not put in a sickle or collect into vessels with a view to carry them away to keep or sell. This was an aspect of God’s desired hospitality and neighbourliness (Deuteronomy 23:25). But the Pharisees were accusing them of doing work on the Sabbath day as they probably interpreted their action as act of harvesting.

The unjustified accusation of the Pharisees reveals the fact that they were simply fault-finders. They intentionally closed their minds against the truth. These religious leaders were so callous, spiritually ignorant and insensitive to the plight of fellow humans. Their criticism did not however, stop Christ from fulfilling His

ministry to the people oppressed and afflicted by Satan.

Question 4: Give reasons the Pharisees had the wrong perception of Sabbath.

These religious critics against Christ had a wrong perception and misconception about the Sabbath day because, first, they did not fully understand the Scriptures as they relied on the letters of the law, rather than the Spirit of God (Amos 2:4; Hebrews 3:10). Second, they did not search the Scriptures for sound understanding of the Sabbath. Third, they were too legalistic in spite of the plights and sufferings of fellow men. Fourth, they were hypocritical, insincere, unbelieving and anti-Christ in attitude (Matthew 12:10,14; Luke 13:14-17). To avoid false teachers and their doctrines, believers are admonished to, **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”** (2 Timothy 2:15).

However, it is noteworthy that Christ showed that works which pertain to the necessity of human life, mercy and for the glory of God could be undertaken on the Sabbath day.

CHRIST’S CONCERN FOR THE PEOPLE (Matthew 12:9-13; Luke 6:6-10; Luke 19:9,10; 8:37-40; John 11:7-9; Acts 10:38; Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 24:8)

Despite the criticism and indignation of the Pharisees, Christ went on preaching the truth everywhere and showing mercy to multitude of people in line with His divine purpose of coming to the world (Acts 10:38). Christ’s experience taught every contemporary believer that there is an opportunity in every adversity. We must not allow obstacles in life or

ministry to hinder us from our goal or destination but manfully uphold scriptural truth. Jesus left the distraction of the Pharisees to move into the temple for another God-glorifying event which involved the healing of the man with withered hand. The lessons youth can draw are as follows: one, as we labour for the establishment of Christ's kingdom through the preaching of the gospel, we must avoid conflicts and unnecessary arguments which can distract us from our goals (2 Timothy 2:23,24). Two, we must be focused, determined and resilient in doing God's will no matter the devices and opposition of Satan (Acts 20:24; Galatians 2:5,6). Nothing can harm us when we are on the path of duty for the Lord. Three, despite the enmity, opposition and criticism, we must not slack or draw back from Christ's righteous expectations from us. Four, we must not allow the actions of any brother or sister to make us forsake the fellowship of God's children (Hebrews 10:25). Jesus did not allow His worship at the temple to be affected by the repulsive action of the Pharisees.

Question 5: What lesson can a Christian youth draw from Christ's concern for the people?

The healing of the man with withered hand present important lesson to all youths: first, a man that will receive cure from sin must obey Christ's command to come, and stretch out the hand through prayers of repentance and thereafter, do extraordinary duties for the expansion of God's kingdom. Second, our blessing depends on our obedience. Third, only a contact with Christ can make a man completely whole.

In reaction to the errors and misconception of the Sabbath, Christ affirmed with finality, the true essence and practice of the Sabbath. He sealed His teaching on

the Sabbath by His authority that, **“For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”** Christ taught that: one, the Sabbath is made for man’s benefit and not man for the Sabbath. Two, the Sabbath is for the purpose of doing good to others especially as regards saving lives (Mark 3:4,5; Acts 10:38). Three, we can use our spiritual gifts to bless others and edify the church as Christ did on the Sabbath day.

CHRIST’S SENSIBLE REACTION TO PHARISEES’ PLOT (Matthew 12:14-21; 3:7; Luke 6:6-12; Romans 14:4-10; Colossians 2:16,17; 2 Timothy 2:24; James 1:26; 3:14-17; Proverbs 22:3)

Question 6: *What lessons can we draw from the reaction of Christ to the Pharisees’ plan?*

“But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all” (Matthew 12:15). Jesus demonstrated clearly that it is not an act of cowardice for believers to avoid danger when they can. (Proverbs 22:3). The believer must therefore be humble enough to acknowledge his weakness and avoid objects of temptations that could lead to his fall. We must avoid environments, friends, career, social events, etc., that could make us lose our testimony of holiness. Like Jesus, we must avoid pride that is instigated by current exploits (Proverbs 16:18). We mustn’t seek for vainglory. God will always exalt the humble and those who faithfully pursue the heavenly vision.

It is noteworthy that the people were amazed, followed and were healed; therefore, glorified God for what Christ did. But the Pharisees were aggrieved (Matthew 12:14,15,24). Jesus knew their thoughts. This is a clear revelation that He knows what we are thinking about at

any time; He knows what is in man. Christian youths should not be grieved when others are demonstrating the power of God in the fellowship but rather give God the glory and seek for their own spiritual upliftment (1 Corinthians 12:27-31; Mark 9:38-40; Acts 19:13). Unbelief and sentimental spirit will hinder anyone from enjoying the manifestation of God's power as we see in the life of the Pharisees (Matthew 12:14,15).

Jesus Christ **“charged them that they should not make him known”** (Matthew 12:16), because it has been written of Him that, **“He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets...”** (Matthew 12:19-21). This is a lesson to every Christian youth that they must not strive with any man for any reason, but leave everything to God. **“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient”** (2 Timothy 2:24). **“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”** (Romans 12:19).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Luke	1:57-66	Exodus	34:1-9
MON	“	1:67-80	“	34:10-28
TUE	“	2:1-14	“	34:29-35
WED	“	2:15-25	“	35:1-20
THU	“	2:26-40	“	35:21-35
FRI	“	2:41-52	“	36:1-19
SAT	“	3:1-20	“	36:20-38

Lesson 24

WARNING AGAINST EVIL SPEAKING

TEXT: Matthew 12:22-50;
Luke 11:14-36

MEMORY VERSE: “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:36,37).

In our text, Jesus Christ rebuked the Pharisees who accused Him of casting out devils through Beelzebub. The Lord had so perfectly healed a man that had a triple problems of demon possession, dumbness and blindness that people marveled at the greatness of His power. The people knew such a demonstration was nothing less than the manifestation of the power of God. But the Pharisees, who also obviously knew this so well, chose to attribute the feat to the power of a high ranking demon. This callous misrepresentation was to belittle Christ, rob God of the glory due to Him, and confuse the people with intent to lead them from the Truth, and ultimately, God. In the course of His response, Christ said “**...blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men**” (Matthew 12:31).

Question 1: *Like the Pharisees, what risks do opposers and doubters of Jesus Christ face?*

The opposers and doubters of Jesus Christ face dual risk of being condemned and rejected on the last day. He confronted the Pharisees with their hypocritical lifestyle as He rebuked

them of speaking evil in respect of the miracle that has just been performed. Christ intimated them with the risk of condemnation for their poor rating in comparison with those in previous dispensations. **“But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: ...The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here...”** (Matthew 12:39-45). Finally, Jesus set out the true credentials of those who genuinely belong to His family. **“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother”** (Matthew 12:50).

JESUS CAST OUT DEVILS BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD (Matthew 12:22-29; Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:18-20)

“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?” (Matthew 12:22,23).

On one of the occasions when the Lord Jesus preached in the synagogue, people brought to Him a man that was possessed with a blind and dumb spirit, and immediately, the Lord healed him. **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”** (Hebrews 13:8). Our Saviour is still doing the work and deliverance for as many that believe in His power. While the people wondered at the demonstration of such power, the Pharisees were unwilling to acknowledge such divine manifestation; rather, they attributed the healing to Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Why did the Pharisees resort to this blasphemy? They were simply envious of the power of Jesus. Their own religion was in outward form only. Hence, could not attract divine power and

approval such as manifested in the ministry of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The Bible warns against, **“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...”** (2 Timothy 3:5).

God gave us the ability of communication through the use of our tongue. But each individual can decide to use it for good or for evil (Proverbs 18:21). Actually, the unregenerated speak evil because that is their nature: **“every tree is known by his own fruit”, “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. A good man out the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”** (Luke 6:43-45). All evil speaking is from the heart and it defiles the man (Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:18-20). The heart that is not regenerated is as a root that bears the fruit of evil; a fountain which generates evil thoughts that result in wickedness; and a treasure source of evil imaginations. The problem of the Pharisees in our study also stemmed from the heart. Since they were unregenerated and they were not willing to be spiritually helped, they antagonised Christ and the truth for the fear of losing their members and gains.

Question 2: What are the characteristics of the unregenerated heart?

Like the Pharisees, quite a number of youths speak evil in different ways. One, they give negative comments about a person even when their opinion is not sought. Two, they accuse others falsely. Three, they exaggerate the failings and faults of others. Four, they unnecessarily repeat the faults of others. Five, they misrepresent others. Six, they involve in slander. The heart of unregenerated youth is the devil’s factory where he manufactures all kinds of evil, such as envy, malice, pride, vengeance, desire to promote self, desire to please others and so on: the end of these will be terrible. As a caring Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer has given us serious warnings against evil speaking, which is common in contemporary times. Some Christian youths are

ignorantly involved in this deadly act. Some speak evil of their teachers, and at times, even anointed men of God. Yet, they presumptuously claim to know and honour Jesus. Christian youths should understand that, “**...every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment**” (Matthew 12:36).

JESUS CASTIGATED PHARISEES FOR EVIL SPEAKING (Matthew 12:30-45; Numbers 16:23-33; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8)

Every evil speaking has negative repercussions. For example, the young people that made jest of Prophet Elisha perished for their folly. Likewise, Miriam suffered for the misuse of her tongue (Numbers 12:14-16). Some people love to talk evil about others. They give (i) ungodly speech, (ii) impulsive speech, (iii) uncontrolled speech, (iv) insincere speech, (v) evil speech, (vi) curse. All these speeches are contrary to the gospel and they have great, unpleasant and unbearable consequences (Matthew 12:36).

Question 3: *What are the repercussions of evil speaking?*

Any youth that engages in speaking evil against pastors, leaders, teachers, government functionaries or fellow student will not go unpunished. Such may: (i) stand the danger of untimely death as in the case of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16:23-33), (ii) have unfulfilled destiny, (iii) be cursed and thereby carry different sicknesses and diseases, (iv) face the danger of eternal separation from God. Since they will be rejected in heaven, they will have to spend eternity in hell fire.

Question 4: *How will one escape the punishment reserved for evil speakers?*

A caring and loving father who looks forward to the success and breakthrough of his children will not close his mouth when serious warning is to be given. Jesus Christ, our

incomparable Lord is telling us to beware of dangers of evil speaking. **“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”** (Matthew 12:37). Since a bad tree cannot bear good fruit, youth that really want to avoid the damnation coming upon evil speakers and carriers must do the following: (i) Be born again. Unless the heart be transformed, it will not be thoroughly reformed. To be born again is simple as ABC. Acknowledge yourself as a sinner; Believe in the saving power of Jesus Christ; Confess your sins including evil speaking with a solemn promise not to go back to any sin. (ii) Humble yourself and be ready to obey God at all times. (iii) Be guided and controlled by His word. (iv) Control your tongue (v) Have no intimate, unfruitful or sin-inducing fellowship with unbelievers or unregenerated youth (vi) Forgive and forget the sin of others against you (vii) Be in fellowship with heaven-minded believers. (viii) Take all bitterness away (Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8). Like the Psalmist, Pray: **“set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips”** (Psalm 141:3). (ix) Avoid the folly of speaking whatever crosses your mind: sift such before you speak it (Proverbs 29:11). First consider whether it is edifying or not; God-glorifying or self-serving; acceptable before the eternal Judge or not (Philippians 4:8). If your truthful assessment of yourself implies you are at risk of condemnation, you can quickly change camp today by returning to the Lord, resolving not to allow the devil to lure you into evil speaking any longer, by resisting any such suggestion from within yourself or the agency of any colleague or superior human.

JESUS CLARIFIED ON HIS BELOVED RELATIONS (Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31; Luke 11:29-32; Matthew 7:21-27; James 1:22-25; Revelation 22:14)

It is heartwarming that despite the unceasing spate of attacks on the person and ministry of Christ, He could still confidently refer to some people as His brethren. **“And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!”** (Matthew 12:49). The point is that Jesus again refuted the error that anyone that

appears to stay close to Him is acceptable. The important thing is not the filial but the spiritual relationship. For example, even though His genealogy is clearly traceable to the Hebrew race, many of them do not believe or follow Him, so they are not His brethren or members of His Father's spiritual family. Likewise, unserious professing Christians are not reckoned with. Anyone who practises any form of iniquity is not known in the family of God. **"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 7:21). What makes an individual better than another in the economy of God is the response and disposition to the word of God. **"The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here"** (Luke 11:32).

The primary defining feature of true disciples of Christ is freedom from sin. The reason Christ came is to purge repentant sinners, empower them to become members of the family of God, prepare for them as vessels for His honourable use in this world, and prepare them an habitation in His glorious kingdom (Matthew 3:12; John 1:12; 14:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:20,21). This is precisely the summary of the ministry He left to His faithful disciples. It implies that both they and their converts must continue to do the will of God. **"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother"** (Matthew 12:50).

Question 5: What steps can a believer take to continue with the Lord?

To continue in the privilege, a believer must: one, be daily minded to do so. It requires a daily recommitment of oneself to follow the Lord. **"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto**

the end” (Hebrews 3:12-14). Two, one must read and meditate on His word with a non-negotiable resolve to live by it (Joshua 1:8; Deuteronomy 5:29; Luke 11:28; John 14:21). Three, be committed to the sound doctrine of the Lord in preference of any other person’s opinion or option (Job 23:12; Romans 16:17; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 John 9). Four, be poised to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12; Ephesians 6:10-12). This involves watchfulness against the incursions or wiles of the devil, consistently speaking the truth, interminable life of righteousness, readiness to preach the gospel, living by faith, trust and dependence on the word of God, militantly wielding the Sword of the Spirit against any spiritual foe and a life of importunate praying for self, family, ministry and genuine gospel ministers. As each youth focuses on Christ and makes good use of the avenues of grace, no one will be disappointed.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Luke	3:21-38
MON	“	4:1-15
TUE	“	4:16-30
WED	“	4:31-37
THU	“	4:38-44
FRI	“	5:1-15
SAT	“	5:16-26

EVENING

Exodus	37:1-16
“	37:17-29
“	38:1-20
“	38:21-31
“	39:1-31
“	39:32-43
“	40:1-16

Lesson 25

SUNDRY PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

TEXT: Matthew 13:1-35;
Luke 8:1-8; 13:18-21

MEMORY VERSE: “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them” (Matthew 13:34).

This chapter begins with Christ teaching the great multitudes by the sea side. He taught using parables. The parables are seven. One, the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23); two, parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31,32; Luke 13:18,19); three, parable of the hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44); four, parable of the pearl (Matthew 13:45,46); five, parable of the net (Matthew 13:47-51); six, parable of the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43); and seven, parable of the leaven (Matthew 13:33). The first four were spoken to the multitudes, while the remaining three were spoken to the disciples in private.

The parables of the sower and mustard seed revealed the impact of the Word on the state of men's heart. The fruitful heart is greatly affected and controlled by the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:19-26). **“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”** (Galatians 5:17). When born again youths submit to the leading of the Spirit of God, they are able to bear godly

fruits.

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD (Matthew 13:3-9; 14:18-30; Luke 13:18-21; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Proverbs 30:5,6; Revelation 22:18,19)

The parables of the sower and the mustard seed is an exposition of the inspired word of God. It shows two different works being done in the heart of every person. It provides understanding as to why there is evil. God plants good seed that becomes His children in the Kingdom. Satan the wicked one, plants those who are his followers. The seed of the Sower (mustard seed) is likened to this Word and is the only source of knowledge of the almighty God to all mankind, the contact point between finite man with the infinite God; and its prime purpose is to give mankind the revelation of God (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Question 1: *What are the goals of the word of God in the life of a Christian youth?*

The Seed (the Word) has a ministry to unbelievers as well as to believers. To unbelievers, the Word brings conviction of sin which leads to repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. To believers, the goals of the Word are: one, it is to make believers perfect (Psalm 119:9,11); two, to reveal the condition of the hearts (Hebrews 4:12; Jeremiah 17:9,10); three, it is a light to believers' feet or way of life (Psalm 119:105); four, it is food for the soul (Deuteronomy 8:3; John 21:17; Psalm 19:10; Matthew 4:4); five, a medicine to the body and soul (Proverbs 4:20-22; Psalm 107:20; Matthew 8:8); six, the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17; Matthew 4:1-11); seven, it is a mirror to reflect (James 1:23); eight, a hammer to

convict, and fire to refine (Jeremiah 23:29); nine, seed to multiply (1 Peter 1:23); ten, water to cleanse (Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3); eleven, rain to refresh (Isaiah 55:10,11); twelve, gold to enrich (Psalm 19:7-10); and thirteen, power to create life and faith (1 Peter 1:23; Romans 10:17).

HOW TO POSSESS GOD'S TREASURED KINGDOM

(Matthew 13:44-46; Revelation 3:20; Isaiah 55:6,7; Psalms 34:10; 105:3,4; Proverbs 28:5; Hosea 10:12; Amos 5:6; Acts 17:27)

There are two parables to show that those who expect salvation must be willing to give up all for the kingdom of heaven. Found in the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price, the parable of the pearl (also called the Pearl of Great Price) is one of the parables of Jesus. It appears in Matthew 13:45,46 and illustrates the great value of the kingdom of heaven. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure is a well-known parable of Jesus, which typifies in the kingdom of heaven as a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again; went and sold all he had and bought that field with gladness (Matthew 13:44). This illustrates the great value of the kingdom of heaven. Every youth must give up self, sin and everything to seek God's hidden treasure.

Question 2: *Why is it necessary for youths to give up all in order to seek God's true treasure?*

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36,37). To give all for Christ, there must be total submission

and complete repentance. This is an avenue to seek the Lord. Repentance is a conscious turning away from evil, disobedience, sin or idolatry. It is also turning from Satan to the living God (Jonah 3:8-10; Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 12:41). Repentance means a change of one's mind and purpose in life and changes all past actions. Repentance is a universal command by God to all people (Acts 17:30).

The treasure of God is Jesus Christ who came into the world to save us from our sins. Jesus is like a treasure hidden in the field where everybody passes daily, yet they do not see Him. The entire nature of man, mentally, physically, morally and spiritually has been affected by sin. The testimony of the Scriptures is that the image of God in man has been seriously marred by the great fall. As a result of this fall, and the nature of sin inherited, man became separated from God, totally alienated from the perfect, holy and pure God. This separation is the cause of the beginning of sorrow, shame, fear, heartaches, and manifold problems, spiritually and mentally. All these have brought man under the wrath and condemnation of God, for **“the soul that sinneth, it shall die”** (Ezekiel 18:4). There is nothing we can do for ourselves to commend us to a righteous and holy God. There is nothing a natural man (fallen away from grace) can offer to appease God so as to escape His righteous judgment; but sincere repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Saviour.

ETERNAL SEPARATION OF SAINTS AND SINNERS

(Matthew 13:24-30,36-43; 2 Timothy 2:19; Galatians 6:7; Hebrews 12:2; John 5:28,29; Acts 3:19; 17:30,31)

The Parable of wheat and tares represents the present

and future state of the gospel. Christ cares about the growth of the Church (the Bride) but the devil sows enmity in the Church. In this parable, there are two sowers, two kinds of seeds and two types of harvest. Jesus is the first Sower which is regarded as the Son of man, while the second sower is called the wicked one, that is, the devil. This parable exposes the problem of mixed multitude in the Church of God today. Since the tares and wheat look alike, it is difficult to differentiate. The tares look and act similar to the sons of the kingdom. They pray, attend services regularly, pay tithes and offerings etc. God knows those who are His and those who are not. No one can deceive Him (2 Timothy 2:19; Galatians 6:7). We need to be fully aware that there are fake and counterfeit members in the church. We are to be careful and not measure ourselves with any other person except Christ, our perfect Model (Hebrews 12:2). The day of separation of saints and sinners is certain. On the day of judgment, all our thoughts, motives and actions will be scrutinised by the Judge of the whole earth (2 Corinthians 5:10). Jesus taught repeatedly that a time is coming when He will separate the righteous from the wicked. The wicked will go into everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal. The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all the things that offend, and them which do iniquity. All youths that do things that offend God will not go to heaven because no sin can enter there (1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Galatians 5:19-21).

Question 3: *How can a sinning youth become a saint?*

Genuine repentance is required for a sinning youth to turn to saint. Repentance entails putting away the sinful activities. Turn to God by accepting Christ and then

follow Him to the end. When this happen, the evidence will be seen in our conducts. Meanwhile, saved should not neglect sinners, but preach to them compassionately. And though good and bad are together in this world, yet on the final day, they shall be sieved and separated. Then the righteous and the wicked shall be plainly revealed, though it is hard to distinguish between them here on earth.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Luke	5:27-39	Exodus	40:17-33
MON	"	6:1-11	"	40:34-38
TUE	"	6:12-19	Leviticus	1:1-17
WED	"	6:20-26	"	2:1-16
THU	"	6:27-38	"	3:1-17
FRI	"	6:39-49	"	4:1-17
SAT	"	7:1-10	"	4:18-35

Lesson 26

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

TEXT: Matthew 14:1-13

MEMORY VERSE: “And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother” (Matthew 14: 10,11).

At the end of the previous chapter, Jesus was despised in His own country by His own people “**And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief**” (Matthew 13:58). However, this study shows that the miracles of Jesus cannot be concealed by household hatred and envy. Christ’s popularity has spread even among political leaders of His day due to numerous miracles performed by Him. Herod, the wicked king who killed John the Baptist the forerunner of Jesus Christ also heard of these miracles. He misinterpreted the source of the miracles due to his ignorance and inner condemnation for killing John who warned him of his adultery.

Christian youths should not be afraid of household or classmates’ hatred and mockery. God’s purpose will be accomplished eventually in the life of every youth who put his/her confidence in Christ. Living in sins and evils including stealing, fighting, abortion, cultism, fornication, dating and disobedient to God brings condemnations and inner troubles to sinning youths.

Confessing and forsaking of sins and acceptance of Jesus Christ are the only ways a sinning youth can have lasting inner peace and freedom from condemnations.

Question 1: How can a sinning youth be free from sins and inner condemnation?

Christ didn't allow His relatives' unbelief and the death of John to discourage Him from preaching the gospel. Every youth should emulate His example by tirelessly spreading His good news to others, not minding persecutions from unbelievers.

JESUS' MIRACLES MISUNDERSTOOD BY HEROD
(Matthew 14:1,2; Mark 6:14-16; 7:37; Luke 9:8)

The good news of salvation from sins and deliverance from oppression brought by Jesus Christ has spread to the palace of Herod. Some people must have spread the news, since neither Christ nor His disciples went to the palace. This is a challenge to all youths to allow God to use them for the salvation of other youths. As the slave girl in the house of Naman spread the good news of God's power to her master, Christian youths should not be ashamed of spreading the saving and miracle working power in the name of Jesus everywhere. The numerous signs and wonders witnessed in our church is the best "breaking" news to share on social media, instead of rumours and nude pictures unbelieving youths are spreading today. Christian youths must flood the social media with good news in order to stop the tide of evil news from unbelievers.

Question 2: How can Christian youths stop the tide of evils in the social media?

Jesus Christ was famous for good reasons not for

evils. He is the best hero any youth should emulate today. He lived a perfect life worthy of emulation for all youths. Christian youths should abstain from worshiping sinful so-called models in the world. The world, just like Herod do not still understand who Jesus is today. They are blind to eternal life and peace in Christ Jesus. They are confused and cannot understand how to be free from their condemnations. The guilt of their evils follow them everywhere they go. Truly, in agreement with the Scripture, the sinner runneth “when no man pursueth”.

“And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him” (Matthew 14:2). Herod, like many unbelieving youths erroneously believed in re-incarnation. But the Scripture clearly says that, **“...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). Uniform testimony of the Scripture is judgment after death for every human without any second chance of being re-incarnated. Youths should make the best use of the opportunity they have today by surrendering their lives to Jesus Christ before it is too late. Though Herod was rich and popular as a king; yet he lacks basic spiritual understanding, no wonder he was living in sins. Unregenerate great men and women in the world are themselves ignorant and blind spiritually. Only salvation and deep knowledge of the word of God can prevent youths from being misled by popular but sinful adults and youths.

Question 3: What is the stand of the Scripture on re-incarnation?

Herod was bold discussing John, even after murdering him. He spoke categorically as if he was an authority in

spiritual matters. In like manner, popular men and women in the world today often speak on matters they are completely ignorant of. Some alleged that there is no hell or heaven. They claim that God is not interested in what you wear, and some even go as far as saying there is no God. Christian youths must understand that all sinners either rich or poor, educated or illiterate, high or low are all blind and are not competent to guide them. Only Christ is our real Model in everything and the Bible is our final authority on every issue. Whosoever contradicts the Bible on any issue is wrong irrespective of his/her position in the world or the church.

JOHN THE BAPTIST KILLED BY HEROD (Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29; Luke 9:9; Exodus 20:13; Proverbs 15:12)

“For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother, Philip’s wife” (Matthew 14:3). Leaders are supposed to be good examples unto youths both in the church and society. However, Herod was a bad model indeed by his conducts and inability to refrain from adultery and incest. Herod dislikes corrections like many ungodly youths today. He wants to satisfy his flesh without consideration for the feeling of his brother, Philip just because he was in a position of authority. It is unfortunate that there are several bad examples in the society today and even in several churches. Political killings, kidnapping, robbery, cheatings, stealing, divorce, remarriage, demonic music and prostitutions are all common among men and women in places of authority. Though common, yet the judgment of God is certain and imminent if there is no genuine repentance from all these evils. Christian youths should refrain from these evils in order to escape from the imminent wrath of

God.

Question 4: *What should be the attitude of Christian youths to increasing evils among leaders in the society?*

John's correction of Herod's adulterous act was his last public ministry on earth. He was a firing, righteous and courageous forerunner of Christ. Christ's statement about John later shows that it is not how or when we depart this world that matter most, but how well we are able to fulfil the purpose of God in our lives here on earth (Matthew 11:11,12).

We can learn the following from John the Baptist. One, persecution is a cross every follower of Christ must experience and endure as we journey to heaven. Two, generally, highly placed individuals hate being corrected; so Christian youths must seek counsel from their spiritual leaders and refrain from open confrontation. Three, youths must develop right attitude towards godly correction both at home and in the church.

While John was unjustly kept in prison, Herod was celebrating his birthday with dancing, drinking and fun-fare. The daughter of Herodias danced before him, and in his unguided drunken state, **"...he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask"** (Matthew 14:7). In response, after consulting with her wicked mother, the girl demanded John the Baptist's head. Herod was guilty of making thoughtless vow. His pride and desires to please men prevented him from reversing his foolish vow. He preferred to murder an innocent man of God just for the purpose of gaining the praise of men. Herod added sin to sins (verse 6,8). Christian youths should not allow themselves to be used by ungodly adults to settle scores with their perceived enemies.

Believing youths' obedience to their parents and others must be moderated by the word of God. Any instruction contrary to God's word must be wisely rejected. This is the reason adequate knowledge of the word of God through reading and meditation should be a daily practice of all Christian youths.

Question 5: *What should be the attitude of Christian youths to birthday celebration?*

At Herod's birthday, three things happened. Herod and his acquaintances became drunk. They played ungodly music and John the baptist was killed. Christian youths should be careful on the issue of birthday celebration. The act of excessiveness and ungodly conduct in marking one's birthday celebration is frowned at by God's word.

JESUS' MODEL ATTITUDE TO PERSECUTION
(Matthew 14:12,13; 5:10-12,44; Psalm 119:86; John 15:20; Romans 12:14; 2 Timothy 3:12)

“And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus” (Matthew 14:12). John the Baptist's disciples identified with him even after his death. In like manner, Christian youths should indentify with Christ and His Church in all situations. As Christ suffered to redeem the Church, youths should willingly bear every suffering associated with their obedience to God. As John's disciples openly associated with him in his darkest period, godly youths should not be ashamed of Jesus; they should openly associate with Him in all situations.

Proper attitude during persecution both by the persecuted and their close associates is very important. Right attitude includes forbearance (Matthew 5:38-42),

mercy (Romans 12:20), love for persecutors (Matthew 5:44) and realisation that being Christlike will attract persecutions like Christ. **“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”** (Matthew 5:10,11). Christian youths’ persecution can be in the form of ridicules, scorn, deliberate failure by teachers, unkind nicknames, deprivation, physical harm and on few occasions, deaths. Saints all over the ages had suffered persecution. **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (2 Timothy 3:12). God knows how to moderate the persecutions believers face based on their level of faith. He will not allow them to face trials greater than their faith. John was able to face his own persecution based on the grace of God in his life.

Question 6: *Mention forms of persecution that Christian youths can face and what their attitude should be.*

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Luke 7:11-23	Leviticus 5:1-13
MON	“ 7:24-35	“ 5:14-19
TUE	“ 7:36-50	“ 6:1-13
WED	“ 8:1-21	“ 6:14-23
THU	“ 8:22-40	“ 6:24-30
FRI	“ 8:41-48	“ 7:1-21
SAT	“ 8:49-56	“ 7:22-38

Lesson 27

DINAH'S DEFILEMENT AVENGED

TEXT: Genesis 34:1-31

MEMORY VERSE: “And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males” (Genesis 34:25).

The Scripture forbids sinful curiosity, careless wandering and quest to explore new grounds of friendship exhibited by youths. These unguarded passions have great and damnable consequences. Dinah’s quest to see and interact with the daughters of the land, a heathen nation, led to the incident of rape and this resulted in frightening murder of innocent people. The Scripture clearly states that “**...evil communications corrupt good manners**” (1 Corinthians 15:33). It will be strange for Christian youths who have covenant relationship with God and live by His laws to have interest or seek to copy the lifestyle of sinful people around them (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

Question 1: *What lesson can Christian youths draw from the book of Exodus 23:2?*

“When thou art come into the land which the LORD

thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations” (Deuteronomy 18:9). Whatever may be the practice of unbelievers in our community, Christian youths are to steer clear and “**...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”** (1 Timothy 4:12).

This study contains useful lessons for Christian youths on how to maintain moral chastity that will help prevent similar incident of defilement and its attended consequences.

DANGEROUS AIMLESS VISITATION AND UNEQUAL YOKE (Genesis 34:1-4; Proverbs 7:6-27; Job 1:7; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Timothy 3:6; Luke 15:11-24; Proverbs 4:14,15)

Dinah was unmindful of the evil tendency in unregenerate hearts. Her visit was on the pretence “**to see the daughters of the land**”: how they dress, dance, socialise and what they eat, drink and worship. Recall that her father who had just returned from Padan-aram was a wealthy and God-fearing man. Thus, it was not for want of food or any material need that she embarked on the strange adventure. “**And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her**” (Genesis 34:2). A similar account in Proverbs 7:6-27 reveals the deadly present and eternal condemnation of wanderers.

Question 2: What are the dangers of aimless visitation and wandering?

“And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not”

(1 Timothy 5:13). Wandering around people who do not know that rape is “sinful” is deadly. Aside rape, wandering exposes the wanderer to the danger of kidnapping, ritual killing, armed robbery, cultism, harlotry and human trafficking. Wanderers are hardly innocent. They are characterised by idleness, talkativeness and gossiping.

Satan inspires aimless wandering because it serves his purpose to steal, kill and destroy. He is a wanderer himself. **“And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered... From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it... your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8). He influences children to abandon their families and run from pillar to post; inspires carnal believers to move from one fellowship to another without settling in one, just to waste their lives and talents.

Young people and strangers in a new environment are often prone to exploring new areas and interacting with people whose ways of life are different from theirs. It was curiosity that made Dinah went on the picnic when her brothers were on the field shepherding the flock of their father. Perhaps, she felt nobody should limit her freedom of movement. Bitterly however, she learnt the benefit of parental tutelage/control and the truth that freedom has limits. It was for ungodly friendship that Samson also lost his eyes and life prematurely. Careless visitation and unguided sightseeing are dangerous to believers in Christ (Proverbs 25:17).

Observe that Shechem was not rebuked by his father for his evil deed, probably because it was an acceptable practice for the prince to take any lady at will. He had done the evil with pride as the son of the king. Thus, he could go further to ask his father to arrange for marriage with Dinah. Shechem and his people however, learnt that sin will not go unpunished whether they are committed by the

high or the low. It is abominable to sin against people who have come under our roof or land on the basis of our pledged hospitality as friends, colleagues, visitors or house helps (Genesis 19:1-8). Christian youths must avoid careless visitation as it can lead to many other evils.

DECEITFUL MARRIAGE OFFER WITH UNGODLY INTENTION (Genesis 34:5-24; Deuteronomy 22:27-29; 7:1-4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 1 Peter 2:9)

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Jacob heard about what happened, held his peace and waited for his sons. However, before the family of Jacob could come up with the next line of action, Hamor brought marriage proposal for Dinah and Shechem (Proverbs 18:13). This meant inter-marriage between two different nations: heathens and the people of God.

Question 3: *What does the Bible says concerning marriage with an unbeliever?*

“Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly” (Deuteronomy 7:3,4). Hamor highlighted the benefits that would accrue to Jacob’s family. Even Shechem promised to give whatever would be demanded to marry Dinah.

Here is a plan by Satan to terminate the covenant of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Whereas the patriarchs have been careful with the marriages of their sons because of their covenant with God, here comes a temptation to forfeit or corrupt Israel. Some vibrant Christian youths at

their unguarded hour who are being tempted often fail to see the grand design of the enemy to frustrate the divine plan not only for them, but also for their future generation. We need to watch and pray to see the larger picture of God's plan for our present and future life in order to escape the snare of the fowler.

Marriage is for mature adults and not for teenagers; therefore, any proposal from unconverted persons at this stage should not be accommodated by Christian youths. However promising the union might be in terms of religious, economic and social benefits, we must not consider their proposal or propose to them. Yield not to their temptations for yielding is sin.

Your answer as a child of God at this stage of your life should be the response of Joseph to Potiphar's wife: **"how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"** (Genesis 39:9).

Christian youths should reject any suggestion or proposal from their parents to marry unbelievers no matter the pressure on them or the supposed profits attached to their proposal because of the displeasure from God on such union.

The sons of Jacob hatched a plan and offered the suitors a deceitful proposal. **"But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people"** (Genesis 34:15,16).

The family of Hamor agreed to the terms of marriage given by the sons of Jacob. Since the proposal was for all the inhabitants of Canaan and not just for Shechem, the king used his position to influence his people to key into the scheme.

Christian youths should learn here that the ungodly would be willing to submit to any Christian rites to achieve

their purpose. They can change church, wear Christian clothing and act like Christians, but without conversion, just to get what they want. Though the rite of circumcision was required to benefit from the Abrahamic covenant, that would not have made the Canaanites forsake their idols. So, those who promise to marry the ungodly on the condition that they join their congregation deceive themselves by thinking they can profit from relationship that God forbids (Galatians 6:7). Believers should examine all things in the light of the Bible and with the help of the Holy Spirit before doing them.

Hamor's influence on his people brought destruction upon them. Hamor and Shechem did not escape the sword; so shall the sensual, deceivers and the deceived be judged. The wages of sin for all, both the high and the low, is death. Shechem did not know that his youthful exuberance, power to rape and enjoy sinful pleasure would lead to death and destruction of the entire city where he would have reigned later as the heir apparent. Sin terminates destiny.

DINAH'S DEFILEMENT AVENGED (Genesis 34:25-31; 49:5-7; Psalm 1:1-4; Proverbs 4:14,15)

Shechem was wrong for their dealing with the daughter of a stranger who had dwelt with them for over seven years thereby violating the rules of hospitality in the then world. Unknown to them however, the terms of intermarriage was designed to render them easy prey for massacre. **“And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went out”** (Genesis 34:25,26).

When Jacob confronted Simeon and Levi, they justified their murderous and bloody act with the cloak of religion (Genesis 34:30,31).

Question 4: *How should Christian youths handle those who cheat or offend them?*

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19-21).

It is unscriptural to take anybody's life for whatever reason. God is righteous and just. He did not spare Simeon and Levi for killing of innocent people. **“Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel”** (Genesis 49:5,7). When Haman wanted to wipe out all Jews in Shushan just because Mordecai who offended him was a Jew, God intervened since the punishment was not proportionate to the offence committed. Human life is sacred. Those who hide under religion or use it as cloak to perpetrate all kinds of evil, including murder, shall not escape the wrath of God, except they repent.

Question 5: *Why was the act of the sons of Jacob condemned?*

“The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth

generation” (Numbers 14:18).

Children of God should not tread the ensnaring path of the ungodly (Psalm 1:1-4; Proverbs 4:14,15). The events in this passage emphasise the conditional security of saints: Dinah lost her chastity and Levi and Simeon forfeited the covenant blessings Jacob would have pronounced on them on his dying bed.

Christian youths must abide in holiness till the end to be able to enter heaven. Sinners should repent and be saved to avoid perishing like Shechem and the inhabitants of the land who lost their lives.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Luke	9:1-11	Leviticus	8:1-13
MON	“	9:12-22	“	8:14-30
TUE	“	9:23-36	“	8:31-36
WED	“	9:37-50	“	9:1-14
THU	“	9:51-62	“	9:15-24
FRI	“	10:1-16	“	10:1-11
SAT	“	10:17-28	“	10:12-20

Lesson 28

JACOB RETURNS TO BETHEL

TEXT: Genesis 35:1-29;
36:1-43

MEMORY VERSE: “And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother” (Genesis 35:1).

The texts focus on God’s command to Jacob to go back to Bethel, his prompt obedience and God’s pronouncement of blessing on him and his generation. God’s command came to Jacob, following his fear of extermination due to the cruel act of Simeon and Levi against the inhabitants of Shechem. God is a refuge in time of need and it is very important to maintain a close relationship with Him. Though God had answered the prayer of Jacob when he was fleeing from Esau, but he seems to have forgotten his own side of the covenant. God, however, took the initiative by inviting Jacob back to a living relationship with Him.

Question 1: *Mention some ways through which youths can be led of God and what is the expected attitude when God is leading.*

Youths are enjoined to cultivate a close relationship with God by surrendering their lives to Him through repentance

and forsaking of all known sins in order to attract His manifold blessings on their lives. God still speaks to the youths through His word.

GOD'S COMMAND AND RESPONSE OF JACOB (Genesis 35:1-15; Exodus 19:10-14; Genesis 12:1,2; Deuteronomy 10:5; Exodus 20:3,4; Deuteronomy 5:7; Galatians 5:19-21)

Jacob had an encounter with God at Luz (where he named Bethel) when he was fleeing from Esau to Padanharan. During his first encounter with God, he promised the Lord that if He will be with him, bless and keep him, that the Lord God Almighty will: one, be his God; two, build Him a house and three, give God the tenth of all his blessings. Jacob left Haran with God's full blessings but forgot the promises he made unto Him. Like Jacob, youths often forget the promises they made unto God in time of distresses. Though they may forget, God will not and He expects every youth to fulfil all promises and vow they made unto Him in their periods of needs. Contrary to his promise, Jacob settled at Shechem instead of Bethel.

Question 2: *Give example of a man in the Scripture that made promise unto God and fulfilled it even though it was very costly to do so.*

Jephthah kept his vow unto the Lord, though costlier than his expectation (Judges 11:35). His only daughter also cooperated and consecrated her life unto God till death. He was a good example of faithfulness unto the Lord no matter how costly. Obedience to God is more important than the cost of our obedience.

Jacob's household had gone into idolatry. Thus, there was a need for them to forsake idol worship before they could seek the living God at Bethel. Jacob, all his children and wives promptly obeyed. It shows that no matter how

far you have gone astray from God, it is not too late now to return unto your Maker since you are still alive. Youths should follow the good example of Jacob's children by surrendering to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jacob's children were not there when he made a covenant with God yet when he told them, they did not refuse to serve the true God. Youths should also cooperate with their converted parents to serve God wholeheartedly in their Bible-believing church. Any youth involved in idol worship in the form of cultism, tattoo, enchantment or using of spiritual rings for examination purpose should repent now before it is too late. Jacob commanded his household to put away the strange gods that were among them, be clean and change their garments. As Christian youths, you should do away with all forms of strange gods and keep yourselves holy and clean in His presence.

Fear has torment, but perfect love casts out fear. Jacob was afraid of reprisal attacks but God was merciful unto him and his household because of his obedience to His commandment. Youths must have strong faith in God and obey His commandments in order to be free from the fear of enemies.

Question 3: From the experience of Jacob, what are the benefits of obedience and close relationship with God?

Jacob's sacrifice was acceptable to God. He therefore, appeared unto him and transferred the blessings of Abraham and Isaac upon him. He further commanded him to multiply and be fruitful. Fruitfulness and multiplication is not an option for any youth but a command. No Christian youth should tolerate failure in his life. The power of God is at the disposal of every Christian youth to succeed in life. Youths' consecration to God always attracts God's divine approval and favour. The benefits of close relationship with God are numerous. They include:

one, divine protection; two, divine guidance; three, unhindered progress; four, peace of mind; five, fruitfulness; six, victory over enemies and seven, eternal life.

GRIEFS, CONFLICTS AND DEATH OF RACHEL (Genesis 35:16-29; 49:1-4; Exodus 20:14; Hebrews 13:4; Leviticus 18:6,8)

Jacob decided to visit his father whom he had left for about twenty years with his household. As they journeyed, Rachel his wife was at the point of delivering her second child. She however, had a hard labour and died in the process as soon as she delivered the baby boy. She named the child “Benoni” (Meaning: the child of my pain) but Jacob gave him the name “Benjamin” (Meaning: the right hand is the seat of power). Youths should be careful of what comes out of their mouth when things are not going according to their expectation.

Question 4: *What is the danger of negative confession and what is the antidote against it?*

Jacob and his household eventually arrived at Mamre, a location in Hebron the dwelling place of Isaac, his father. Isaac was one hundred and eighty years old at this time. Isaac thought he would die more than twenty years before this time but God prolonged his life beyond his expectation. His life was preserved by God until he saw his grandchildren who are apparently the heirs of the blessing he had earlier pronounced on Jacob. At last Isaac gave up the ghost and departed this sinful world to eternity with God. He was jointly buried by his two sons, Jacob and Esau.

GENEALOGIES AND REPUTATION OF ESAU'S SEED

(Genesis 36:1-43; 13:6; Judges 9:22,23; Ephesians 4:11)

The history of Esau and his family was here re-enacted. His marriage was a grief of heart to his father and mother. Youths should be watchful not to do anything that can bring grief to their parents. Unlike Jacob, Esau married from the Canaanites without consideration for God and his parents. God-fearing youths should not allow the devil to use anyone to make them go into unholy alliance with the ungodly.

Jacob's and Esau's families pattern were both polygamists, contrary to the good example of Isaac. One man, one wife is God's standard for marriage and every disobedience to this injunction brings sorrow and grief to everyone involved. Some consequences of polygamy are: conflicts, jealousy, bitter rivalry, incest, partiality, hatred and other evils. Youths must pray to God for His perfect will in marriage. Wrong step in marriage can make the rest of their lives bitter.

Esau was a complete sensual and casual man. He was physically prosperous but was spiritually poor and wretched. Youths must not pursue earthly prosperity without spiritual riches. A complete youth must both be spiritually sound and earthly relevant.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Luke	10:29-42	Leviticus	11:1-12
MON	"	11:1-13	"	11:13-28
TUE	"	11:14-28	"	11:29-40
WED	"	11:29-36	"	11:41-47
THU	"	11:37-54	"	12:1-8
FRI	"	12:1-12	"	13:1-15
SAT	"	12:13-21	"	13:16-29

Lesson 29

THE PLOT AGAINST JOSEPH

TEXT: Genesis 37:1-36;
39:1-23

MEMORY VERSE: “And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him” (Genesis 37:18).

In this study, we shall be considering plot against Joseph, the son of Jacob born to him by Rachel. Jacob loved Joseph because he was the son of his old age; hence, he made him a coat of many colours which became a source of envy and hatred for him. Also, Joseph’s inexperience in relating his dream to his brethren led to more envy and subsequent plot against him.

However, instead of being killed, the Lord saved him and he was sold into slavery in Egypt. While in Egypt, Joseph faced temptations in the hand of his master’s wife but he stood his ground and maintained his faithfulness toward God which attracted favour from Him.

Question 1:

- a. *How old was Joseph when he began to keep the flock?*
- b. *What was the symbol of Jacob’s love towards Joseph?*

JOSEPH'S EARLY LIFE AND DREAM (Genesis 37:1-11; Exodus 23:2; Proverbs 29:11; 10:19; 4:5-7; 1:15; Matthew 17:9)

Joseph was the son of Jacob, the eleventh of his twelve children and was just seventeen years old when he was feeding his father's flock. Joseph was a godly child and the hand of God was upon him. He lived a distinct life among his brethren. He refrained himself from doing evil. He lived a consecrated and separated life. This was why he reported the evil activities of his brothers: **"...and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report"** (Genesis 37:2).

Question 2: *How should a youth handle evil deeds of others?*

Though we should not cover up evil activities of others, yet it should be done in a godly manner with intention of getting the individual corrected. Joseph did not imitate the behaviour of his brothers, just as Samuel did not imitate the character of the sons of Eli (1 Samuel 2:22-24). Christian youths should be distinct and separate themselves from the worldly pleasures and amusements (Exodus 23:2).

Joseph was an obedient and submissive child. He submitted to training under his elder brothers, as he fed the flock of his father. Youths should submit to the training and instructions of both their biological and spiritual parents. Joseph was not idle, but was fully involved in the family business. So must youths be fully involved in household, school and church's activities. Joseph was hated and envied by his brothers because he brought their evil reports to their father and that Jacob preferred him above them.

Question 3: *What are the reasons for Joseph's brothers' hatred against him?*

“And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me” (Genesis 37:5,9). Joseph, being a godly child, well favoured and gifted, dreamt and told his brethren, which made them to hate him more. The fact that he revealed his dream to his father and his brothers aggravated the already strained relationship between him and his brothers. This action of Joseph showed his inexperience and immaturity in relating his God-given dreams to people. Youths of today must be careful in revealing personal and divine revelation from God to people so that it will not endanger their future fulfilment. Jesus told Peter and John, **“...tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead”** (Matthew 17:9). There are some revelations that are meant to be kept till the appointed time.

Question 4: *How should Christian youths handle personal revelation?*

JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS (Genesis 37:12-36; Acts 7:9; Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21)

“And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem, And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I” (Genesis 37:12,13). Joseph, being a faithful child obeyed his father. As he went, he could not find his brothers in the place he thought they should be, yet he was not discouraged. The steps of a righteous man are ordered

by the Lord, **“And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field...And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks”** (Genesis 37:15,16). Youths should be humble to ask for counsel from godly leaders, teachers and parents in the choice of career and institutions to study. We should learn to seek God’s face in all endeavours. God still speaks to His people. There are various ways we can hear from Him such as through dream as in the case of Joseph, direct audible voice as in Samuel, (1 Samuel 3:3-5) small audible voice as in Elijah. (1 Kings 19:12,13) and above all through His Words (Psalm 19: 7-9; 119:105; John 5:39).

“And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him” (Genesis 37:18). Conspiracy is a secret plan by a group of people, who are harmful or injurious. Joseph’s brothers thought of eliminating him right on the field. Jealousy and envy filled their hearts and they were ready to terminate his life so as to prevent the fulfillment of his dreams. God is against envy and it must not be mentioned among Christian youths. Though Reuben was not in support of his brothers, yet he did not deliver Joseph totally from the plot. He should have made his stand known.

Question 5: *What is conspiracy?*

Instead of being killed, Joseph was sold to Ishmaelite traders for just twenty pieces of silver. To cover up for this wicked act, they killed a kid (young goats) and dipped Joseph’s coat in the blood, as if he was killed by a wild animal. **“And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no”** (Genesis 37:32). It is common among sinners to attempt to cover up a sin with another sin.

The only cure for sin is repentance. All these, his brothers did to him because of the hatred and envy they had against him. As Christian youths, we should not allow any root of bitterness to spring up in our hearts against others. When people are prospering, we should rejoice with them.

God's hand was upon Joseph (Romans 8:28,) as his brothers brought him out of the pit and sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh where he later became a prime minister. If a youth trusts in God, He will use enemies' conspiracy to fulfill good purposes in his life.

JOSEPH IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE (Genesis 39:1-23; 1 Corinthians 6:16-20; 10:13; James 1:12; 2 Peter 2:9; 2 Timothy 2:22)

“And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelite, which had brought him down thither” (Genesis 39:1). The boy, Joseph, was brought to Potiphar's house, to the strange land as a slave. **“And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian”** (Genesis 39:2). The godly life of Joseph made him to find favour in the sight of his master and was made overseer over everything in his master's house except his wife.

Meanwhile, Joseph's master's wife cast her eyes upon him to commit immorality, but he refused. It was a great temptation but God gave him victory. Joseph avoided temptation from Potiphar's wife. He refused her advances and finally ran away from her. Temporary pleasure could have ruined God's plan for his life. Many youths have destroyed their lives through temporary pleasure with sugar mummy and sugar daddy.

Sometimes, merely trying to avoid temptation is not enough; youths should turn and run from them, especially when the temptation is seemingly very strong, as in the case of sexual temptation. We are to flee youthful lust. As Christian youths, we should not allow any form of lustful desire in our heart towards the opposite gender.

Question 6: *What steps must a youth take to overcome temptation?*

In order to overcome temptation, youths need to watch and pray (Matthew 26:41); associate with people of like precious faith (2 Corinthians 6:14) and occupy themselves with profitable ventures.

In order to cover up, Potiphar's wife framed a story to implicate him; Joseph was put in prison but God was with him. God made him to have favour with the keeper of the prison (Genesis 39:21), he was put in charge of the inmates. Youths are not to be moved when they suffer from false accusation. The Lord will be with them to comfort and strengthen them.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Luke	12:22-34	Leviticus	13:30-46
MON	"	12:35-48	"	13:47-59
TUE	"	12:49-59	"	14:1-18
WED	"	13:1-17	"	14:19-32
THU	"	13:18-30	"	14:33-57
FRI	"	13:31-35	"	15:1-18
SAT	"	14:1-14	"	15:19-33

Lesson 30

JUDAH'S MORAL SLIP

TEXT: Genesis 38:1-30

MEMORY VERSE: “And Judah acknowledged them, and said, she hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more” (Genesis 38:26).

Our text is a temporary break in the flow of the story of Joseph. It introduces us to another son of Jacob called Judah. He was the fourth son of Jacob born unto him by Leah. This chapter on Judah, is intended to teach a number of lessons which include worldliness, wickedness and all forms of wantonness and grave consequences on individual's life and family. The moral lapses of Judah brought death to some members of his family and disgrace to him as a person.

JUDAH'S UNGODLY FRIENDSHIP AND FAMILY LIFE
(Genesis 38:1-11; James 4:4; 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Timothy 2:22; Proverbs 7:6-23)

Judah's moral slip started with his friendship with unbelievers. **“And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah”** (Genesis 38:1). This was the slippery ground on which Judah stood that led to his subsequent moral failures. He left his brethren, the Jewish family, and made friend with a Canaanite. Making friend with an unbeliever rather than God's children is always dangerous for one's life.

Question 1: What is the consequence of downward journey in a Christian life?

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). A Christian youth should not be in friendship with an unconverted, wayward youth, because **“evil communications corrupt good maners”** (1 Corinthians 15:33). There is a common saying, “show me your friend and I will show you the kind of person you are”. If you have sinners as your best friends, it is sure, they will drag you into sin. The type of friend you keep determines your destiny; make friend with God’s people. Judah went into immoral relationship in his downward journey.

Question 2: *How can a youth overcome immoral practice today?*

In order to overcome immoral relationship, like any other sins, one must be born again (John 3:3); steer clear from any object of temptation: **“Abstain from all appearance of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The first evidence of moral downward movement of Judah was in his unequal yoke in marriage with a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shuah. Furthermore, as Christian youths, we should learn the following lessons: One, **“Flee also youthful lusts”** (2 Timothy 2:22). Two, female youths should not allow themselves to be used by the devil as instrument of lust. Three, we should not allow our friends to lead us into evil through careless dressing.

“And Er, Judah’s first son was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him” (Genesis 38:7). God hates wicked youths. He hates their ways, their thoughts, worship, actions and evil deeds. God’s judgment is awaiting all the wicked who refuse to repent of their wickedness (Psalm 145:20). However, He loves them by sending Jesus Christ to die for their salvation. **“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man”** (Hebrews 2:9).

Question 3: *Is there hope for wicked youths?*

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

JUDAH’S FLESHLY LUST AND TAMAR’S DESPERATION
(Genesis 38:12-23; Acts 3:19; Isaiah 55:6,7; John 1:8,9; Proverbs 28:13)

Unfaithfulness is not adhering to promises, obligation or allegiances. The sin of unfaithfulness towards God is a common practice among youths today. Are you a faithful or an unfaithful Christian? The death of Judah’s first two sons must have frightened him so much that he made no move to give his third son (Shelah) to his daughter-in-law, Tamar. Eventually, Shelah grew up but Judah neither fulfilled his promise to Tamar, nor gave her the freedom to remarry. Here we see selfishness, insincerity and insensitivity to the needs of others. When we make promises which we do not intend to keep, not caring how it hurts others, we walk like deceitful and dishonest Judah. Judah did not keep to the promise he made to Tamar (Genesis 38:11). He was unfaithful to his promise.

God expects believers to always keep to their promises (Matthew 5:37, James 5:12). Christian youths should be careful of the promises and vows they make (Ecclesiastes 5:5). If you want other people to keep to their promises to you, you will need to keep to yours. If you keep to your promises, people will be able to trust you. They know that you will be honest and not lie.

Question 4: *How can a Christian demonstrate faithfulness to God?*

“That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many” (Nehemiah 7:2). To be faithful to God, we must fear Him and know He sees

everything we do. Christian youths must not be so desperate in life to get things at the expense of losing their Christian experience and cordial relationship with God.

“And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath... And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep...” (Genesis 38:12-14). To trap Judah, Tamar played an harlot and Judah fell for the trap and laid shamefully with his daughter-in-law, though unknown to him. Tamar, however, secured his personal possession as an evidence that Judah laid with her. When a youth sins, the devil always have something which he will use against him. That is why every Christian youth must flee from the sin of fornication.

JUDAH'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS SINFUL ACTS
(Genesis 38:24-30; Proverbs 28:13; John 3:3,7; Revelation 20:15)

After three months of Judah's shameful act, he acknowledged it after clear evidences. Judah, like all unregenerated persons, was quick to condemn Tamar and requested she should be burnt for her harlotry. However, Judah was convicted of his sin when he realised that he was the man responsible for her immoral act and the disgraceful pregnancy. **“And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son...”** (Genesis 38:26).

Judah openly acknowledged that he was the one responsible for his daughter-in-law's pregnancy. He did not try to cover up his sin before the people (Psalm 32:5; 2 Samuel 12:13). Confession of sin done is not all that God requires. He demands that we repent and turn away from our sinful activities. **“And he knew her again no more”** (Genesis 38:26b).

Question 5: *How can a sinning youth receive the mercy of God today?*

Genuine repentance always attracts God's mercy, forgiveness and favour. The manifestations of God's mercy and

grace on Judah were manifold. One, he was forgiven and restored from shame to praise (Judah means praise). Two, he became a leader of the kingly tribe in Israel through the line of Pharez, one of the twins born by Tamar (Genesis 49:10; Hebrews 7:14; Matthew 1:3)

In this story of Judah's moral lapse, we see the glorious triumph of God's grace over man's sin. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound! No matter how bad and disgraceful one's past life was, divine grace can turn everything around. In God's plan of salvation, one's family background is not a limiting factor, provided the sinner accepts his sinfulness, confesses his sin, repent of all known sins, accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and accept to follow him, then justification, regeneration and adoption becomes his portion. As the Lord chose Judah, Tamar and Pharez, God will choose and accept all those who come to him by faith in Christ Jesus (Psalm 65:4; John 6:37).

Although the practice of levirate marriage is not part of the New Testament dispensation, having and keeping one's name in the book of life by being born again and living a consistent Christian life, is important if one will not be destroyed in the second death (John 3:3,7; Revelation 20:15). When it is time, and the youth comes to marriageable age, they are to pray and seek to know the will of God for them in marriage among children of God.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Luke	14:15-24
MON	"	14:25-35
TUE	"	15:1-10
WED	"	15:11-24
THU	"	15:25-32
FRI	"	16:1-13
SAT	"	16:14-31

EVENING

Leviticus	16:1-19
"	16:20-34
"	17:1-16
"	18:1-15
"	18:16-30
"	19:1-19
"	19:20-37

Lesson 31

JOSEPH'S INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS AND HIS ELEVATION

**TEXT: Genesis 40:1-23;
41:1-57**

MEMORY VERSE: “And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace” (Genesis 41:15,16).

Joseph was imprisoned for an offence he did not commit. While in prison, his character shone. He carried out his prison duties with distinguished faithfulness. Adversity could not break his spirit or change his character. In him was fulfilled the Scriptures: **“The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger”** (Job 17:9). Today’s teaching exemplifies what God does to Christian youth who remains faithful and dogged to God’s inspired instructions. God’s presence with Joseph endeared him to the prison keeper who appointed him chief prisoner. He charged him with the care and welfare of other inmates to uphold prison orders. In the process of time, Pharaoh’s Chief Butler and Baker were remanded in the prison where Joseph was and their welfare was also committed to Joseph. Joseph interpreted their dreams which they had the same night with precision. The Butler was later restored to his duties while the Baker was

executed. As Scripture shows, no youth should consider himself too small to be used of God to save or bring salvation to anybody no matter how highly placed. Wherever we find ourselves – schools and communities, we are there by the grace of God. The Butler later remembered Joseph when Pharaoh had a confusing dream, and was troubled for lack of an interpreter. He informed Pharaoh about Joseph, and Pharaoh called for him. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream with utmost meekness, confidence, with ingenious counsel on vital steps to bring the positive scene of Pharaoh's dream to reality. Pharaoh was impressed with Joseph and so elevated, empowered and commissioned him for the task. **"A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth"** (Proverbs 17:8). Many youths tend to forget God when an expectation is not met immediately; but not Joseph. He waited for God's time and plan for his life.

JOSEPH INTERPRETS THE PRISONERS' DREAMS (Genesis 40:1-23; Job 33:14-17; Isaiah 8:20)

Despite the evidence of Joseph's integrity and moral uprightness, Potiphar still confined him to prison, probably to protect his wife. Yet, Joseph took orders from him, maintained a godly character and hoped for God's deliverance (Genesis 49:22-44; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:12). Christian youths are encouraged to maintain godly character despite injustice, oppressions and persecutions. Pharaoh's Chief Baker and Butler were sent to prison for offending their master. They were kept in the prison where Joseph was. The imprisonment of these two key officers of Pharaoh showed the danger of transgression. **"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered"** (Proverbs 11:21). If earthly kings could imprison their nobles for errors, how much more should all mortals tremble before the King of kings and Creator of heaven and earth who alone has power to kill the body and damn the soul in hell (Matthew 10:28).

The two servants would have been very concerned about

their fate before Pharaoh. It was, therefore, not a surprise that they dreamt dreams. Although God sometimes communicates his mind through dreams (Job 33:14-16), yet, dreams at times could be unreliable and misleading as a means of guidance. Hence, proper interpretation and substantiation by the Scripture is required (Ecclesiastes 5:3,7; Jeremiah 23:28,29; Isaiah 8:20). It is not advisable for Christian youths to base their actions and activities on dreams alone.

Question 1: *What should be the Christian youth's attitude to dreams, and what caution should be exercised about it?*

Pharaoh's officers became sorrowful for lack of an interpreter. Joseph, as his manner was, visited them in the morning and discerned their depressed conditions. Joseph's commitment to his duties in prison despite the unfair treatment meted on him by his master is worthy of emulation.

Question 2: *What can Christian youths learn from the disposition of Joseph while in prison?*

Unlike many Christian youths, Joseph was neither proud or self-conscious for interpreting the dreams of such noble people in the prison, but still went about his duties despite bitter tormenting thoughts of his predicaments with a cheerful countenance (Proverbs 15:13). Joseph's disposition is associated with forgiving offenders; a quality also demonstrated by our Lord Jesus (Mark 6:20-24; Luke 23:39-43).

“And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you”. (Genesis 40:7,8). There are salient lessons for all Christian youths to learn from Joseph. First, his compassion and tenderness towards his fellow prisoners won their confidence to narrate their dreams to him. Christian

youths are to be tender and compassionate toward sinners in pitiable conditions in our schools and fellowships to enhance their receptivity of the gospel. Second, Joseph pointed them to God as the sole interpreter of dreams. Third, he interpreted the dreams without altering the positive message for the Butler or the negative message for the Baker. Christian youths must be faithful as stewards of the manifold grace of God, deliver the full gospel content without adding or removing (1 Corinthians 4:1,2).

“And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand: But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the Chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him” (Genesis 40:21-23).

JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH’S DREAMS (Genesis 41:1-36; Deuteronomy 29:29; Daniel 2:27,28; Job 33:14,15,23,24)

God allowed two full years to pass after Joseph interpreted the Chief Butler and Baker’s dreams. Not until after this did Pharaoh have his dream that demanded Joseph’s interpretation. The Chief Butler forgot Joseph because man can only remember us for good only when it is God’s time (Psalm 118:8,9). God also wanted Joseph to be perfectly moulded in the prison before the next task that will bring him to national prominence. God sometimes allow adversity in his preparatory scheme for vessels for His project (Psalm 66:10-12) especially youths with promising destinies.

Pharaoh had a dream. The dream, a mystery to him, held salient keys about imminent seasons of prosperity and famine for Egypt. The dream required interpretation for Pharaoh to know what to do for Egypt’s economic safety. The dream was sent by God both to save and elevate Joseph (Genesis 41:25), Pharaoh was troubled by the dream as nobody in Egypt could interpret it. Then the Chief Butler remembered his encounter with Joseph in prison. He mentioned him to Pharaoh who quickly sent for Joseph. **“A man’s gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before**

great men” (Proverbs 18:16). Pharaoh welcomed Joseph on the basis of his credentials by the Butler. However, Joseph’s quality of character was evident as he responded to Pharaoh’s compliments, “**And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace**” (Genesis 41:16). Christian youths, even in time of challenges can be source of blessings both to their fellow youths and adults in the society.

Question 3: *Why does God speak through dreams especially to the heathen?*

Joseph pointed to God as the sole possessor of knowledge that provides peace. The process with which Joseph interpreted the initial dream was still evident in his discourse with Pharaoh. It shows absolute faith and confidence in God, humility and an embodiment of consistency. Joseph interpreted the message to the understanding of the dreamer with the intended message clearly understood by him (Mark 4:11). However, God speaks to heathen (kings or subjects) and the ignorant in coded language: one, to humble them and lead them to an interpreter (God’s messenger) who would unveil God’s message of salvation (Job 33:14,15, 23, 24). Two, to reveal His sovereignty over the universe as the ultimate Judge and sole-owner (Genesis 20:1-7; 41:25; Daniel 2:28,29; 4:32). Three, to warn the heathen and the ignorant of the dangers of sin and God’s fierce judgment (Genesis 20:7; Job 33:4; Daniel 4:4-33). Four, to restrain the ignorant from his purpose (Genesis 20:4-7; Job 33:15-17; Matthew 1:18-21; 2:12). Five, God may speak through a dream to a ruler if he has a role to play in His scheme of events (Genesis 15:13,14; Daniel 2:31-45).

Question 4: *Mention the three essentials in Joseph’s interpretation and counsel.*

As Pharaoh narrated his dream, it is noteworthy that Joseph immediately had a deep insight of the dream and the interpretation through the assistance of God’s Spirit

(Genesis 41:38; Job 32:7-9; Isaiah 11:2,3; Daniel 5:11,12; John 16:13; Acts 1:8). Christian youths should see reasons early conversion is of utmost necessity in our schools and fellowships. Joseph had a long history of dreams and dream interpretation. We have greater privileges today through the Holy Spirit to help the world of sinful men and women. Joseph emphasised three cardinal things in the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. One, that seven years of agricultural fruitfulness were imminent in Egypt. Two, another seven years of severe famine and devastation would immediately follow. Three, the need for a serious-minded leader to manage the agricultural potentials of Egypt to store food against the years of famine to guarantee food security.

JOSEPH'S ELEVATION BY PHARAOH (Genesis 41:37-57; Proverbs 10:4; 12:24; 22:29)

Pharaoh and his servants were pleased with Joseph's interpretation of the dream and wise counsel. The dream did not only convey the imminence of two challenging seasons but spelt out responsibilities and need for serious-minded leadership. It was therefore not a surprise to hear Pharaoh say to his servants, **"Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"** (Genesis 41:38). In the language of Pharaoh, no man was better qualified for the job than the man that God had given the insight. God's fashioned men are always better people - Moses, Joshua, Daniel, Paul, Peter etc. Joseph was elevated to the position of a ruler in Egypt. **"Thou shall be over my house, and according unto thy words shall my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou"** (Genesis 41:40). This event in Joseph's life teaches Christian youths the following: First, God reigns in the affairs of men, and gives the kingdom to whom He wills. Second, when we cooperate with God as clay in the potter's hand, He fashions us to be enviable vessels.

Question 5: *Mention some success sterling qualities in Joseph and how would you apply them to the task of soul-winning.*

Joseph did not waste time celebrating his elevation. Being conscious of time constraint; first, he surveyed through the land, obviously to identify men, materials and methods to achieve his mission. Second, he made and selected workers, shared the vision, and empowered them to the task. Third, he designed strategies for sowing, harvests and storage both in the cities and in the fields. **“And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much until he left numbering; for it was without number”** (Genesis 41:49). Four, when the famine eventually came as envisioned, the nation was cushioned from the effects. Five, other nations benefited from his industry and prudence. Six, despite the hard task, he had a stable family and was blessed with children. The gospel work demands no less commitment. We must enlist, train workers and foster cohesive leadership through soul-winning and discipleship with consciousness of the urgency of our task.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Luke	17:1-10
MON	“	17:11-19
TUE	“	17:20-37
WED	“	18:1-14
THU	“	18:15-30
FRI	“	18:31-43
SAT	“	19:1-10

EVENING

Leviticus	20:1-21
“	20:22-27
“	21:1-15
“	21:16-24
“	22:1-16
“	22:17-33
“	23:1-14

Lesson **32**

JOSEPH'S ENCOUNTER WITH HIS BRETHREN

TEXT: Genesis 42:1-38;
43:1-34; 44:1-34;
45:1-28.

MEMORY VERSE: “And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt” (Genesis 45:4).

Twenty years after Joseph had been sold into slavery in Egypt, his brothers went down in search of grains for survival. They never thought of seeing him alive anymore, neither his father who had believed he is dead. (Genesis 42:36,38). The famine bit hard on Jacob's family while they got information of the abundance of corn in Egypt. They were taken to the “lord” of the land whom they never knew was the Joseph they once hated, despised and sold into slavery. The present study shows Joseph's encounter with his siblings, the joy of forgiveness, family reunion and the beginning of another chapter in the history of the sons of Jacob.

THE FAMINE AND THE VISIT OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS
(Genesis 42:1,2; 21,22; 2 Chronicles 20:4; 1 Samuel 30:11-18; Joshua 2:4-16; 1 Samuel 11:1-9)

“And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die” (Genesis 42:2). Jacob got informed of the availability of corn in Egypt; therefore, commanded his children to go and buy corn from there that they may survive the famine.

As Christian youths, we should be well-informed of the place to get assistance in time of need. For instance, source for information from your classmates, teachers, internet, literatures the Holy Bible etc. When Ziklag was invaded by the Amalekites and the women, including David's wife were taken captives, David prayed to God and He bid him to pursue them. It was a young man of Egypt who was fainting that was of help to David by giving them vital information needed (1 Samuel 30:11-18). For the spies that visited Jericho, it was Rahab, an harlot, that was of help to them and afterward Rahab became beneficiary of the favour of God (Joshua 2:4-16). The men of Jabesh-gilead received help from Saul (1 Samuel 11:1-9).

Famine is characterized by scarcity of food. It may arise as a result of scarcity of rain in some cases or disobedience to God's command (Proverbs 26:2; Psalm 119:67). Where idolatry, occultism, gross immorality, kidnapping, examination malpractice, internet fraud and other evils abound in any society, they bring the punishment of God (1 Kings 8:35-37).

Question 1: *Enumerate acts that can lead to famine and affliction.*

It is instructive that wickedness of men produces sufferings and afflictions when the land is polluted with sin. Righteousness, the Bible says, exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34). In these last days, our land is famished of the truth because of sin. The devil is at work to derail believers from the way of truth. The only way out is to go back to the Bible (2 Timothy 3:1-7). This is the only antidote to famine and barrenness in our land.

JOSEPH'S BEHAVIOUR BEFORE REUNION (Genesis 42:7,9,14-20, 25; 43:16,27-30; 44:1-4,15; 45:1-15; Luke 24:36-43; Revelation 3:9; Isaiah 49:23; 43:4-7)

Question 2: *What must characterise the life of believers for their God-given visions to be fulfilled?*

While Jacob sent his ten sons to Egypt, he kept Benjamin with him. The 'loss' of Joseph was still fresh in his mind. On getting to Egypt, they came face to face with Joseph, but they did not recognise him. The teenager they sold into slavery many years back had become the prime minister in Egypt. Joseph spoke through an interpreter, so they could not recognise him. Joseph showed good judgment, prudence and cleverness (Proverbs 12:23). There are sundry lessons to learn from the encounter. First, his precaution – Joseph was careful in showing excitement on seeing his brothers. He was not hasty. He concealed his identity long enough to be able to discern whether they were still the old cruel, envious brothers he once knew them to be. Christians should exercise self-control in all situations (Philippians 4:5). Second, pretended hostility – he accused them of being spies. He was able to make them volunteer information about his father and brother, Benjamin. He was “harsh” with them in order to know their present state. Third, their consciences were pricked – they remembered the evil they had done, the lie they had told their father (Genesis 42:22; 43:18; 44:16). Reuben spoke confidently with clear conscience because he did all he could to prevent their evil action (Genesis 37:21,22,29,30; 42:22). Joseph however, held Simeon, his father's second born hostage. Fourth, his provision and hospitality – in spite of his pretentious harshness to his half-brothers, his heart was still filled with love and care. He made provisions for them, ate on the same table with them even when he was yet to make himself known to them. He believed he was sent ahead of them to preserve and nurture them. Fifth, his positive construction and compassion – Joseph wept four times (Genesis 42:24, 43:30, 45:2, 50:17). He interpreted the evil they did to him in the light of divine plan. For believers, **“...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Romans 8:28). Sixth, his patience and perseverance – he did not reveal himself to them until he has proved them to establish their sincerity and evidence of transformed lives.

Joseph's brothers went back home and related their experience to their father. The demand for Benjamin to go

with them on the next trip did not go down well with Jacob. Once beaten, twice shy, he was not ready to lose Benjamin too. He became suspicious (Genesis 42:36). However, the famine was biting hard and the whole family was at risk of dying. Judah made himself a surety for Benjamin. Their father saw his sincerity and entrusted him with Benjamin. Every Christian worker must ask, can God entrust me with souls?

Question 3: How should Christian youths treat their siblings?

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17). On their second visit, Joseph was delighted to see his younger brother Benjamin. He showed him care and affection. Christian youths should be affectionate to their younger ones and all. They must eschew all forms of bitterness. Joseph asked about their father’s welfare. Parental care and concern are virtues Christian youths must imbibe.

After dining with his brothers, he left them to go with much grain. However, Joseph’s cup was hid in Benjamin’s sack. He sent for them, a search was made and the lost cup was found with Benjamin. The ploy was another part of Joseph’s test to prove the genuineness of his brothers’ change of heart. Joseph’s verdict was that Benjamin alone was to be detained in Egypt. Judah rose to the occasion. He was willing to be detained. Our Lord Jesus Christ is both our Substitute and a Surety of a better covenant. With all the tests, Joseph was convinced that his brothers had truly been transformed; they had indeed become **“true men”**.

THE LOVE AND FORGIVENESS OF JOSEPH (Genesis 45:1-28; Matthew 5:43-45; 18:15-17,21-35; Ephesians 4:31,32; Luke 23:24)

Question 4: What moved Joseph to reveal himself to his brothers?

Joseph could no longer refrain himself. Brotherly love took its turn. The Scripture says, **“Let brotherly love continue”**

(Hebrews 13:1). Joseph put on bowels of mercy as commanded for believers. **“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering”** (Colossians 3:12).

Christian youths must be challenged by the character of Joseph. If he, in the era of the Old Covenant can be so tender-hearted, believers in the era of grace has no excuse to harbour hatred, vengeance or unforgiving spirit. Joseph’s life is worthy of emulation. With all he went through, he saw it all as God’s plan to save his brothers’ lives (Genesis 50:20). Joseph was truly sanctified. He followed peace with his former tormentors as it was with David and Saul when he had opportunity to kill him. No one can enter heaven without being at peace with all. **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14).

Eventually, Joseph made himself known to his brothers, **“I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt”** (Genesis 45:4), much like our Saviour with Saul of Tarsus **“I am Jesus whom thou persecutest”** (Acts 9:5). The men felt uneasy and insecure at Joseph’s presence, as sinners would feel in the presence of the Holy God. Sinners who reject Jesus Christ now will find no place to hide in the day of judgment, but mercy is still available today. Jesus bade sinners, **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28).

Joseph fell on his brothers’ necks, kissed them, thus assuring them of his forgiveness, **“and after that his brethren talked with him”** (Genesis 45:15). He then sent them to go and bring his father and the entire household so that they might live near him for sustenance. As Christians, we should care for our families. Pharaoh also sent invitation to bring the family of Joseph to Egypt (Genesis 45:18). Pharaoh’s action must have been influenced by God (Proverbs 21:1), coupled with the selfless service that Joseph had rendered to his kingdom. Christian youths should take solace in the fact of divine-human partnership in the fulfillment of God’s plans for their lives.

Question 5: How should a Christian youth treat those who have wronged them?

Throughout this encounter, it was obvious Joseph did not manifest any selfishness. His actions brought his brothers to confession of sin. He became a blessing to them. He did not take advantage of his position to exact from them a “pound of flesh”. Christian youths should learn to forgive their offender and forget their offences by showing the love of God to them. The disposition he put up led his brothers to self-realization. Trust, love and confidence towards each other were built up. He exemplified Jesus Christ as he forgave, brought them near, supplied their needs and preserved them from extinction.

Jacob initially received the news of Joseph being alive with unbelief. He had expected the worst, loss of Simeon and probably Benjamin, but now to hear that Joseph was alive was too much to bear for a heart weighed down with sorrow. But when he saw the wagons, his spirit revived. His days of mourning had come to an end. **“And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die”** (Genesis 45:28). The Scripture says, **“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country”** (Proverbs 25:25). Too much sorrow can make believers to forget their covenant rights and position in Christ. Apostle Paul admonished believers to **“...sorrow not, even as others which have no hope”** (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Luke 19:11-27	Leviticus 23:15-22
MON	“ 19:28-48	“ 23:23-32
TUE	“ 20:1-8	“ 23:33-44
WED	“ 20:9-18	“ 24:1-23
THU	“ 20:19-26	“ 25:1-21
FRI	“ 20:27-47	“ 25:22-41
SAT	“ 21:1-19	“ 25:42-55

Lesson 33

JACOB MOVES TO EGYPT

TEXT: Genesis 46:1-34;
47:1-31

MEMORY VERSE: “And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him” (Genesis 46:6).

In the previous lesson, Joseph had revealed himself to his brethren and consequently asked them to bring his father, Jacob, down to Egypt. Joseph did not chide his brethren nor sought vengeance for selling him into slavery. The Lord has counselled believers thus: **“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”** (Romans 12:17,19). Believers are not to seek vengeance. We should follow peace with all men.

JACOB’S MOVEMENT TO EGYPT (Genesis 46:1-34; 28:15; 26:1-7; Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 66:12; Deuteronomy 31:6,8; Ephesians 6:1,2)

“And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac” (Genesis 46:1). Israel, formerly known as Jacob left Canaan for Egypt on the invitation from Joseph. He did not leave anyone in his household behind. This teaches

believers the need for them to ensure they and all the members of their families are brought to the Lord.

“And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father, fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation” (Genesis 46:2,3). This assurance from the Lord made Jacob to know that it was God’s perfect will for him to heed the invitation of his loving son to come to Egypt. The lesson here for believers is that they should not go anywhere or take any major decision in life without seeking the face of God and His will.

Question 1: *How can believers know God’s will for their lives?*

“I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again; and Joseph shall put his hand upon thy eyes” (Genesis 46:4). God has promised Jacob His abiding presence. Even though Egypt was not the place God had promised his fathers, Jacob knew that if he obeyed Him, he will still be blessed. **“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee”** (Isaiah 43:2).

Question 2: *What should be the right attitude of believers to their parents?*

“And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. His sons, and his son’s sons with him, his daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt” (Genesis 46:5,7). The children of Jacob had obviously been transformed. They took proper care of their father by

putting him in one of the wagons provided by Pharaoh. Believers must honour their parents and respect them. **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise”** (Ephesians 6:1,2). The respect and honour should not be limited to our biological parents alone. Believers should equally respect and honour their spiritual parents and the elderly.

JACOB’S ARRIVAL AND ACCEPTANCE IN EGYPT (Genesis 46:28-34; 47:1-3; 22:17,18; Numbers 23:19; Acts 7:59,60; Hebrews 2:11; Proverbs 15:33)

Jacob came down to Egypt on the invitation of Joseph. The total number of his descendants that followed him to Egypt was seventy. This seemingly small member eventually became a mighty nation in accordance with the promise of God. **“And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly ...for a father of many nations have I made thee”** (Genesis 17:2,5). **“That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies”** (Genesis 22:17).

Question 3: *What encouragement do believers receive from the multiplication of Israel in Egypt?*

The small number of Jacob’s descendants that came down with him to Egypt eventually became a mighty nation. This shows that every promise of God is dependable and infallible. **“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”** (Numbers 23:19). Christian youths should not despise the day of little beginning (Job 8:7).

The meeting between the aged Jacob and his son, Joseph was indeed the fulfillment of divine promise. **“And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive”** (Genesis 46:29,30).

Question 4: What should be the right attitude of believers to their persecutors?

God has divinely brought a loving father together with his beloved son again. Joseph provided a good land in Egypt for his father and his brethren called Goshen, the best part of the Egyptian land. This shows clearly that Joseph was not vengeful. He manifested evidence of total forgiveness to his wicked brethren. This is a good attribute every believer should possess. Christians should not show retaliation for evil done by persecutors. Rather, we should pray for them. **“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...”** (Luke 23:34). **“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God... And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge...”** (Acts 7:59,60).

Joseph took his father to Pharaoh’s palace for introduction. **“Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh”** (Genesis 47:1,2). Joseph was not ashamed to openly identify with his brethren. It is absurd for a professing Christian to be position or ego conscious. This makes a believer to be proud. Christians should humble themselves so that the Lord could exalt them.

“And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your

occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers” (Genesis 47:3). This question of King Pharaoh shows the importance and dignity of labour. No Christian should be idle. As a youth, if one does not go to school, he should learn a profitable trade. **“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you”** (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

JOSEPH’S ADMINISTRATION IN EGYPT (Genesis 47:13-26; 41:39-46; 2 Corinthians 8:21; 1 Timothy 5:17; Deuteronomy 5:16; Colossians 3:22-24)

According to the pronouncement of Pharaoh after the interpretation of his dreams by Joseph, he was set over all the land of Egypt. Only in the throne was Pharaoh greater than him. Joseph operated discreetly and cautiously. **“And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought and Joseph brought the money unto Pharaoh’s house”** (Genesis 47:14). Joseph did not abuse the power of his office. He was prudent, dependable and loyal. It was the faithfulness and openness of Joseph that made him to diligently and honestly deliver all the resources of Egypt into the Egyptian treasury. He did not play prank with the vast resources of Egypt and neither did he try to swindle or syphon it to his personal account.

Joseph faithfully delivered to Pharaoh the land that the people surrendered to him in exchange of food. He did not convert any part of the land as his own private property. Joseph was not only faithful to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians, he was also respectful to the priests. He bought all the lands of Egypt except the land of the priests. This is a lesson believers need to learn about how much to respect pastors and leaders in the church. **“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine”** (1 Timothy 5:17).

Jacob was properly taken care of by Joseph before his death. He promised to obey the instruction of his father not to bury him in Egypt (Genesis 47:30).

Christian youths need to emulate this virtue. We need to obey our parents even at old age, we should not violate their godly instructions. **“Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee, that thy days may be prolonged and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”** (Deuteronomy 5:16).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Luke	21:20-28
MON	“	21:29-38
TUE	“	22:1-13
WED	“	22:14-20
THU	“	22:21-30
FRI	“	22:31-38
SAT	“	22:39-46

EVENING

Leviticus	26:1-13
“	26:14-25
“	26:26-39
“	26:40-46
“	27:1-16
“	27:17-25
“	27:26-34

Lesson 34

CHRIST FEEDS THE MULTITUDE

TEXT: Matthew 14:14-21;
Mark 8:1-26; Luke 9:11-17

MEMORY VERSE: “And they did all eat, and were filled, and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full” (Matthew 14:20).

In the previous chapter, Jesus taught the multitude the word of the kingdom of God. He revealed in His teachings the operation of the devil in hindering man from benefitting from the word of God. From that, we learnt the need to pray fervently after hearing the word of God for fruitfulness. A well prepared heart can experience spiritual fruitfulness from God's word.

The report of the death of John the Baptist had been brought to the attention of Jesus by His disciples. “**When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart**” (Matthew 14:13).

Question 1: *From Christ's example, how should Christian youths handle persecution or threat to their life?*

Here is wisdom: Jesus had to go apart with His disciples away from Herod for safety. This is unlike some unwise Christians who would have thought fleeing is an act of cowardice! Jesus taught His disciples earlier on how to handle similar situation. “**But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye**

shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come” (Matthew 10:23).

Also, Jesus and His disciples needed to be refreshed; and going apart into a solitary place becomes necessary. Unfortunately, there are contemporary Christian workers who labour for others in the Kingdom but have no time for personal refreshment. Such should know that they are not wiser and stronger than Christ! Anyone who neglects personal rest and spiritual refreshment will soon go empty or crash. Hence, they withdrew across the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1,2) to a quiet place for meditation and prayer (Mark 6:30,31).

Meanwhile, when the multitudes heard about the movement of Jesus and His disciples to the place, they followed Him on foot, desiring to further hear from and be blessed of Him. There is a lesson to learn from the attitude of this desirous multitude that walked long distance to hear Jesus. Those who recognise Jesus’ power to meet all their needs will defy all odds and inconveniences to seek Him. The blessings we receive from seeking the Lord against all odds outweigh the sacrifices we put into it. As shown in our text, Jesus responded to the quest of the crowd by not only ministering to their souls, but also to their needs. He had compassion on them, healed and miraculously fed them (Matthew 14:14,15).

THE COMMENDABLE DESIRE FOR THE LORD BY THE MULTITUDE (Matthew 14:13; Luke 9:10,11; John 6:1,2; Psalm 42:1,2; John 4:25; 6:25,26; Deuteronomy 4:29; 1 Chronicles 16:11).

The strong desire to hear from Jesus as well as to be blessed by Him made the people to seek after Him wherever He goes. Even though Christ went across the sea unannounced, the people made effort to know His whereabouts and went there on foot. The counsel for youths within and outside the church is that they should develop a strong desire and undeterred effort

to seek the Lord. This should be for spiritual, physical, material, academic and other needed blessings. **“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God”** (Psalm 42:1).

Question 2: *Were these multitude sincere seekers of Christ?*

The coming of the Messiah was long awaited for by the Israelites, and beyond the nation of Israel. **“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things”** (John 4:25). This is one of the reasons some in the multitude sought after Christ. Others in the group had carnal motive for seeking Christ. This was revealed in Christ’s interaction with them. **“And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled”** (John 6:25,26).

Today, different youths come to the church for several reasons. It may be for sincere purpose of making the kingdom of God, while others come for ulterior motive or position - seeking. Why are you coming to the church? Jesus’ admonition is, **“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed”** (John 6:27). Just as the multitude came to Christ beyond the sea, youths are to avail themselves in the weekly meetings of the church; special monthly program, Youth Home Success Fellowship; retreat and Success Camp, etc. They should come with ready minds to learn from the Lord and be ready to receive all round blessings from Him; just as the multitude that came were blessed by Him.

THE COMPASSIONATE DEALING OF THE LORD WITH THE MULTITUDE (Matthew 14:15-19; 9:36; 15:32; Mark 8:2-8; 6:34; Luke 9:12-17; Deuteronomy 13:17; 2 Chronicles 30:9)

“And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14). Jesus is the Good Shepherd who dealt with the multitude compassionately. Observing the miracles of Christ during His earthly ministry was based on mercy. Many of the recipients of His miracle did not merit it. But, He healed them all.

Question 3: *What was the motive of Christ in His miraculous outreach to the multitude?*

Christ’s purpose for coming to the world is to save the people from their sins. Satan took advantage of the sin of man to torment and oppress him. This oppression and torment made man to become subject to the devil who takes him captive at his will. And Christ came **“that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will”** (2 Timothy 2:26). The compassion of Christ is borne of this. He has to heal, deliver and set free these captives and afterward, give them salvation. He did not come to condemn the sinners or deny them of healing due to sin. But expects them to repent, having seen His authority over the devil and his works; and His ability to liberate them from all life challenges. Christian youths should understand the danger of sin and must be attended to urgently. There is no need for delay to repent, whether there is healing or health. And Christ greatest purpose is to save man from his sins. Are you saved since you started coming to this church? Christ’s compassion makes Him to forgive and forget every sin unconditionally no matter how terrible they are. **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to**

heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18).

Christ’s healing and deliverance show His deity as God who created all things and can relieve pains, restore defaulted parts, remove sickness, rebuke and drive out the devil from those possessed. It showed His authority, ability and power to do all things. **“And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak” (Mark 7:37).**

Question 4: *Mention some instances where Jesus demonstrated His compassion on people in the Bible.*

Cases of Jesus demonstrating compassion on people abound in the Scriptures. These include: One, restoration of the sight of two blind men (Matthew 20:30-34). Two, the cleansing of a man from leprosy (Mark 1:40-42). Three, deliverance of the demoniac (Mark 5:1-19). Four, restoration of the dead son of the woman of Nain back to life (Luke 7:11-13). As the people in all the cases mentioned above were not disappointed but had their problems solved by Jesus, youths also should be rest assured that all their problems will receive solutions today as they come to Jesus with faith.

“And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals” (Matthew 14:15). Christ’s care for the people is one of the greatest virtues that showed Him a Good Shepherd. He has heartfelt feeling for them and would not want them to go hungry. **“But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat” (verse 16).** Though His disciples thought it was impossible to feed such a multitude, Christ knew what He would do. All that was needed was the available **“five loaves, and two fishes” (verse 17)** to feed them. It is noticeable that

the loaves and fishes used to feed the multitude belonged to a lad. If you were the lad, would you have surrendered it? In church's program, do you make contribution as a youth even when you have? Or you take your money to such program to feed sumptuously? Think on this. **"And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand"** (John 6:10).

Having organised the multitude into groups, He blessed the five loaves and two fishes. Then the miracle of multiplication took place. There are two things we learn from here. (1) Christ love an organised people and does not like rowdiness. As we come to the retreat or success camp, we should maintain an orderly and organised manner when food is being served. (2) Christ has the ability to multiply five loaves and two fishes. Whenever we are in scarcity, just pray to Him and you will find out that this is true of Him. Do not lose your faith at a time of need, He might just be there waiting for you.

THE COLLECTION AND CONSERVATION OF THE FRAGMENTS FROM THE MULTITUDES (Matthew 14:20,21; Mark 8:8,9; 6:43; Luke 9:17; John 6:13; 2 Kings 4:5-7)

"And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full" (Matthew 14:20). After the multitude had been fed to satisfaction, the remaining food was collected together for preservation. This shows that God is against wastage of any kind.

Question 5: *What lesson can you draw from the gathering of the leftover food by the disciples?*

It is very unfortunate that at hard times like this, some youths have the habit of wastage. They will take the food they

cannot finish and waste the remnant afterward. Some of these boys and girls do not know that water, electricity, money and other substance should be managed.

God commanded the children of Israel to take adequate Manna they can consume. They should not take excess so that it would not be wasted. **“And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating”** (Exodus 16:18).

Apart from wastage, the remnant was kept for further consumption. In this, Christian youths are admonished to learn to save at a time of abundance for the future when there may be scarcity. It was this way that Joseph saved a generation from been destroyed by destitution (Genesis 41:33-36).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Luke	22:47-53
MON	“	22:54-62
TUE	“	22:63-71
WED	“	23:1-12
THU	“	23:13-25
FRI	“	23:26-43
SAT	“	23:44-56

EVENING

Numbers	1:1-43
“	1:44-54
“	2:1-17
“	2:18-34
“	3:1-20
“	3:21-37
“	3:38-51

Lesson 35

CHRIST'S POWER OVER NATURE

TEXT: Matthew 14:22-36;
Luke 8:22-25

MEMORY VERSE: “And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him” (Luke 8:25).

Christ calmed the stormy sea by divine authority. The disciples were not only amazed, but were also persuaded and said “**Of a truth thou art the Son of God**”. The manifestation of Christ’s authority in calming the storm is instructive to contemporary Christians as it shows how God is able to bring peace to our lives in difficult times. It is therefore, important for Christian youths to exercise their faith in God whenever they are faced with challenging situations like ill health, financial crises, academic failure, disappointment during admission processing and bereavement, among others.

The entire Scriptures, especially the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) shows that Jesus has power over nature. This then confirms the sovereignty of our Saviour as Maker and Creator. Besides, Christ also manifested His authority over all sicknesses. It is certain that with God nothing is impossible. Hence, the manifestation of His power is still evident today (Psalm 62:11; Isaiah 40:28-31; John 14:12).

THE PRAYER LIFE OF CHRIST (Matthew 14:22,23; Luke 8:22; Matthew 8:18; Mark 4:35; 6:45,46; 9:28,29; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 6:18,19)

In the earlier verses of this chapter, Christ has performed the miracle of abundant supply of food for His audience. Jesus Christ will not allow success to deprive Him of spiritual refreshment (prayer). He often moves on to the other side for more assignments and prayers. **“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone”** (Matthew 14:23). Christ showed the pattern of spiritual leadership. Here, He irresistibly urged His disciples to get into a ship and go before Him unto “the other side”. This signifies His approach of reaching as many as possible with the gospel of the kingdom of God. Christian youths and leaders should not be contented with an immediate success or ministerial achievements in one location but should have broadened thoughts and plans to reach everyone and everywhere. He sent the multitude away but moved to the other side. **“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”** (Matthew 24:14). Therefore, believing youths must rise and leave their comfort zones (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16-20; Acts 1:8) to preach the gospel.

Question 1: *What should saved youths learn from Christ’s retiring to a secret place to pray?*

Christian youths must create time for personal prayer, for refreshing and renewal of spiritual strength. That is the source of spiritual power and authority. **“And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting”** (Mark 9:28,29). Christ had always set Himself apart alone with God, for this is the means to always hear from Him.

Christ has set before us an example of the power of secret prayer. **“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly”** (Matthew 6:6). Prayer should not be an emergency thing with Christian youths, but rather be part of their lifestyle. For it is written; **“men ought always to pray, and not to faint”** (Luke 18:1).

THE POWER OVER STORM BY CHRIST (Matthew 14:24-27; Luke 8:23-25)

“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary” (Matthew 14:24). While the disciples were inside the ship, there was a raging storm. The situation was becoming hopeless and frightening. And Christ knowing the disciples were in danger walked on the sea to meet them. This made them to suppose Christ to be a spirit. Challenges of life can lead believers to suspicion, not seeing with the eyes of faith. The counsel of the Scripture for every youth is to look to Jesus at such a time (Hebrews 12:1,2; 13:5,6).

For the fact that it was Christ that gave the instruction to move to the other side did not excuse them from the storms of life. Being in the centre of God’s will does not make anyone free from life’s challenges. **“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33).

Question 2: Does Christ’s walking on the sea cancel the natural law?

Christ walking upon the sea contradicts the force of natural law. This, however, does not cancel the natural law but establishes that Christ is supernatural. He is supreme over nature and kingdoms (Philippians 2:5-9; Ephesians 1:19-

23). This shows that nothing exceeds the power of the Almighty God. He is the umpire of the whole universe. The sun, moon and all the planets will always obey Him. Christ is always at hand to manifest His power in life and situations that challenges the faith of Christian youths. While the disciples were troubled, fearful and frightened, Christ pronounced calmness and the wind obeyed. In this same manner, youths should allow Christ to be at the center of their lives in order to calm all storms confronting them. **“He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still”** (Psalm 107:29).

THE POWER OF FAITH THROUGH CHRIST (Matthew 14:28-33; Luke 8:24,25; Mark 6:47-51; John 6:16-21).

“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water” (Matthew 14:28). Peter often demonstrates boldness and his courage always made him to experience the supernatural. He desired to walk on the sea like Christ, soon he became afraid when he looked away from the Saviour. Yet, His touch brought him up. **“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me”** (Psalm 138:7). Christian youths are not expected to look away from Christ. They must continuously look **“unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Hebrews 12:2). The presence of Christ establishes His sovereignty and assures believers’ overwhelming victory in all challenges of life. It gives all His anointed the persuasive confirmation that through Him they can do exploits (John 14:12).

Question 3: *What are some things that faith in Christ can do?*

The explosion of different kinds of miracle often takes place through faith in Christ. These are confirmations of His absolute power over man and nature. The power of Christ therefore gives calmness over crisis, peace over pandemonium and life over death. Faith in His power gives all-round blessings such as: healing for the sick, strength for the weak, blessing for the poor and enabling grace for His children.

The power to do exploit in His name is for all who believe today. All that sinners need to do is to reflect on His word, repent and believe on the Lord as the Saviour. Backsliders must come back to the Lord for full restoration. The prayer of faith with earnest desire will work wonders through every believers to the glory of God. Come believing, Come believing, Come to Jesus look and live.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Luke	24:1-12	Numbers	4:1-20
MON	"	24:13-32	"	4:21-33
TUE	"	24:33-43	"	4:34-49
WED	"	24:44-53	"	5:1-10
THU	John	1:1-18	"	5:11-31
FRI	"	1:19-28	"	6:1-27
SAT	"	1:29-42	"	7:1-23

Lesson 36

CHRIST EXALTS GOD'S COMMANDMENT OVER TRADITION

TEXT: Matthew 15:1-39

MEMORY VERSE: "But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also **t r a n s g r e s s** the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3).

In this study, the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees came to accuse Jesus whose disciples were seen eating with unwashed hands. They were criticised for not obeying the Jewish ceremonial practice of washing of hands as taught by the Pharisees. Christ however, used the opportunity to teach and counsel the Pharisees and the Scribes that they should not violate the commandment of God with their unscriptural traditions. Christian youths should learn from Christ's attitude by turning criticism to opportunity.

Question 1: *What should be the attitude of Christian youths towards criticism from the unbelievers?*

Christian youths must not take criticism as a personal offence. They should love and pray for the people who criticise them (Matthew 5:44). They should not fight back or quarrel with them, but develop a right attitude. They

should shun negative tendencies because of heaven. **“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”** (Matthew 5:9)

SINISTER CONDEMNATION BY THE CRITICS (Matthew 15:1,2; Ezra 7:6; Revelation 22:18; Galatians 4:9; Colossians 2:20-23)

Throughout the earthly ministry of Christ, the Scribes and the Pharisees made themselves perpetual and constant opposers and critics of everything that Christ did or stood for. In this text, the Scribes and the Pharisees had come to condemn Jesus for allowing His disciples eat with unwashed hands. **“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hand when they eat bread”** (Matthew 15:1,2). These accusers were critical and judgmental. Their approach to Jesus had a sinister motive. They wanted to prove to Jesus that they were more righteous.

The Pharisees were of a strict sect within Judaism that came into prominence during the dark age of Israel's history when God did not speak to the people of Israel through dreams, vision or through any prophets. This was in the second century B.C. The Pharisees were fond of demonstrating a “holier than thou attitude”. They treated anyone who was not part of them as infidel who should be despised and disdained. On the other hand, the Scribes, also called lawyers, were teachers of the law. They specialized in copying out the law to replicate it for the people. They were learned men whose business was to study the law, transcribe it and write commentaries on it. Their assistance was often sought when an interpretation of a legal point was needed. The Pharisees were zealous of

the tradition of the elders. This zeal had made them to place the tradition over the commandment of God. Christian youths should not exalt the culture of the society or their level of education above the word of God.

Question 2: *What are the common traditions of men and their associated dangers?*

The Pharisees' undue emphasis on tradition was like an addition to the Lord's commandments. Any addition to God's law contravenes His command. **"...If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book"** (Revelation 22:18).

As in the days of Pharisees and Scribes that they exalted the tradition of elders above the commandments of God, some today also exalt traditions above God's word.

The traditions that are being exalted above the word of God today are the worship of Mary, the mother of Jesus, feet washing and praying in the names of angels and saints, using of prayer books, water baptism by sprinkling of water, valentine celebration etc. Dangers abound if anyone exalts the tradition of men above God. It would lead to spiritual weakness, condemnation from Christ and eternal damnation.

SUPREMACY OF GOD'S COMMAND OVER TRADITION
(Matthew 15:3-6; Leviticus 19:3; Ephesians 6:1,2; Exodus 20:12)

Unlike the Pharisees and the Scribes that laid undue emphasis on observance of traditions at the expense of the commandments of God, Jesus clearly stated the superiority and supremacy of the commandment of God over the traditions of men. **"But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the**

commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift ...And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:3-6).

In this point, Jesus lifted and exalted the fifth commandment of the Lord above the tradition of the Jews. The fifth commandment of the Lord taught the people to honour their parents, but the Jews had added a tradition that made them to disregard their parents. The tradition permitted the people to inform their parents that what they could have given them had been offered to God. Jesus said that the ungodly tradition has in that process contradicted the plain teaching of the law. **"Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God"** (Leviticus 19:3).

Question 3: Why do youths disobey the word of God today?

The word of God is the commandment of God. The command of God is expected to be obeyed promptly (Psalm 119:60). It is painful to note that many youths show wrong attitude to God's word and disobey them because: one, they love themselves above the word of God. Two, they are covetous and proud. Three, they do dishonour their parents and four, they are not born again (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

SOLEMN COUNSEL BY CHRIST (Matthew 15:7-20; Colossians 2:18-22; Matthew 12:34,35; Proverbs 4:23; John 17:17; Romans 14:2,3; 1 Corinthians 8:8,9,13; Habakkuk 2:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Leviticus 7:26; 19:26; 1 Corinthians 10:22-26)

“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:7,8).

Question 4: *What is hypocrisy and its consequences?*

Hypocrisy is pretending to be what you are not because you are yet to have an encounter with Christ, the Saviour. Many youths today act as Christians at home and also at the church, but when they go out they live contrary.

God frowns at hypocrisy. Youths exhibit hypocrisy in the following ways: (1) Dressing like a Christian but inwardly are corrupt (Matthew 23:27). (2) Attending church meetings regularly but far away from God (Matthew 15:8,9). (3) Engaging in God’s service but not yet saved (Psalm 50:16). (4) Behaving like angels at home but do live like the world on campus. Hypocrisy has great consequences because Christ condemns it. The effects of hypocrisy are rejection by Christ and eternal condemnation in hell (Matthew 23:33). The way out of these danger of hypocrisy is to repent and turn to Christ for salvation and be yourself.

“Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man” (Matthew 15:11). The people were made to understand that all sin in word or deed first originated from the heart. These all came out of the man to defile him. This

shows the priority of heart cleansing for believers. **“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things”** (Matthew 12:34,35).

There is the need for a Christian youth to press on to possess sanctification of the heart after salvation, else such a believer may not see God. Christ has indeed prayed for the heart purity of His disciples. **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy world is truth”** (John 17:17).

Question 5: Why should Christian youths pay great attention to the condition of their hearts?

Careless youths who allow themselves to be misled by the Pharisees in the church will face the same judgment that awaits all hypocrites. **“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch”** (Matthew 15:14).

Jesus emphasised the fact that what makes a person unclean is the evil that comes out of the mouth, not the food that goes into it. The heart, which is the engine house of the body, is the source of all evils and must be cleansed if a person is to be able to please God Almighty. All manner of sins such as murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies all emanate from the heart of man, and these are the things that defile a man, not what he eats.

“For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him when eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him” (Romans 14:2,3). Here, the Lord through

His servant was telling believers not to criticize people or judge them on account of what they eat or what they don't eat. There is however, a limitation to believers' liberty in this regard. There is a word of caution on this. **"But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better, neither if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend"** (1 Corinthians 8:8,9,13).

In addition, believers cannot take alcohol or smoke cigarette, marijuana or any hard drug. It is equally abominable for believers to eat anything offered in sacrifice to idols. (Habakkuk 2:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Leviticus 7:26; 17:10,12,14; 19:26; 1 Corinthians 10:22-26).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	John	1:43-51	Numbers	7:24-47
MON	"	2:1-12	"	7:48-71
TUE	"	2:13-25	"	7:72-89
WED	"	3:1-12	"	8:1-26
THU	"	3:13-21	"	9:1-14
FRI	"	3:22-36	"	9:15-23
SAT	"	4:1-12	"	10:1-10

Lesson 37

PETER CONFESSES CHRIST

TEXT: Matthew 16:1-28;
Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-27;
18:31-34

MEMORY VERSE: “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

Our study reveals Christ’s discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees, men at variance among themselves, yet agreed in their opposition to Christ. This was because His doctrine countered the errors and heresies of the Sadducees who denied the existence of spirits. Believers are to live in expectation of persecution, and must be careful of the leaven of modern Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. The focus of the godly must remain in Christ, the very Source of our present and eternal life.

Question 1: *Why was Jesus Christ particularly interested in His disciples’ perception of His Person?*

Christ had a private meeting with His disciples concerning Himself. He asked, “**But whom say ye that I am?**” After the report of other people’s idea of His personality, He asked the disciples themselves of their own opinion. This was intended to actually ascertain that the disciples had the right perception of His person. Peter answered thus: “**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God**”. Here is a confession of Jesus Christ as truly divine: a knowledge which gives life eternal. Having indicated that such knowledge was a

revelation from the Father, Jesus now began to speak of His sufferings. He explained how He would lay down His life for mankind to have eternal life (Matthew 16:21). Also, He showed them that as He was ready and willing to suffer, so must they be prepared to lead a life of self-denial for His sake.

PETER'S CONFESSION OF FAITH (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-29; 1 John 4:15; Romans 10:10)

Christ's question is applicable to every Christian youth today. It requires personal response that determines individual position in Christ and in His kingdom. **"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?"** To this, Peter answered: **"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"**. This showed that they believed Jesus to be more than man. The word translated "rock" is not the same word as Peter. It was Peter's confession that Christ referred to as the "rock".

Question 2: *What is the implication of Peter's confession of Christ?*

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). The basis of obtaining the kingdom keys was the correct discernment of Christ as the Messiah. Since God is not partial, every one that shares Peter's conviction can also possess the keys to the kingdom. The keys by which one accesses all the benefits of the kingdom of God like salvation, sanctification, power, healing, deliverance, dominion, victories, etc., are summarised in the effective involvement in gospel declaration. **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith"** (Romans

1:16,17).

PREDICTION OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND NECESSITY OF SELF-DENIAL (Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-35; Luke 9:22-26).

Here, Jesus predicts His death and resurrection. **“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day”** (Matthew 16:21). The main focus of His discussion here was His suffering and resurrection. On the basis of Peter's confession, Jesus began to teach them about His death and resurrection which were the core of the gospel. This verse is based on Isaiah's prophecy concerning the suffering Messiah. **“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not”** (Isaiah 53:3). Worldly kings conquer other people by destroying them with weapons ruling with military power. But Jesus does not do that. Through His death, Jesus became the King of kings and Prince of peace who gives eternal life to all that believe in Him. He cleanses man's guilty conscience by His blood. **“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed”** (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus' blood on the cross can cure all kinds of wounds we receive as a result of sin. Through His resurrection, Jesus opened the door to the kingdom of heaven and restored the paradise once again. He will come again to take us to our eternal home.

Unable to put up with the concept of a suffering and dying Christ, **“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee”** (Matthew 16:22). The first lecture was too hard for Peter to swallow. So he reacted emotionally based on his human thinking. To Peter, Jesus' death and suffering were

unacceptable. Peter heard Jesus' prediction of His death. Actually Jesus also told him about His resurrection, but Peter could not catch Jesus' word about resurrection. He was fearful about the word "suffering". In the plan of God, the cross was a non-negotiable experience for Christ.

Question 3a: *Why did Peter initially oppose Christ's suffering?*

Question 3b: *Why did the Lord rebuke Peter sharply?*

"But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:23). One moment Peter was blessed and next moment he made a big mistake. We need a right attitude towards suffering. Peter had wanted to protect Jesus from any suffering. He was loyal and faithful from human point of view, but disobedient due to his refusal to accept Christ's death. God's will for Jesus was to die on the cross to save the world. But Peter rejected His plan. When God allows suffering and hardship, there is a reason for it. Rather than give way to human thinking, we should develop a positive attitude toward the cross instead of rejecting it.

PRECEPTS ON CROSS-BEARING (Matthew 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:24-27; Galatians 2:20)

"And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:34,35). Having rebuked Peter for his error, Jesus now began to teach the disciples that the issue of suffering is not only attached to the personality of Christ but for all of His followers. One, a true disciple must not be too conscious of himself, attainments or

prospect in life. Rather, he puts Christ and His demands first and above anything else. Two, he must daily endure the cross which is an emblem of shame. Whoever desires to wear the eternal crown must not shy away from bearing the cross. The believer's life is hid in Christ and his well-being anchored on Him. Three, the believer must continually follow Christ. This implies focussing on Him and surrendering to His will at all times. As Christ yielded to the Father, even so must the disciple be completely committed to Him. The believer must fully identify with Christ's person in the face of persecution, His passion for the salvation of the lost world as well as His project of enlarging the kingdom of God. Every true disciple must be involved in spreading Christ's purposes no matter the cost.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	John	4:13-26	Numbers	10:11-36
MON	"	4:27-38	"	11:1-14
TUE	"	4:39-54	"	11:15-35
WED	"	5:1-16	"	12:1-16
THU	"	5:17-30	"	13:1-22
FRI	"	5:31-38	"	13:23-33
SAT	"	5:39-47	"	14:1-10

Lesson 38

TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

TEXT: Matthew 17:1-27;
Mark 9:1-29; Luke 9:28-45

MEMORY VERSE: “And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light” (Matthew 17:2).

In the previous chapter, Christ revealed to His disciples the suffering He was bound to go through, and also expounded to them, sacrifices they needed to make to be able to overcome the suffering and trials of life (Matthew 16: 21-27). In the passage under consideration, Christ went further to give them a foretaste of His coming glory. Peter, James and John had the singular privilege of this vision of Christ's transfiguration. The Scripture records: **“as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening”** (Luke 9:29). No doubt then, the transfiguration of Christ was not only for the purpose of teaching the disciples, but also to strengthen them. It was also to encourage Christ as He marched towards the Gethsemane of agony, shame and death.

Question 1: *Explain the purpose of the Transfiguration of Christ.*

THE INTENT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST (Matthew 17:1-5; Luke 9:28-32; 2 Peter 1:16-18; Philippians 2:5-7; John 17:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:12-14)

The account of the Transfiguration of Christ was a true story as recorded in the Scriptures. It should not be taken as a mere vision. The Holy Bible records thus: **“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light”** (Matthew 17:1,2). It was on record that while Christ was being transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared to him, discussing the death on the cross He was about accomplishing and His disciples, who initially were asleep later woke up to hear and witness the major part of the transfiguration. While Peter was so overwhelmed and proposing their desire to remain on the mountain top by having three tabernacles built for Jesus, Moses and Elijah, a cloud came and overshadow them and God’s voice came forth out of the clouds saying, **“This is my beloved Son, ...hear ye him”**. When the disciples heard the voice, they were sore afraid but Jesus came and touched them, and when they lifted up their eyes they saw no one but Jesus.

Question 2: Outline various lessons we can draw from the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

There are pertinent lessons to be drawn from the account of the Transfiguration of Christ. One, it was while Christ was praying that He was transfigured. Jesus, no doubt, devoted more time to prayer, such as; at His baptism, during His temptations in the wilderness, before and after every great event (Mark 1:35; Luke 11:1; Matthew 26:40-45). Thus, engagement in consistent prayer unto God may go a long way to transforming believing youths from grace to grace and from glory to glory. The presence of God in the life of a believing youth has the power to make such a youth glow in countenance (Exodus 34:29-35).

Two, the appearance of Moses and Elijah affirmed the unity of God's word; for Moses and Elijah represented the law and the prophet respectively. On this, the Scripture records: **"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"** (Isaiah 8:20). Peter, re-emphasizing the supremacy and finality of God's word said: **"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts"** (2 Peter 1:18,19).

Three, we observed that Moses and Elijah spoke about His death, and of course His resurrection. We learn that the main focus of Christ's first coming was to accomplish the great sacrifice on the cross for the salvation of mankind. For Christ Himself says, **"...for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"** (Matthew 9:13b). As Christian youths, we must endeavour wherever we find ourselves, be it at schools or in the neighbourhood, to reach out to souls that are yet to receive Christ as their Lord and personal Saviour.

Four, the fact that Moses and Elijah left the scene and Jesus was found alone, is an attestation to Christ's deity; He being God in human flesh. Thus, Paul the apostle writing through God's inspiration to the Hebrew Christians enjoined believers to look on to Jesus alone; being the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). As saved boys and girls, our gaze must be on Jesus in all matters of life, and not on angels, men and women, dreams and vision. Note, that God's voice from the cloud enjoined all to 'hear him'. Jesus Himself said, **"I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"** (John 14:6). Peter re-echoed this when he said **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12).

Five, beholding the glory of God calls for divine revelation; and divine revelation is not just given without sacrifice. God said in His word: **"Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice"** (Psalm 50:5). Peter, James and John, no doubt, might have

earned this rare privilege of being with Christ in His transfiguration through sacrifice; for Christ knows the heart of all men. As Christian youths, if we must grow from grace to grace and from glory to glory, then we must be entirely devoted to God.

Question 3: *Mention the significance of the Transfiguration of Christ.*

The transfiguration of Christ is of great significance to believers. Its significance is reflected in the assurance, encouragement and hope it stirs in us as we patiently wait for the Second Coming of Christ. Our hope, encouragement, assurance and strength is re-awakened as we draw on the transfiguration experience of Christ. Thus, its essence is deduced as follows: one, it gives us a glimpse of the glory that Christ laid aside to become a man of sorrow acquainted with grief, so that He could save mankind from sin. As believers, there is glorious hope, assurance and strength this can give us as we lay all on the altar so as to win Christ. Paul the apostle said, **“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ”** (Philippians 3:8).

Two, the transfiguration of Christ confirmed the immortality of the soul. The appearance of Moses and Elijah is an attestation and confirmation of life hereafter. The Scripture says, **“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). The fact of resurrection in Christ is a thing that gladdens the heart of every true believer. Therefore, whether caught up with the Lord in the rapture or the dead in Christ being caught up first, the believer is much more comforted. Paul the apostle said, **“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout... Wherefore comfort one another with these words”** (1 Thessalonians 4:14,16,18).

Three, the transfiguration of Christ was an attestation and

confirmation of the 'Messiahship' of Christ. God spoke from heaven testifying Christ to be the only begotten of God full of grace and truth. Four, the transfiguration of Christ revealed His divinity, just as His temptation in the wilderness revealed His humanity.

Five, Christ's transfiguration gives us, as children of God, a re-assurance of our safety in the face of any challenging situation. When a bright cloud overshadowed the disciples and they heard the voice of God out of the cloud, they were sore afraid. **"And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid"** (Matthew 17:7). We learn from Christ's soothing touch and comforting words that as children of God, our Lord Jesus is always ever ready and present to help us out of any challenging situation. God said, **"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness"** (Isaiah 41:10). Be rest assured that we are secured in Him no matter the terrifying situation!

THE IMPLICATION OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST TO BELIEVERS (Matthew 17:6-13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Exodus 34:29-35; Romans 12:1,2; Philippians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Believers are the light of the world. They are expected to shine as light in this dark world of sins. Jesus said, **"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Let you light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 5:14,16).

Question 4: *What is the implication of the transfiguration of Christ to believers?*

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51). The transfiguration is a foretaste of the future translation of believers into similar glory. At present, a true believer is imbued with grace through the Spirit renewal as he remains

devoted and dedicated to God. Thus, there is a spiritual radiation that comes forth from him. **“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”** (2 Corinthians 3:18). At the rapture, the believer is “transfigured” to meet with the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

Question 5: How can a saved youth experience spiritual transfiguration?

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1,2). As Christian youths, we can also be transformed into this perfect image by spending much time in secret prayer and meditation on the word of God, and abiding therein in holiness.

IMPORTANCE OF FAITH AND THE BELIEVERS’ CIVIL DUTY (Matthew 17:14-27; Mark 9:17-29; Luke 9:28-45; Romans 13:5-8; Mark 12:17; 1 Corinthians 10:32)

“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20). Jesus here drives home the necessity of faith in Christian ministry and life. He associated the inability of His disciple to cast out the dumb and deaf spirit from the possessed boy to unbelief. Christianity is a life of faith; for we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8a). In Mark chapter eleven verse twenty-two, Jesus enjoined the disciple to have faith in God. Paul the apostle testified that: **“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek**

him” (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus said, **“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting”** (Matthew 17:21). This confirms that as we fast and pray, our faith increases, and consequently God’s power is released to set free the captives. Christ, indeed came to set the captives free. Thus, as we consecrate our lives, and live in holiness, exercise faith in Christ’s finished work at Calvary, pray and fast, the possessed, oppressed, afflicted by the devil in our fellowships will be set free (Acts 6:4; Luke 10:17-19; 1 John 3:8)

Question 6: Faith in God, praying and fasting coupled with a life of holiness will bring down God’s power to set the captives free. True or False?

“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shall find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee” (Matthew 17:27). We understand here that Christ does not want us to neglect our civic duties. As children of God, we are to be blameless in this present generation. In our schools, we are not to break the school rules and regulations. Believers are to pay their taxes and other legal dues as deemed right by the government (Romans 13:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:32).

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	John	6:1-14	Numbers	14:11-19
MON	“	6:15-21	“	14:20-35
TUE	“	6:22-43	“	14:36-45
WED	“	6:44-59	“	15:1-21
THU	“	6:60-71	“	15:22-29
FRI	“	7:1-13	“	15:30-41
SAT	“	7:14-24	“	16:1-14

Lesson 39

CHRIST TEACHES ON FORGIVENESS

TEXT: Matthew 18:1-35

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22).

In the previous chapter, the Lord Jesus Christ and Apostle Peter paid tribute to those in authority. The disciples must have been thinking of when the Lord will establish His reign here on earth. They are also thinking perhaps of enjoying the benefits of occupying political authority here on earth. Hence, they wanted to know what it takes to be greatest in the coming Kingdom. The answer of Christ must have surprised them. He used the occasion to teach them on the paradox of greatness in His kingdom.

Question 1: *Distinguish between the methods of attaining greatness in the world for sinners and in God’s kingdom for believers.*

While greatness in the world for sinners is by struggling, fighting, pulling down others and self-centeredness, greatness in the Kingdom of God is by repentance, humility and obedience to the word of God. Christ used the remaining part of the chapter to teach about the possibility and resolution of offences in the Kingdom and the danger of unforgiving spirit.

PRECONDITION OF CONVERSION BEFORE ENTERING THE KINGDOM (Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 9:33-41; Luke 9:46-50; James 5:19)

Conversion is not optional for youths who are dreaming of entering and enjoying benefits in the kingdom of God. As it is not reasonable to be thinking of having a first class degree without first gaining admission into the university, so it is unreasonable to be thinking of greatness in God's kingdom without genuine repentance and faith in Christ's atoning death. Conversion is the genesis of a meaningful relationship between God and youths. Every youth is born with sinful nature, but God is against every form of sin. To fellowship with God, sins must be confessed and forsaken by the youth. Christ's sacrifice must be accepted as the only means of approaching God. Religious activities are no substitute for salvation. Even if you are born in the church or born by Christian parents, you still need to personally repent of your sins and accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour. This is the only remedy for sins, without which it is impossible to enter heaven.

Question 2: *What is the only way for youths to have genuine fellowship with God?*

It takes humility to be converted, so proud youths cannot be converted except they humble themselves. Those who are depending on good works they can do in order for them to merit salvation are proud. Unbelieving youths must accept that they are helpless without Christ. They must realize that there is nothing they can do on their own to merit salvation. The price of salvation is so high that no human being can afford to pay the price. Christ Jesus is God's remedy to human need of salvation. Like little children, youths must see themselves as being helpless, weak, handicapped and incompetent to merit salvation. It is not the duty of God to humble any youth but you must deliberately humble yourself to be counted among the redeemed. The disciples in particular and all Christians in general must change their

opinion about the kingdom of God. Humility and childlike obedience is essential in the kingdom of God unlike the worldly kingdom where those in authority oppress the less privileged.

Question 3: *What does it mean to offend “these little ones”? How do sinning youths seduce believers today?*

Christian youths are expected to love and appreciate God’s children who are humble and teachable like children. **“Whoso shall offend these little ones”** means to do anything that can make them fall back into sins. They must not put any stumbling block on the way of converts and believers whom Christ died for. Every youth must live to edify others, rather than leading them back to sins. In dressing, conducts and interactions, they must be careful not to be agent of backsliding. They must not seduce them or entice others into sins because they are precious in the sight of God. Some youths seduce others by: one, posting naked pictures on social media; two, sitting carelessly in the church; three, wearing transparent dresses in public; four, writing love letter to the opposite gender; five, hindering others from hearing God’s word; six, carrying false rumours against the believers; seven, deliberately provoking Christian youths without cause. The consequence of making any believer to backslide is terrible. God will not take it lightly with anyone that makes a believer backslide. It is better not to be born into this world at all than to make a child of God to backslide.

Question 4: *What do you understand by “cutting off and plucking out your hands and eyes” as used by Christ?*

Christ places much value on believers that God will not hold any youth who despise them guiltless. God specifically assigns angels in heaven to take care of believers. What an assuring revelation from our Lord and what a great privilege an unbelieving youth is missing. Jesus Christ personally was on earth for the main purpose of bringing back those who are lost in sins and trespasses. To cut off your hands and pluck

out your eyes as used by Christ means, rather than making any one to fall, youths must separate from anything and any one luring them into sins. It means it is better to lose the friendship and appreciation of an agent of temptation than to go to hell. Youths must not hold on to anything or anyone so dearly to the detriment of their souls. Things and any one as precious as eyes or as close and as useful as hands must not be allowed to make them sin. Making heaven at last should be the most important thing to the youths.

No efforts should be spared in searching for backsliders by believers. Christian youths should not mock but pray and search for those who are lost because it is not the will of God that anyone should perish.

PRESCRIPTION OF CHRIST FOR SETTLING OFFENCES IN THE KINGDOM (Matthew 18:15-20; Leviticus 19:17; John 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1)

In our text, Christ gave a vivid illustration and instruction on how to settle misunderstanding among believers. This command of Christ is the only means of avoiding and preventing disunity, backbiting and grudges among believers. It is possible for a Christian youth to offend one another. Christ's usage of the "if thy brother" shows that it is possible for a brother to offend a brother and for a sister to offend a sister.

Question 5: *What are the causes of offences among believers? And how should conflicts be resolved in the church?*

We can step on one another's toes in the household of faith. Offences may happen in the church due to: one, carelessness; two, misunderstanding; three, misinterpretation; four, forgetfulness; five, lack of maturity; six, satanic manipulation; seven, differences in background and culture; eight, educational differences; nine, differences in exposure; ten, oversights whenever there is an offence among believers. Christ commands that the offended

Christian should: one, go directly to the perceived offender to explain and discuss with him with all humility. Two, the offended must not go about spreading the offences and slandering the offender behind. Remember, both of them are converted, humble and teachable like children. Three, the offended believer must not approach the offender in an arrogant and holier than thou attitude. He is only offended but must listen to the offender in order to understand the reasons for his action. Four, the offended is expected to prayerfully approach the offender and have the right attitude when presenting the matter. Five, the offended must not manifest anger but should speak gently to the offender. Six, the offended believer must not conclude in his mind that the offender is wrong before hearing from him. Seven, there should be faith in the offended that the offender is still a believer.

Wrong attitude during offenses is not biblical and should be avoided by all Christian youths. Christian youths must not settle misunderstandings like unbelievers. There is a possibility that the offender may not understand why a believer should be offended by his/her actions. The offender may be looking at the issues from another angle and may assume that nothing is wrong or offensive in what has happened. In such situation, a Christian youth must prayerfully again take one or two matured and impartial believers to help them settle their misunderstanding. The offended youth should not go with people to go and fight the offender. The offended must not go to the offender with unbelievers, neither with young converts who are not mature and patient enough to handle such matter. If the offender still refuses to apologise to the offended, then the matter should be reported to the leaders in the church. If the offender still will not listen to the leaders in the church, then the offender should be regarded as a sinner or backslider. Since believers will not fight a sinner, the offender needs the prayer of the offended till God will help such individual to realise and repent.

Heaven-minded youths should not hold malice against an unrepentant offender. When an offender apologises, the

matter should be allowed to die permanently without sharing it with other youths. The offended should not look down on the offender nor make the offender look like a criminal after then. The offended should rather join hands together with the offender to pray for more grace to stand. They should cooperate together and understand that their common enemy is the devil. They should use their power of agreement to claim their inheritance in Christ. They must not allow personal interests to divide them. Satan uses the principle of divide and rule against the believers. Great power is at the disposal of the believers when they agree together. Every disagreement must be resolved immediately because only Satan prospers when believers disagree.

PUNISHMENT AND CONDEMNATION FOR UNFORGIVENESS IN THE KINGDOM (Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 17:4; Mark 11:25,26)

In response to the question of Peter, our Lord taught about forgiveness and the consequence of unforgiveness. Refusal to forgive makes a believer an enemy of God. If God has forgiven all the sins we ever committed and admitted us into His kingdom because of Christ, Christian youths must forgive all offenders. No Christian youths should hold malice against any one either believers or unbelievers. If a believer refuses to forgive others, God will not forgive the sins of such a believer. It means when we don't forgive, we become backsliders and sinners. If we don't forgive others, we cannot make heaven and our privileges in Christ will be eroded. Refusal to forgive hurts you even more than the original offence. Forgiveness is divine and we can easily forgive and forget when the nature of Christ is in us. Inability to forgive, is an evidence of lack of grace and backsliding. The quicker you are ready and willing to forgive the more of God's grace you have in you.

Question 6: *Why should believers forgive and what is the consequence of unforgiveness?*

When you forgive, you will forget offences and will not

remember it. Those who always refer to the past offences have not really forgiven because the evidence of true forgiveness is to forget the offence. You should not mention the offence to the offender or others again when you really forgive. You cannot enjoy your Christian life if you can't forgive. People will definitely do something you don't appreciate but you must forgive in order to move forward as Christians. If you don't want the devil to hinder your prayer, you must forgive and forget all offences. You hurt yourself and hinder your progress both physically and spiritually when you don't forgive and forget. When Satan wants to remind you of the offence in your mind, rebuke him and tell him you have forgiven the offender. Live a joyful life and be the best God wants you to be. Do not allow the devil to imprison you with malice. Many are imprisoned by the devil due to the grudges they have against others. Some are keeping offences for years in their mind; no wonder their prayers are not answered. Today, make up your mind, be free from all malice in Jesus name. Amen.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	John	7:25-36	Numbers	16:15-40
MON	"	7:37-44	"	16:41-50
TUE	"	7:45-53	"	17:1-13
WED	"	8:1-11	"	18:1-15
THU	"	8:12-27	"	18:16-32
FRI	"	8:28-48	"	19:1-11
SAT	"	8:49-59	"	19:12-22

Lesson **40**

JACOB'S LAST DAYS ON EARTH

TEXT: Genesis 48:1-22;
49:1-33; 50:1-26

MEMORY VERSE: “And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days” (Genesis 49:1).

As Jacob felt the approach of death, he first blessed and adopted the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh). After this, he proceeded to bless his twelve sons one after the other. But in doing so, he made some significant pronouncement concerning their future. This pronouncement at this significant time was directed by the Spirit of God, rather than a mere human imagination. This is obvious as one takes a closer look at the many details and accuracy of the pronouncement concerning each of the tribes.

Ironically, Jacob, who thought that he will die mourning died been celebrated. He thought he will never see Joseph again; not only did he see him but also his children (Genesis 37:35; 50:8,9; 48:11). Also, Joseph who thought that he will no longer see his family ended up been buried by his relations. (Genesis 41:51; 50:24-26). Jacob and Joseph's lives should give hope to Christian youths that are passing through one difficulty or the other that there is hope. We only need to remain faithful to the Lord. Not only that, youths should know that today's attitude is a seed to be reaped tomorrow.

Question 1: *What can Christian youths learn from the life of Jacob and Joseph?*

SPECIAL BLESSING PRONOUNCED ON JOSEPH (Genesis 48:1-22; 49:22-26; Matthew 25:35-46; Psalm 128:1-3)

“And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim” (Genesis 48:1). Joseph, though a busy man yet when he heard that his father was sick, took time to visit him.

Question 2: *What lesson can Christian youths draw from Joseph’s visit to his sick father?*

It is mandatory for children to take care of their parents. Therefore, no one should hide under church activities and been busy in other things as an excuse for neglect of their parents especially when they are sick. Visiting of those that are sick is a religious obligation. We are expected to visit members of the church, neighbours, classmate, teachers and others that are sick. Our Lord Jesus tells us that there is punishment for neglect to visit the sick and there is blessing for doing so (Matthew 25:35-46).

Joseph’s visit took Jacob to memory lane. He remembered the covenant that God had with him, and passed it to his children. **“God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession”** (Genesis 48:3,4; 28:13-15). Joseph’s closeness to his father made him hear what was uppermost in his father’s heart. Christian youths who are close to their spiritual parents tend to have more spiritual insight than others who operate at a distance.

In continuation of Jacob’s parting words to Joseph, he adopted his two sons, **“And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine”** (Genesis 48:5). Joseph, whom his brethren did not want to be their ruler ended up being their ruler with two portions, one above his brethren

(verse 22). This should be a great lesson to Christian youths that no matter the opposition, only the counsel of God will stand. **“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand”** (Proverbs 19:21). However, in the course of blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob laid his right hand on Ephraim and the left hand on Manasseh which was contrary to Joseph’s wish who wanted Manasseh being the first son to be at the right hand of his father. Jacob objected to Joseph’s plan to reposition his hand. Actually the action was directed by God.

Question 3: Mention some spiritual lessons in Jacob placing Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

Placing younger son ahead of the older is not strange in the Scripture. Isaac was placed ahead of Ishmael, Jacob was ahead of Esau. Therefore, birth position does not determine how one will be blessed; God’s blessing is the most important thing. Also, leadership position in the church does not depend on how long one has been in the church, but on God’s choice. Hence, there should be no murmuring or complaint over who is or who is not the leader.

Jacob, in his parting words did not forget the God of his father, anchoring everything on the covenant that He had with them (verses 15,16,21). Children with godly parents should not forget the God of their parents. They should do everything to keep the covenant that their parents had with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way they too will be able to extend the benefits of the covenant to their own children.

SINFUL PAST AND ITS REPERCUSSION (Genesis 49:1-7; 50:15-18; 34:13-26; 35:22; 1 Chronicles 5:1; Jeremiah 18:9,10; Matthew 21:33-43; Hebrews 12:16,17)

“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father” (Genesis 49:1,2). Jacob called his children together to

bless them and predict what will happen to their generations. In his pronouncement, we see an inseparable link between our past, present and future. The way we lived in the past affect our present position and experiences; and our future, in most cases, depends so much on our present life. A life of sin can only produce a future full of regret and sorrow. Whereas, a life of holiness and commitment to God will lead to a blissful future. This is ever true because of the law of sowing and reaping. Unless a man breaks the cycle of sin by genuinely repenting and believing in Christ, he must be prepared to face a future of bitter reaping and eternal damnation. This is a solemn lesson that we learn as we study the prophecies of Jacob concerning his twelve sons.

The prediction concerning Reuben, Simeon and Levi were negative. This was predicated on their sinful past. Reuben committed incest with Bilhah, his father's concubine. While Simeon and Levi manifested cruel anger and murder against the Shechemites. (Genesis 35:22; 34:13-26). Reuben, been the first son was entitled to a double portion inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17). He should have become the teaching priest and ruling head of the entire race after the death of Jacob. But he lost all these because of sin. Instead of the tribe of Reuben to excel in spiritual leadership and dignity over the other tribes, his father said unto him **"thou shall not excel"**. And of a truth, the tribe of Reuben never produced any outstanding hero or eminent leader in Israel. They were few in population when compared with other tribes such as Judah, Dan and Joseph (Numbers 1:21). The description **"unstable as water"** is an obvious reference to the unbridled lust and passion that characterized Reuben which made him to sin against God. The sin of immorality is a great sin before God, and youths should run from it. **"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"** (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

On the other hand, Simeon and Levi were cursed because

of anger which led to murder. Anger and murder are sins, Jesus warns, **“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire”** (Matthew 5:21,22).

Question 4: *What are the consequences of sin?*

It should be noted that sin hinders spiritual development and promotion. **“Righteousness exalteth a nation** [and individuals, too] **but sin is a reproach to any people”** (Proverbs 14:34). For Reuben, an immoral act of a moment pleasure relegated his posterity to the back position for all generations. Simeon and Levi were cursed because of anger and murder. What one sowed at the dawn of his life shall be reaped at the twilight of his days. Indeed, our decisions determine our destiny and a single act can destroy a prospective bright future and cause us to bequeath a terrible inheritance to generations yet unborn.

Question 5: *How can one escape the terrible effect of sin?*

After the death of Jacob, there is another recall of past sin. The shadow of Joseph’s brethren’s sin was chasing them. They thought he would revenge, so they apologised for their sins. For a sinner to escape judgment, there must be genuine repentance and turning away from evil doings. Joseph, unlike his father forgave his brethren, he saw everything as working for good and fulfilment of God’s plan (Genesis 50:15-21; Romans 8:28). This should be the attitude of all born again youths; we must forgive, like Joseph.

SPECIFIC BLESSINGS PRONOUNCED BY JACOB (Genesis 49:8-33; 50:1-14,22-26)

After the end of negative pronouncement on his first three

sons, Jacob pronounced blessings on Judah that: one, he would be exalted and superior to the other tribes in so much that they would praise him. This is in line with his name Judah, which means ‘Praise’. Two, he would be a victorious tribe, conquering all his enemies. This is the meaning of the expression **“thy hand shall be in the neck of thy enemy”**. David was from the tribe of Judah and he alluded to this in one of his psalms of praise after God had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies. **“Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me”** (Psalm 18:40). In fact, the tribe of Judah was the first to subdue their enemy under David and they were the first to be given a lot in the land of Canaan (Joshua 14:6-13; 15:1; Judges 1:1,2) Three, Judah was described as a lion whelp (young lion), then a lion (fully grown) and finally an old lion (nursing lioness). This is a description of the growth of the tribe of Judah which eventually, as an old lion, would be a terror to all the nations about her. Jesus Christ, who descended from this tribe was described as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

Question 6: *Mention other children of Jacob and specific blessings pronounced on them.*

Jacob did not leave any of his children without specific pronouncement concerning their future. One, Zebulon will dwell near the sea and excel in sea travel. Indeed, when the land of Canaan was shared among the tribe, Zebulun’s inheritance was sandwiched between the Mediterranean sea on the west and lake of Gennesaret on the east (Matthew 4:15; Joshua 19:10,11). Two, Issachar would be very strong and resilient, but they would rather give up their liberty in order to have security. This implies that they would be unwilling to contend for their inheritance unless they were forced to do so. Such an attitude would make one to remain under tribute. Three, the tribe of Dan **“shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel.”** Jacob said this because Dan was the first son of Bilhah, Rachael’s maid. He was given an equal right to rule as the sons of either Leah or Rachael. Samson was from the tribe of Dan and they were

known for their cunningness and strategy in defeating mighty kings. Unfortunately, they were the first tribe to go into full scale idolatry after the settlement in the promised land (Judges 18:30). Four, Gad will overcome his enemies at last (1 Chronicles 5:18). Five, Asher will be prosperous (Deuteronomy 33:24). Six, Nephtali will have goodly words; and finally, seven, **“Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil”**. After the end of his pronouncement on his children, Jacob gave similar instructions concerning his burial. Joseph also gave instruction concerning his burial. They were both sure that God’s promise to take them back to their land will be fulfilled no matter how long. No matter how long, our Lord Jesus will come and take us to the promised home. The summary of Jacob’s and Joseph’s lives should teach us that the suffering of today will end with great testimonies.

DAILY BIBLE READING

		MORNING		EVENING
SUN	John	9:1-13	Numbers	20:1-13
MON	“	9:14-23	“	20:14-29
TUE	“	9:24-41	“	21:1-20
WED	“	10:1-8	“	21:21-35
THU	“	10:9-21	“	22:1-14
FRI	“	10:22-30	“	22:15-41
SAT	“	10:31-42	“	23:1-12

Lesson 41

ISRAEL'S MULTIPLICATION AND OPPRESSION IN EGYPT

TEXT: Exodus 1:1-22

MEMORY VERSE: “But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel” (Exodus 1:12).

The children of Israel had moved in to Egypt through the invitation of Joseph who was sold to slavery by his elder brothers, but had become a great ruler under Pharaoh. The Israelites grew into a large nation and they prospered greatly and increased mightily. After Joseph's death, they were forced into slavery. **“Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph”** (Exodus 1:8). God then raised Moses to rescue His people from oppression and led them out of Egypt. The first chapter focuses on how God multiplied the Israelites greatly, and how He delivered them from oppression. **“And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them”** (verse 7). This wonderful increase was a fulfillment of the promise of God. **“...I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation”** (Genesis 46:3).

Question 1: *What can youths learn from the fulfillment of God's long time promise to the children of Israel?*

The experience of the Israelites serves as a great lesson to

contemporary youths that passage of time cannot cancel the promises of God to His children even in the presence of their enemies.

GOD MULTIPLIED ISRAEL IN EGYPT (Exodus 1:1-7; Genesis 46:8-27; Deuteronomy 10:22; Acts 7:14-17; Psalm 105:24)

Looking at the seventy souls of Jacob's family which were brought by the hand of the Lord from the land of Canaan to Egypt to alleviate their famine, though insignificant, God was with them. It was this little band of insignificant immigrants that God used to raise a mighty nation (verse 7).

Question 2: *What lesson can we draw from the multiplication of the Israelites in spite of their affliction?*

The blessings and growth of Israel was vivid enough that the Egyptians confessed, saying the Israelites are “**more and mightier than we**” (verse 9). Christian youths should know that God's promises cannot fail. They will certainly come to pass, no matter the opposing circumstances. Adversity can never hinder God's purpose in the life of a believer. “**There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord**” (Proverbs 21:30). The Egyptians became envious of the Israelites, which eventually led to persecution of the later. In like manner, the progress of Christian youths can cause envy, opposition and persecution by their ungodly peers. As we obey God's word, Satan will always want to oppose us through his agents. But we should rather choose to suffer opposition for the sake of Christ. “**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**” (Romans 8:35).

GREAT MISERY OF ISRAELITES IN EGYPT (Exodus 1:8-22;

After the death of Joseph, the children of Israel lost their initial favour in Egypt. The new king, seeing the growth and multiplication of the children of Israel became afraid. He presumed that the Israelites could join their enemies to fight them in battle and escape from servitude. Evidently, the Egyptians oppressed Israel for two reasons. One, to slow down their multiplication in order to weaken them; and two, they did not want them to think of leaving Egypt. The Egyptians planned to enslave them continually.

The king said, **“Come on, let us deal wisely with them”** (verse 10). What the Egyptians termed as “dealing wisely” is considered an act of wickedness before God and man. Some youths think they are wise as they get involved in examination malpractice, steal other students’ books etc., not knowing that: **“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish... But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”** (James 3:15-17).

Question 3: Mention five methods employed by the Egyptians to oppress the Israelites.

Five major methods were used by the Egyptians to oppress Israel. One, the use of task masters to allocate work, collect tribute and beat them. Two, slavery; they were not given freedom. Three, hard labour and rigorous service; they were forced to make and burn bricks which they used to build house for Pharaoh. Four, infanticide: their male child were commanded to be killed as soon as they were born, in order to stop their growth. Five, male children genocide: when the king observed that his order to the midwives to kill all the male children at the point of birth was not carried out, he ordered all the people to cast into the sea, the male children of

the Israelites.

Question 4: *Mention some positive impact of persecution on Christian youths.*

However, the oppression of Israel produced some positive results. One, it made Israel to call upon the Lord in prayer for a relieve (Exodus 2:23). Two, it made the Israelites ever-willing, yearning and ready to leave Egypt. It reminded them that Egypt was not their resting place. In like manner, persecution and tribulation serve as reminder for Christian youths that this world is not their permanent place of abode. Three, the affliction made them stronger and tougher. Four, it produces courage in their women during childbirth, unlike the Egyptians. This teaches us that God is able to preserve His people in spite of affliction and opposition. Five, from the incidence, the Egyptians realised that no man can win God in any battle. Lastly, through Israel's affliction in Egypt, we learnt that our prosperity and security depend on God, and not situations around us. Once God is on our side, nobody can be against us (Romans 8:31). Persecution strengthens and enhances the progress of Christian youths (Acts 8:4,11,19; Philippians 1:12). On the other hand, living outside God's will can lead to spiritual death and ultimate destruction.

GODLY MIDWIVES BLESSED IN EGYPT (Exodus 1:12,17-20; 3:8; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Job 5:19; Psalm 32:7)

God rescued Israel in Egypt by ensuring that the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grow (Exodus 1:12). When Shiphrah and Puah, Hebrew's midwives were commanded to kill the infants at birth, God's fear in their hearts did not allow them to obey the wicked command. They **"feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive"** (Exodus 1:17). When the king inquired, the midwives replied that, **"the**

Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them" (Exodus 1:19). It was God's finger that resulted in the frustration of the Egyptians' plan. They did not exalt patriotism above God's command not to kill innocent children.

Question 5: Give examples of Bible Characters who rejected ungodly commandments.

Scriptural evidences show that God always bless those who respect His word above men's command, even when it is dangerous to do so. For instance, Jonathan refused the instruction of his father to kill David (1 Samuel 19:1,5). The three Hebrew men disobeyed king Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship his golden image (Daniel 3:1-30; 6:1-28). Daniel prayed to God, contrary to king Darius' decree (Daniel 6:1-28). In the New Testament, the Apostles preferred to obey God rather than men when faced with intimidation of the Sanhenderin not to preach or teach in Christ's name (Acts 4:19). Godly youths are to obey constituted authorities at home, church, school and in the society at large; but only **"in the Lord"** (Ephesians 6:1). When men's order contradicts God's word, we have to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

God rewarded the midwives because they feared Him. He dealt well with them and prospered them by building houses for them. Fear of God and obedience to His words bring blessings. On the other hand, disobedience attracts a curse. Youth's genuine fear of God can be demonstrated by practical departure from evil (Proverbs 3:7).

Finally, we learn from the study not to oppress one another. The act of bullying and misusing junior students is unscriptural. God hates oppression; youths are to desist from oppressing one another in the hostels, classrooms and in all their interpersonal relationships. **"Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy**

God: for I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 25:17).

Question 6: *What should guide Christian youths’ obedience to parents and other constituted authorities?*

Our Obedience to parents and constituted authority should be the fear of God. Youths should be very careful not to compromise their faith due to fear of man. God expects all saved youths to fear Him above anybody. Our obedience always should only be in the Lord.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	John 11:1-17	Numbers 23:13-30
MON	“ 11:18-29	“ 24:1-13
TUE	“ 11:30-36	“ 24:14-25
WED	“ 11:37-44	“ 25:1-18
THU	“ 11:45-57	“ 26:1-25
FRI	“ 12:1-11	“ 26:26-51
SAT	“ 12:12-22	“ 26:52-65

Lesson 42

THE BIRTH, CALL AND COMMISSION OF MOSES

TEXT: Exodus 2:1-10;
3:1-22; 4:1-31;
5:1-23; 6:1-30

MEMORY VERSE: “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:10).

The birth of Moses was during the difficult time of Israel because the latest edict of Pharaoh’s government against Israel was oppressive: “**...Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive**” (Exodus 1:22). But it was this time that God Almighty decided to bring the deliverer of Israel to the world and satanic device could not stop it. “**But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty**” (Job 5:15). From the account of the birth of Moses at such a difficult time, we learn that no human efforts can frustrate the will and purpose of God.

Question 1: *Mention salient lessons a believer can draw from the timing and lowliness of Moses’ birth.*

MOSES’ BIRTH AND HIS PRESERVATION FOR GOD’S PURPOSE (Exodus 2:1,2; 1:22; Acts 7:19,20; Hebrews 11:23; Proverbs 21:30)

“**And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and**

bare a son..." (Exodus 2:1,2a). Amram and Jochebed gave birth to Miriam long before Moses was born. They also had Aaron three years before the birth of Moses. But Moses was born during the period of Pharaoh's edict to kill the sons of the Hebrews by casting them into the river (Nile). However, because Jochebed saw that the child was extraordinarily handsome and she believed that God had a special mission for him, she did not surrender him to be drowned. In doing so, she took a great risk because if discovered, she would face the king's wrath. But she acted in faith. Risk-taking is a common feature of those who walk by faith. Jochebed did not fear the edict of the king because fear is an enemy of faith and the two cannot co-exist. She chose to believe in God for the preservation of her son even though all that she could devise was an ordinary ark of bulrushes (reed) to serve as a shelter for the young baby (Hebrews 11:23).

We should not be afraid of the threatening circumstances that sometimes prevail around us. Such times are moments of test and opportunities to put our faith to work. Rather than give up in despair and allow the enemy to have a walk-over on us, we should trust God and allow Him to fulfill His plans in our lives.

There was nothing extraordinary or peculiar in the parentage of Moses. The parents were Levites and they gave birth to Moses without any pomp or fanfare – under a threatening circumstance. Most great men that God had extraordinarily used over the ages were mostly men of humble and common birth. Many of them were not even given much chance of survival, either because of health problems, physical danger, poverty or other threats. But eventually, they were raised against all odds to accomplish God's purpose for their lives.

Question 2: *Mention some means that God used in preserving Moses from death.*

After his birth, Moses was preserved by God during the dangerous time. The Lord used several means to ensure the preservation of His chosen servant from death at infancy.

Firstly, He used the beauty of Moses. **"In which time**

Moses was born, and was exceeding fair...” (Acts 7:20). It was his beauty that God used to make the heart of Jochebed cleave much to the child and volunteer to take a risk in preserving him (Exodus 2:2). **“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment”** (Hebrews 11:23). It was the same beauty that motivated the daughter of Pharaoh to pick him up as her own son; just as godly beauty of Esther, David, Solomon, Daniel and even our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the Fairest among the fair, was used to accomplish the purpose of God. Theirs were beauty matched and backed up with godly character. To have beauty without godly character is a trash in an attractive envelop; it always leads to pride, sensuality and destruction. The case of Lucifer, Absalom and Jezebel are warnings against having physical beauty without godliness. **“As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion”** (Proverb 11:22).

Secondly, God used Jochebed’s faith, diligence and discretion. She hid and nursed the child for three months until it became too risky to keep him in the house. Thereafter, she made an ark or basket with reeds, covered it with tar and bitumen to make it water-proof. Then she put the baby in the ark, covered it and kept it at the river brink. She did all she could and left the rest in God’s hand. Then Miriam followed the ark to know what would happen to the child in it. In all these, we see human responsibility cooperating with divine sovereignty to ensure Moses’ survival. When we do all we could, then God will do all we cannot. Of a truth, it was not Jochebed’s device that saved Moses but God expected her to do all that she did before He, the Almighty would move in to save Moses. True faith is never passive but active. There must be corresponding actions to prove the reality and genuineness of our faith.

Thirdly, God directed not only the steps of Pharaoh’s daughter to the river at the time the ark was floating past, but also directed her gaze to see it and also arouse her interest in it. God used her coming to the river at this instance to deliver Moses.

Fourthly, the cry of Moses at the time Pharaoh's daughter picked him up was another means of divine intervention to save him.

Lastly, Miriam's timely intervention and prudent suggestion to go and call one of the Hebrew women to nurse the child was acceptable to Pharaoh's daughter. We see clearly the finger of supernatural Being in this because Pharaoh's daughter accepted Miriam's bold suggestion without any hesitation or suspicion. God, in His sovereign employ the most humbling means and methods to achieve His purpose. Though the time of the king's edict was a dark period for Israel in Egypt, yet God brought something cheering and praise-worthy out of it.

MOSES' CALL AND HIS RESPONSE (Exodus 3:1-22; 4:1-14; Acts 7:20,21; Hebrews 11:23; Judges 6:11-16; 1 Kings 19:19; Matthew 4:18-22; Acts 26:9-18)

At the age of 40, Moses, living in the comfort of the palace as son of Pharaoh's daughter, had been drawn out by the feeling of love and compassion to defend one of his Jewish brethren against an Egyptian oppressor. He killed him and hid the corpse in the sand. Eventually, Moses had to flee to the land of Midian as Pharaoh sought to slay him when he heard of the incident (Exodus 2:15).

Question 3: *Mention some Bible characters and the work they were doing before being called by God.*

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb” (Exodus 3:1). He must have been a caring shepherd who wanted the best grass for his flock to graze upon. The patience, meekness and discipline needed by Moses to lead the often unruly and difficult children of Israel must have been acquired during this forty years of waiting and tending to the flock. They were years of humble preparation for a nobler task. As he occupied himself in his humble occupation at hand, so did God exalted him to lead His people and to

maintain a special relationship with Him. All God's children are expected to be busy doing something worthy for a living, while God opens doors of higher opportunities. Examples of other men of God called while busy include: Gideon (Judges 6:11), Elisha (1 Kings 19:19), Peter, Andrew, James and John among others (Matthew 4:18-22).

Moses' business took him to Horeb (also called Sinai) which unknown to him was the mountain of God. On this occasion however, God appeared unto him in a flame of fire. **"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed"** (Exodus 3:2). This angel that appeared to Moses was God Himself (Exodus 3:2-22; Mark 12:26; Acts 7:30-35; Deuteronomy 4:15).

"And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I" (Exodus 3:4). Moses turned aside to see the wonderful sight which also created the awesome realization that there was an unseen Personality behind the great sight who knew him well and could call his name distinctly. If he could run away and hide from the Pharaoh of Egypt, here was a Personality that one could not hide from, **"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"** (Hebrews 4:13). He must have realized that this, was the God of the Hebrews whom he was taught about in his childhood. He was warned as he approached the presence of God to avoid undue familiarity which breeds disrespect. **"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground"** (Exodus 3:5). This was a mark of respect; and submission to God's presence; the place where Moses stood is holy. By the same token, believers should respect the place of worship; whatever pollutes, be it material or irreverent acts and attitudes, should be avoided.

Question 4: Mention some ways by which worshippers today manifest disrespect to God in the place of worship.

MOSES' COMMISSION AND HIS OBEDIENCE (Exodus 4: 15-31; 5:1-23; 6:1-18,23; Genesis 15:1-8; Romans 7:19,22,24; Acts 7:6; Galatians 3:14-17)

“Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:6). This is an apt introduction as Moses needed to know the identity of the Personality who addressed him in his own name; yet he did not know Him and could not see Him. He is the God of his ancestors; God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses knew very well the splendor of God’s glory (Exodus 33:18-23). The brief introduction had prepared his heart for what was to follow. He began to look beyond the flocks of Jethro under his care to the bondage and deliverance of the children of Israel in Egypt.

“Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:9,10). It was not within the power of suffering Israelites to deliver themselves. Therefore, God sent a deliverer to them. The power to live a life of holiness is not available to the fallen man without Christ. When anybody surrenders to Christ, he will be delivered from Satan, sin and sickness. **“But as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”** (John 1:12).

Question 5: *What are the fears Moses expressed after receiving God’s call?*

At the time of his call and commission, Moses seemed to have lost the vision for the mission which he earlier imposed upon himself and failed therein. He no longer felt competent for the task. **“And Moses said unto God, Who I am, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”** (Exodus 3:11). His fear and objection to the commission was due to human shortcomings

such as: one, his escape from Egypt; two, fear of not being accepted by the Israelites; three, the inability to speak fluently; four, the fear of Pharaoh (Exodus 6:30); five, the Egyptian army was one of the greatest world powers of its time. The thought of human limitation for a mission work is still the problem of many children of God today. They think it's by their ability, when God says it is not by power or by might but by the Spirit of God.

To all Moses' excuses, God gave corresponding answers. After been assured of His presence, Moses obeyed and returned to Egypt with his family. God assured Moses of success in the mission. It was upon this token that Moses depended and demanded from Pharaoh: **"Let my people go, that they may hold a feast for me in the wilderness"**.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	John	12:23-33	Numbers	27:1-11
MON	"	12:34-41	"	27:12-23
TUE	"	13:42-50	"	28:1-16
WED	"	13:1-20	"	28:17-31
THU	"	13:21-30	"	29:1-11
FRI	"	13:31-38	"	29:12-40
SAT	"	14:1-7	"	30:1-16

Lesson 43

DIVINE JUDGMENT ON EGYPT

TEXT: Exodus 7:1-25;
8:1-32; 9:1-35;
10:1-29; 11:1-10

MEMORY VERSE: “But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments” (Exodus 7:4).

The book of Exodus relates the story of the redemption of God’s chosen race. God determined to bring Israel out of the land of bondage that they might possess the land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8). The seventh chapter of Exodus begins the second section of this great book on redemption. In the first 6 chapters of the book, we see the need for redemption, pictured by an enslaved people. Chapters seven to eleven reveal the power of the Redeemer displayed through the plagues on Egypt to ensure Pharaoh’s release of God’s people.

Moses was endowed with divine authority to act as God’s ambassador. God directed him to request that Pharaoh releases Israel from captivity. On several occasions, Pharaoh would plead with him for the removal of the plagues. What an unparalleled and exalted position for God’s servant. This shows that God does His work through human vessels if they are yielded to him. Moreover, He will always endow His human instruments with power and authority to be able to accomplish His work.

Question 1: As Christian youths, how can we be empowered to save the souls of sinning youths around us?

As Christian youths, we should be yielded to God to accomplish the deliverance and salvation of other boys and girls that are enslaved by Satan and sin. The promise of enduement of power of the Holy Ghost has been given by the Lord Jesus for the saved, sanctified and surrendered youth to do this great work of soul-winning (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:8). Moses and Aaron were expected to speak and deliver God's message exactly the way He gave it to them. That underscores the need for God's messengers to always preach the Word, **"...be instant in season, [and] out of season"** (2 Timothy 4:2). The message must be unchanging and unadulterated. Soul-winners are to preach repentance and remission of sins in Jesus' name.

THE CAUSES OF DIVINE JUDGMENT ON EGYPT (Exodus 7:3-5,13; Joshua 24:14-20)

The hardened heart of Pharaoh led to God's judgment in form of plagues on Egypt. God said, **"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt"** (Exodus 7:3). Some people misunderstood the statement: **"...I will harden Pharaoh's heart..."**. They say, if God hardened Pharaoh's heart, then it meant He predetermined or predestined Pharaoh to be wicked and unyielding.

Question 2: Explain the statements "...I will harden Pharaoh's heart..." Give reasons why you know that Pharaoh was responsible for his hardened heart and not God.

The Bible says: **"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempted he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed"** (James 1:13,14). Man is a free moral agent. He is what he has

chosen or decided to be. Pharaoh, right from the onset had been predicted, though not predetermined, to be stubborn and proud (Exodus 3:19,20). God knows what everyone will be, by his choice; but He is not responsible for making anyone either yielding or unyielding. This is the reason God has made several statements of appeal to man in His Word to choose life, rather than death, blessing rather than curse (Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 30:19,20). In order to escape the grave consequence of sins, every youth should submit to God and resist the devil by turning away from sin and turning to the Lord Jesus (Ecclesiastes 12:1; James 4:7-10).

God knew that Pharaoh's hardness of heart was because of his confidence in magic and enchantment in the land. God therefore, prepared His servants, Moses and Aaron, to perform the miracle of turning Moses' rod into a serpent. Truly, Pharaoh desired for miracle and God's power was demonstrated when Aaron's rod was cast down which turned to a serpent. Instead of appreciating and accepting the power and submit to the purpose of the God of the Hebrews, Pharaoh sought to counterfeit and contest with God by bringing in the wise men, sorcerers and the magicians of Egypt. **"For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods"** (Exodus 7:12). Aaron's rod swallowed up all the rods of the magicians to show that Satan's power is limited. Youths should therefore refuse to join cults and other secret societies in search of power. All powers belong to God.

THE CATALOGUE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT ON EGYPT

(Exodus 7:15-25; 8:1-5,16-24; 9:8-12,18-26; 10:3-6,12-16,21-23; 11:4-7)

Since Pharaoh felt confident in his wisdom, sorcerers and magicians, he hardened his heart the more, despite God's power demonstrated before him. Due to the impenitence of Pharaoh, severe judgment came on Egypt in form of plagues. God had promised to deliver Israel with a strong and mighty hand. Pharaoh's rejection of God's word and authority invited His judgment upon him and the entire nation. Christian

youths should know that no man can hinder the purpose of God for their lives no matter who they may be.

Question 3: Mention the plagues God brought on Egypt because of their impenitence.

Series of terrible plagues descended upon Pharaoh and Egypt in quick succession. One, River Nile was turned to blood (Exodus 7:15-25). Two, frogs covered the land and entered the homes of the Egyptians (Exodus 8:1-5). Three, lice came upon men and animals (Exodus 8:16-19). Four, a grievous swarm of flies invaded the houses of the Egyptians and covered the ground (Exodus 8:20-24). Five, a grievous disease smote their cattle (Exodus 9:3-7). Six, boils upon man and beast (Exodus 9:8-12). Seven, thunder and hail destroyed plants and trees (Exodus 9:18-26). Eight, locusts consumed all vegetation (Exodus 10:3-6,12-16). Nine, thick darkness overspread the land for three days (Exodus 10:21-23). Ten, the first born of every man and beast died (Exodus 11:4-7; 12:29-33). We see in these series of plagues that God can use any means to fight unrepentant sinners, backsliders and persecutors of Christian youths if they persist in their ungodliness.

Question 4: What are the conditions that one must meet to be protected and preserved from evils and calamities befalling unbelieving youths?

It is noteworthy that in the midst of these series of terrible punishment on Pharaoh and the Egyptians, God protected and preserved the Hebrews from sharing out of the horror of the plagues. The Lord recognises His own children anywhere they are and will always preserve them from evil. This truth also emphasise that Christian youths who want to enjoy God's protection must be separated from the world and worldly practices. If you mix with the Egyptians of this world, you will partake of their plagues.

THE CORRELATION OF EGYPTIAN JUDGMENTS WITH THAT OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION (Exodus 9:24,25; 10:4-6,14; 11:6; Jeremiah 30:4-9; Joel 2:1-3)

The ten plagues that came upon Egypt are symbolic. After the rapture of the Church, the full fury of the Great Tribulation will break upon this world. As terrible as the plague of Egypt were, they would not be as severe as those that would come upon sinners and unbelievers who would not be raptured. Egypt's plagues are warning to us to be genuinely saved in order to escape the terrible day of God's wrath.

Question 5: What are the similarities between the plagues of Egypt and the Great Tribulation?

The visitation of divine wrath on Egypt in form of plagues are similar in many respects to those the Scriptures predict will occur during the Great Tribulation. One, during the Great Tribulation otherwise called the time of Jacob's trouble, Israel will again be severely oppressed and afflicted by the Antichrist (Exodus 5:21-23; Jeremiah 30:5-8). Two, God will send two witnesses to work miracles before the enemies of the Jews like He sent Moses and Aaron to Egypt (Exodus 6:26,27; Psalm 105:26-36; Revelation 13:11-15). Three, the Israelites' enemies, like the magicians, will also perform some miracles (Exodus 8:6,7; Revelation 13:11-15). Four, God will execute sore judgment upon the world like He did on the Egyptians (Exodus 12:12; Jeremiah 25:15,16). Five, water will again be turned into blood (Exodus 7:19-21; Revelation 8:8,9; 16:4,5). Six, satanic frogs will appear again (Exodus 8:2; Revelation 16:13,14). Seven, a plague of locusts shall be sent (Exodus 10:12-15; Revelation 9:2-11). Eight, God will again send boils and blains (Exodus 9:8-11; Revelation 16:2). Nine, terrible hail-stone shall again descend from heaven (Exodus 9:22-25; Revelation 8:7). Ten, there shall be awful darkness again (Exodus 10:21-23; Revelation 16:10-11). Eleven, just as Pharaoh hardened his heart, so will the wicked harden their hearts then (Exodus 9:35; Revelation 9:20,21). Twelve, death will consume multitudes

as it consumed all the first born in Egypt and the Egyptian armies in the Red Sea (Exodus 11:5,6; 12:29,30; Revelation 9:15).

Question 6: *What preparation should sinners and backsliders make to escape the Great Tribulation and the horror of hell?*

The same pattern of plagues and God’s judgment that came upon Egypt will come upon the world. More awful judgments shall be visited upon the earth in a day, after the rapture, which will soon happen. Every sinner or backsliding youth should repent and be reconciled with God through Christ. Moreover every standing believer should watch and pray, be unmovable, steadfast and always abounding in the work of the Lord (Luke 21:34-36; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	John	14:8-21	Numbers	31:1-24
MON	“	14:22-31	“	31:25-54
TUE	“	15:1-11	“	32:1-19
WED	“	15:12-17	“	32:20-42
THU	“	15:18-27	“	33:1-36
FRI	“	16:1-15	“	33:37-56
SAT	“	16:16-24	“	34:1-29

Lesson 44

THE PASSOVER AND ISRAEL'S EXODUS

TEXT: Exodus 12:1-51;
13:1-22

MEMORY VERSE: “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:41).

After several messages from the Lord through Moses to Pharaoh to let go the children of Israel from Egypt, the Lord visited Egypt with this last plague because of Pharaoh's hardened heart and refusal to heed His warning. God's judgment on Egypt is to be a lesson to all youths in every generation that God always sends warnings to man before judgment.

Question 1: *Having understood God's judgment on Egypt, what should be the responsibility of Christian youths to the unsaved?*

It is our responsibility as Christian youths to warn unrepentant sinners of the impending doom awaiting them. **“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences”** (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Moses, in this chapter, communicates to the Israelites the message that would usher them to their last miracle and open unto them a way of escape from their bondage in Egypt. Their obedience brings the blessing of this unforgettable experience scripturally described as the Passover and their exodus from Egypt.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED (Exodus 12:1-42; Isaiah 53:3-7; John 6:33-35,48-51; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; Romans 9:17,22; Hebrews 9:13,14)

God instituted the ordinance of Passover as an event to prepare the children of Israel for their movement from Egypt. He instructed Moses and Aaron to pass the message across to the Israelites. Each household or combination of households were to choose a year-old lamb or goat without blemish, kill it and use its blood to make a mark on their houses' door posts. This sacrifice was divinely appointed as a substitute for the first born that would have died in the plague and commemorate the night that the Lord passed over the homes of Israelites marked by the blood. **“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt”** (Exodus 12:13). This ordinance is to be observed annually.

Question 2: *What does the lamb without blemish symbolise?*

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats” (Exodus 12:5). The lamb used for the passover was a year old and was spotless and without blemish. For any Christian youth to offer anything to God, it must be the best and free from fault. The lamb symbolises Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that takes away our sins.

The duration of eating the unleavened bread was seven days, without leaven found anywhere in their houses. Leaven in their houses symbolizes sin. **“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”** (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Moses, a faithful servant of God, delivered His message as sent to Pharaoh and to the children of Israel. Pharaoh hardened his heart after pronouncements of God's judgment on Egypt. This led to the final plague of the death of the entire first born in the land. **“He, that being often reprov'd and hardened his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”** (Proverbs 29:1).

On the other hand, the response of the children of Israel to

God's word in one, the observance of the first Passover in Egypt (Exodus 12:21-23) and two, the observance of the passover as a perpetual ordinance (Exodus 12:50,51) attracted God's blessings to them, but God's judgment to the Egyptians. As Christian youths, we should always obey God implicitly as Moses did (Exodus 12:28).

Question 3: *What have you learnt from Moses' attitude to God's message?*

OBSERVANCE OF PASSOVER IN THE SCRIPTURES (Exodus 12:43-51; Isaiah 56:6,7; Romans 10:4; Matthew 26:17-20,26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:17,18,23-32,34)

Pascal lamb, the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs as expressed in our text foreshadowed the blood of Jesus shed for the remission of our sins. All Israelites as well as their servants that are bought with money and are circumcised must partake of the ordinance. **"And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof"** (Exodus 12:43). Today, the Lord's Supper has replaced the ordinance of Passover under the New Testament dispensation. Only those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus are to partake of the Lord's Supper. **"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed unto many for the remission of sins"** (Matthew 26:28).

Question 4: *What does the Pascal lamb, the unleavened bread and bitter herbs foreshadow in the New Testament?*

The observance of the Lord's Supper is to remember the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation and the glorious expectation of His return to take all His saints to heaven. It is to be observed in the church in form of a solemn assembly free of sins, disorderliness and self-gratification (1 Corinthians 11:26-29).

THE ORDER OF CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTBORN (Exodus 13:1-22; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Genesis 18:18,19; Deuteronomy 6:20-25; Proverbs 20:24; John 10:4,5)

The glorious exodus from Egypt as a result of the Passover affords the Israelites the following: (i) divine preservation of the first born of both man and beast in Egypt; (ii) divine exit with all

their personal effects; (iii) divine favour from the Egyptians; (iv) divine intervention as touching their deliverance, and many more. In showing gratitude for these, God demanded from them the setting apart of their first born unto Him for His sacred use. **“Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine”** (Exodus 13:2). In like manner, Christian youths are to be sanctified unto God who sought them and brought them to the fold through the atonement of Christ for sin (Romans 5:8,15; 1 Corinthians 15:21,22; 2 Corinthians 5:15).

For the remembrance of the blessing of the Passover, the Israelites were to celebrate the feast of the unleavened bread in the Promised Land with great caution. It should be done without leaven (sin) with the involvement of their children, in appreciation of the purpose of the feast.

The Lord led the children of Israel as they commenced their wilderness journey because they did not know the way. He led them in form of pillar of cloud by day time and pillar of fire by night time. To every child of God, Jesus Christ is the most glorious light to guide us. Though we may not see Him physically, we are conscious of His nearness all the time (Psalms 119:105; 23:4). When He leads, you cannot miss the way.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	John	16:25-33	Numbers	35:1-8
MON	“	17:1-5	“	35:9-34
TUE	“	17:6-19	“	36:1-13
WED	“	17:20-26	Deuteronomy	1:1-18
THU	“	18:1-11	“	1:19-46
FRI	“	18:12-23	“	2:1-15
SAT	“	18:24-40	“	2:16-37

Lesson **45**

ISRAEL'S MIRACULOUS PASSAGE THROUGH THE RED SEA

TEXT: Exodus 14:1-31;
15:1-27

MEMORY VERSE: “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:41).

The previous chapter reveals the exodus (mass exit) of the children of Israel from Egypt's bondage and the institution of the Passover. Israel had dwelt in Egypt for 430 years under the leadership of different kings; both the king that knew Joseph and the cruel one that knew not Joseph.

Prior to this exit from Egypt, God had brought judgment through plagues on the Egyptians for refusing to release Israel.

Question 1: *What do we learn from the reaction of Pharaoh's refusal to let the Israelites go and God's ability in seemingly impossible situations?*

Our lesson today reviews the decision of the Egyptians to pursue Israel after it seemed they had released them, and God's power which parted the sea into two for the Israelites to pass through the Red Sea. Christian youths should remember that there are enemies, so they should not relent but trust God at all times for them to overcome. Besides, seemingly impossible situations cannot limit God's power in our academics, spiritual and other facets of life if we trust in Him.

PHARAOH'S DECISION TO PURSUE THE ISRAELITES (Exodus 14:1-9; 15:9; Job 9:4; Isaiah 14:12-17; Proverbs 29:1, Joshua 24:6)

The foreknowledge of God is clearly seen here, as He had foretold what the action of Pharaoh would be after their exit from Israel and declaring it to His servant, Moses. **“For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in”** (Exodus 14:3). God understood both the foolishness and the hardness of a depraved man. He knew they would likely pursue Israel so as to overtake, overshadow and possibly overrun them.

Question 2: What were Pharaoh's motives for pursuing Israel and what can you learn from them?

Pharaoh's intent for pursuing the israelites are one, **“I will pursue”**. He had initially released Israel after the death of the firstborn reluctantly. He had to revert his plan to wait and pursue them as they would not have gone far in their journey. This teaches Christian youths to always have a relentless pursuit in a positive direction, not as Pharaoh. We must understand that quitters don't win, and winners don't quit. Two, **“I will overtake”**. This is a language of self-assurance. Israel might have gone far, but Pharaoh still believed he would overtake them. Youths must also believe in their given ability to excel. We must delete the traits of inferiority complex and realise all that God has purposed for us. Three, **“I will divide the spoil”**. This is a statement of victory before the commencement of the war. Children of God must treasure the resources that God has given them. The pursuing enemies see those resources as goodies, if they conquer. Besides, Christian youths must also see themselves accomplishing great things for God, though they are still young. **“Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase”** (Job 8:7). Four, **“My lust shall be satisfied upon them”**. Lust is an evil, strong desire that

runs against the will of God. Christians youths must not lust after the things of the world” (1 John 2:15-17). Pharaoh was looking forward to seeing his evil desire accomplished upon the Israelites on overtaking them in the wilderness. The desires of Satan upon a youth are countless, but they culminate in wanting to deceive and destroy. We must also give no room for youthful lusts, for they war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11; 2 Timothy 2:22). Five, **“I will draw my sword”**. The enemy is not coming to joke as Satan had no time for fun. He is coming with a drawn sword. We must be ready to fight the fury of the foes with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Six, **“my hand shall destroy them”**. One of the three-fold missions of Satan as revealed by Christ in John 10:10 is to destroy. We must stand fast in Christ and watch unto prayers to resist his destructive mission and terminate his vision.

Question 3: What can we learn as Christian youths on the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and crossing God’s red line?

God hastened the ruin of Pharaoh because he crossed His red line. God hardened Pharaoh’s heart to pursue Israel because he refused reproof for a long time and God had to give him over to his own lusts (Proverbs 29:1). God will not lent His effort on to save any youth who refuses to obey the word of God (Romans 1:21-32). The Egyptians pursued and met Israel encamping by the sea, with the hope of fulfilling their lusts on God’s heritage. But as seen in Exodus 14:9, though they tried, they couldn’t succeed. Their first agenda (to pursue) was achieved but others (to overtake, divide, satisfy, draw the sword and destroy) remained a mere illusion. Even the first agenda which was achieved led to their destruction. The enemy may fight, but God never assures them of a minute victory (Jeremiah 1:19), but rather, they are defeated.

PRACTICAL DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S OWN PEOPLE (Exodus 14:10-31; 2 Chronicles 20:20; Hebrews 3:12; 1 Corinthians 10:10)

As Pharaoh and the army of Egypt pursued them, Israel was faced with a big dilemma: the Red sea was ahead, the army of Egypt was behind and there was no where else to run. As the Egyptian army drew nearer, their fear got deeper. **“And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them...”** (Exodus 14:10-12).

Question 4: What are the pitfalls to avoid as Christian youths when faced with seeming possible challenge?

Christian youths must be wary of the use of their tongues whenever they come across any problem. The Israelites murmured in the midst of the challenges, preferring to die in Egypt rather than in the wilderness. Faithless youths have concluded their failures before they even write an examination because of what they have heard or seen. We must not walk by sight but by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Question 5: What can we learn from God's command to Israel to move forward?

The command of God in spite of fears and complaints is challenging. **“And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward”** (Exodus 14:15). This may look foolish or senseless, but it is an action of faith. The impassable Red Sea was flowing with currents; God commanded a step of faith to part the sea. How great we ought to appreciate and embrace the possibilities of faith in God! Many youths are unaccomplished because they are afraid of taking the first step of faith.

There are some basic lessons that Christian youths must learn from this incidence at the Red Sea. One, God, who brought us out of the world, can keep us against getting

entrapped in the ocean of life, academic failures, tribulations and persecutions. Two, complaints and murmurings will not resolve our challenges but increase them. Three, God can break natural laws to favour His children. Four, the closeness of the pursuing enemy does not depict their victory, God may be using that to hasten their ruin. Five, God's protection is always sure on His elect despite the raging of the foes. Six, God's command of faith may look senseless to the natural man, but we must obey Him and progress. Seven, fear limits a man and will hamper his progress in spite of God's presence. Eight, we must be ready to take action of faith if we really profess to believe in God. Nine, we must understand that God is not cruel or callous; He repays all men according to their deeds. Ten, anyone oppressing or fighting against the people of God is fighting against God Himself.

PRAISING GOD FOR DELIVERANCE AND PROMISED HEALTH (Exodus 15:1-21; Psalms 29:2; 96:9; 136:13-15; 1 Chronicles 16:29; Lamentations 3:22; Exodus 15:22-27; Philippians 2:14, Philippians 4:19; 2 Peter 1:6; James 5:10, 11; Hebrews 10:36; 6:12)

God exhibited His great power, destroying the host of Egypt and their chariots. When Israel saw the defeat and death of the Egyptian army, Moses, Miriam and all Israel were caught up in the aura of praises. The center of their praises was God and Him alone. They cast their minds back to how God had miraculously caused them to escape the fury of the hell-bound Pharaoh. Moses was not left out in the period of praise while Miriam led the women in a God-inspired song. **“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord...”** (Exodus 15:1,20,21).

Question 6: *What do we discover from the songs of Moses, Miriam and the children of Israel?*

Checking through this song of victory, we see a lot of lessons that are worth emulating in the music ministry. One,

the song is God glorifying, exalting and appreciating. The song has God as the center message. Our songs also must only point attention to Christ (verse 1). Two, there is a personal relationship between the singer and God through salvation experience as reflected in verse two of the text. Christian youths' songs will only be acceptable to God, if they have first made themselves acceptable to Him by genuine repentance. Three, the attributes of God are mentioned and emphasized above the gifts of men (verses 3,6,8). Four, the strength of the defeated foes was paralyzed to place God higher than them. (verses 4-7; 9,10, 18,19). We must also see God as the supreme authority that cannot be conquered by anyone. Five, they praised God in the majesty of His holiness and the absoluteness of His power to do wonders (verse 11). We must also remember that songs become a pagan's chant if holiness is missing in the life of the melodious singers.

Six, they appreciated the mercy of God that had kept them. No space to vaunt or boast on the achieved success, they rather see themselves as instruments of mercy (verses 12,13). Eight, they pictured the terrific sting the victory will send to the pines of the upcoming enemies (verses 14-17). We must also know that a victory is a testimony to overcome the challenges ahead. The news of this great victory has reached Jericho as Rehab the harlot testified. **"And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt..."** (Joshua 2:9-11). Seven, the song of Moses became a song to be reckoned in the book of Revelation as being sung with the song of the Lamb. **"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints"** (Revelation 15:3).

As the journey into the Promised Land continued, Israel departed from the Red Sea and journeyed in the wilderness for three days without water. Surprisingly, that little problem of no water generated murmurings. In the previous three

days, they were singing of the miracles, today, they are slighting at Marah. One consistent thing about the Israelites has been their inconsistency. Their endurance is always soiled by grumblings. We must be careful of not getting used to murmurings in our schools, homes and churches.

Finally, it is instructive that the challenge of bitter water and turning it to healthy drinkable one brought about the establishment of covenant of healing and health from the Lord for all and sundry.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	John	19:1-16	Deuteronomy	3:1-11
MON	"	19:17-30	"	3:12-29
TUE	"	19:31-37	"	4:1-25
WED	"	19:38-42	"	4:26-49
THU	"	20:1-10	"	5:1-21
FRI	"	20:11-18	"	5:22-33
SAT	"	20:19-25	"	6:1-25

Lesson 46

ISRAEL'S MURMURING AND GOD'S INTERVENTION

TEXT: Exodus 16:1-36;
17:1-16

MEMORY VERSE: “And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness” (Exodus 16:2).

The reaction of the children of Israel to the problem of lack of food and water in the wilderness reveals their spiritual state. They were so concerned and impatient about bodily provision to the point of frightening God's servant. When a youth acts in a way an unbeliever carnally does, he frustrates the grace of God. Indeed, days of want and adversity will come; it is for a while, “**If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small**” (Proverbs 24:10). Israel failed God, but in His mercy, He gave them food and water.

Question 1: *What is the danger of murmuring?*

Murmuring opens the door to satanic attacks in a person's life. Shortly after the murmuring and strife of the Israelites, they were attacked by the Amalekites. But God gave Moses the strategy to overcome the Amalekites.

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL MURMURED AGAINST GOD
(Exodus 16:1-9; 17:1-4; 14:11,12; Numbers 11:1,2; 14:2,27; 20:3-9; 21:5-7; Jude 16)

The murmuring of the children of Israel against Moses and Aaron was unreasonable; and to do so against a loving God is

most ungrateful. A youth who rebels or murmurs against parents, leaders, or neighbours should realise that murmuring is a sin. Miriam was punished for speaking against his brother, Moses. **“And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous...”** (Numbers 12:9-10). Instead of murmuring or complaining, Christian youths should rather discuss the point of disagreement with the concerned individuals privately, before considering relevant other steps that can be taken to resolve the problem and if necessary, report to the leadership and be willing to allow the will of God to be done.

Murmuring is an index of impatience, prayerlessness and faithlessness. It draws one away from God; it makes one forget God and His benefits and turn one to babe in the faith. Each believer should uproot the seed of murmuring before it grows. Apostle Paul warned, **“Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer”** (1 Corinthians 10:10).

Question 2: *What are the implications of murmuring?*

GOD’S PROVISIONS IN THE WILDERNESS (Exodus 16:10-21; 17:5-16; 15:22-26; 1 Kings 17:3-6,8-16).

“Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you...” (Exodus 16:4); **“...This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat”** (Exodus 16:15b). Instead of raining fire and brimstone upon the Israelites, God rained bread for them for forty years. God’s attribute of showing love to those who deserve fiery judgment reveals His kind nature to humanity. God instructed them on how to gather the food, an omer for every man, for five days and on the sixth day, they must gather two omers for the sixth and the seventh days. But they disobeyed (Exodus 16:17,18,20,27). Christian youths should always learn to obey God’s instructions accordingly. They should also obey the instructions of leaders as specified by the Scriptures.

God also gave them water from the rock, to cool their thirst.

What a merciful God! He did not return evil for evil but overcame evil with good. God always conquers man with His love. His love brought man out of sin. He first loved us even when we were yet in sins (1 John 4:19; Romans 5:6-8).

The provision of food (manna) and water were enough to go round for all of them in the wilderness. Youths do not need to go out of the way of righteousness to have their needs met because, “**...God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work**” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Do well to trust God as a merciful and caring Father, especially during challenges. Rest on the promise of His word, in spite of poverty, storms, oppositions, provocation, persecution or criticisms (2 Chronicles 32:8). Remember that God is always faithful to His promises (Psalm 36:5). Reckon that whatever God has promised, He is able also to perform it (Romans 4:9-12). Ensure that you receive God’s daily provision by faith (Psalm 68:19). Rejoice in whatever situation you find yourself (Habakkuk 3:17,18).

Question 3: Mention some proofs to show God as Jehovah Jireh.

Jesus had fed three thousand, and even five thousand people before (Matthew 15:32-39; 14:15-21). In the same way, God fed Elijah through a raven and a widow (1 Kings 17:3-6,8-16). All these prove God to be Jehovah Jireh. As Israelites gathered manna daily, youths must read the Word of God every day, morning and evening. “**Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom**” (Colossians 3:16). He wants youths to thirst for spiritual water. “**...If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water**” (John 7:37,38). We should not hear the word only but be the doer of it.

THE AMALEKITES FOUGHT AGAINST ISRAEL (Exodus 16:22-36; 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:17,18; Psalm 118:8-14; 2 Samuel 15:22-25; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1 Chronicles 29:11-13)

“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim” (Exodus 17:8). This was the first nation that fought with Israel. The Amalekites were the descendant of Esau (Genesis 36:12). They were a threat to Israel’s entrance into Canaan and they oppressed them on different occasions (Numbers 1:28,29; 14:39-45; Judges 3:13; 6:3-5; 1 Samuel 30:1). The attack of Amalek on Israel shows some of the wiles of the devil against believers. One, it was sudden attack. Two, the timing of the attack was strategic. Israel just left Egypt about three months; no formidable army and no weapon of war. Three, the Amalekites attack the weak and defenceless ones (Deuteronomy 25:17,18). And four, Amalek sustained the attack until Israel gained a permanent victory over them. Since the devil never gives up easily, we must not be tired of fighting the good fight of faith until the battle is won.

Question 4: *Mention strategies Moses used against the Amalekites.*

God must have given the strategy to Moses when he ordered Joshua, **“...Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand”** (Exodus 17:9). There are important lessons we must know. One, God is not stereotyped in His operations. The method He used to defeat the Egyptians was totally different from this. God is still involved in our lives’ battles. Two, there is an appropriate strategy for each battle in life. We must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Three, God could have destroyed the Amalekites without the instrumentality of Israel but He chose to demand that they cooperate to achieve that aim. Four, the power of prayer cannot be undermined. Moses, Aaron and Hur were on the mountain praying while Joshua and his men were in the battle field.

Just as Moses lifted up the rod to heaven, it is necessary for us to pray always lifting holy hands. When Moses’ hand became weak, Aaron and Hur rallied round him to ensure a lasting victory for Israel: **“...and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands...”** (Exodus 17:12). As long as Moses hands were up, Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people

with the edge of the sword.

Question 5: Mention some outstanding qualities that made Joshua successful.

Joshua had some good qualities as a leader-to-be. One, he was obedient and submissive to leadership. Two, he was courageous; he went at short notice – “tomorrow”. Three, he had faith in God. He rested on the word of Moses.

Israel defeated Amalek and God ordered Moses to write it for a memorial and even rehearse it in the ears of Joshua that He would utterly wipe out Amalek from the earth. The Scripture says: “**...touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm**” (1 Chronicles 16:22) and “**...for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye**” (Zechariah 2:8). Nobody fights with God’s people and wins. Moses gave the glory and honour to God. He built an altar unto the Lord, for a memorial and called it “Jehovah Nissi” which means “The Lord is my Banner.” As a believer, whenever you are passing through persecution, trial and so on, be sure that the Lord is your Banner. He will fight for you and you will overcome them. Is the enemy confronting you? Just rest in the everlasting arm, He will fight for you and you will have the victory.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	John 20:26-31	Deuteronomy 7:1-26
MON	“ 21:1-14	“ 8:1-20
TUE	“ 21:15-25	“ 9:1-29
WED	Acts 1:1-14	“ 10:1-22
THU	“ 1:15-26	“ 11:1-32
FRI	“ 2:1-28	“ 12:1-15
SAT	“ 2:29-41	“ 12:16-32

Lesson 47

CHRIST PROHIBITS DIVORCE

TEXT: Matthew 19:1-15;
Mark 10:1-16

MEMORY VERSE: “And said,
For this cause shall a man
leave father and mother,
and shall cleave to his wife:
and they twain shall be one
flesh? Wherefore they are
no more twain, but one
flesh. What therefore God
hath joined together, let
not man put asunder”
(Matthew 19:5,6).

While Jesus was on earth, He was deeply involved in the ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. However, He did not allow the miracles which He performed to distract Him from preaching the truth as it touches different areas of life. Today’s study which is derived from two parallel synoptic Gospels reveals to us God’s expectations, demands and rules for the institution of marriage.

Jesus instructed us on how we are expected to live our lives when we get married. His instruction is superior to any other view or teachings on marriage. Believing youths must therefore, make up their minds that when they get married, they will comply with the scriptural dictates from the Author of marriage Himself; rather than borrowing ideas and opinions from the world and modern-day theories.

CHRIST'S PRECEPTS ON MARRIAGE (Matthew 19:1-6; Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7:1-3; Mark 10:7,8; Ephesians 5:21-23)

Marriage institution has been abused across generations. This is so because Satan is also interested in marriage. As a result, he has filled the world with several false teachings about marriage. When Jesus came to Judea, the Pharisees questioned Him: **“Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause”** (Matthew 19:3). This, they did with an evil intention, tempting Him. During the time of Christ, the Pharisees knew His teachings on the permanence of marriage. Instead of adhering to His teachings and instructions, they would rather want Him to approve their errors and evil ways. But Jesus pointed them to the Scripture and said, **“...Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female”** (Matthew 19:4). The Scripture is the only guiding manual for marriage. Any writing, opinion or instruction from whoever which opposes the Scripture should be disregarded and discarded. Jesus referred them to the beginning of marriage. This is because it is from the beginning that we can understand the purpose of marriage and all the fundamentals that we need to know about marriage.

Question 1: *What are some of the unscriptural marriages practiced in the world?*

The following facts appeared from the beginning: one, marriage is between a man and a woman: **“But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female”** (Mark 10:6). This contradicts the teaching and the practice of same sex marriage. Homosexuality and gay marriages are prohibited by God and they are abomination in His sight. Also, marriage institution was intended by God between one man and one woman as He did not create and present two women to Adam. Also, marriage is not between a boy and a girl. This means that you must be matured spiritually, physically, financially and emotionally before you

get into marriage. In summary, heterosexual and monogamy is the scriptural standard in marriage.

Two, marriage is a sacred institution. It is God's idea and not a derivation of any culture. **“And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”** (Genesis 2:18). We see marriage here, innovated and authored by God for partnership so that each other could find help, comfort and succor from one another. This is why as a youth, you must realize that God has a plan for you. When you get to the point of marriage, you need to pray unto God who will guide you on the choice of a life partner.

Three, marriage is also meant for purity. Apostle Paul confirmed this when he said, **“Nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband”** (1 Corinthians 7:2). Marriage thus, becomes a means through which legitimate pleasure could be enjoyed between a matured man and a woman, thus enabling moral purity among human beings in general. As a youth, you must keep yourself pure until you get married and not be involved in the sin of fornication. Four, God also instructed multiplication of human seeds through marriage (Genesis 1:27,28). Marriage becomes the only means through which this becomes achievable. Hence, marriage was established for procreation. Having children outside wedlock is not in line with the plan of God.

Question 2: Give some fundamental facts on marriage as taught by Jesus Christ.

Jesus spoke further, **“And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”** (Matthew 19:5,6). From these verses, Jesus made us to understand that the original plan of God for marriage was that a man would leave his father and mother and would be joined to his wife. From the above teaching of the Lord, we understand

that: one, two people are divinely united to become one. Two, matrimonial union is more intimate and binding than parental or filial affection. Three, the union in body means a complete union in spirit, mind, interest, vision, decision and possession. Four, they are united together and bound to each other such that any separation would cause damages to their lives and personalities. Five, the union is based on a pure flame of love that warms their lives. Six, such union is so beautiful, precious and delightful that it cannot and should not be put asunder. Seven, God Himself has yoked or joined them together and He only can terminate the union through death.

CHRIST PROHIBITS DIVORCE IN MARRIAGE (Matthew 19:7-9; Genesis 2:18; Malachi 2:16; Mark 10:4-9)

In an attempt to strengthen their argument, the Pharisees asked, **“Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?”**

Question 3: *Explain the stand of the Bible on divorce and remarriage.*

But Christ, the final authority on all issues explained it was for the hardness of their hearts (Matthew 19:8). Moses did not command them as they wrongly posited, but permitted them. **“In the beginning it was not so”** (Matthew 19:8). Later in the Scripture, the position of God on the issue of divorce was made clear. **“For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith he hateth putting away...”** (Malachi 2:16). Divorce and remarriage while the former partner lives is human ideas that contradicts divine arrangement (1 Corinthians 7:39). The right to remarry is only allowed when one of the spouses dies.

“And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter ...if the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry” (Mark 10:10; Matthew 19:10). The disciples, hearing Christ’s teachings on marriage felt it was better not to marry at all. They received the teaching as entirely new in that age and impracticable. Today, some single

brothers and sisters see marriage as a burden and refuse to marry. But this is contrary to the plan of God for man. **“And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him a help meet for him”** (Genesis 2:18). Some also misunderstood Paul’s assertion in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35. A casual reader would think Paul was making a case for celibacy or stating that the married state is inferior to being single, but this is not so. Rather, he points out that marriage confers additional responsibility on a person, and if not properly handled, could become a distraction in our personal walk with God.

Obviously, being single does not automatically make a person more spiritual, or vice versa. What brings the difference is the priority one places on spiritual pursuit and the readiness to make necessary sacrifices for personal growth in the Lord.

Christ then told the disciples that most men and women are to marry except for special case where God allows an individual not to get married – for example, Paul the apostle. These few exceptions are to receive God’s guidance and are not to be product of infantile decision, misguided imitations, faithless consecration or frivolous religious practice.

CHRIST’S POSITION ON CHILDREN (Matthew 19:10-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15; Matthew 18:3)

“But Jesus said, suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them and departed thence” (Matthew 19:14,15). As the children were brought to Christ, the disciples disallowed them from getting access to Him. But Christ, having knowledge of this, received and blessed them. The action of Christ’s disciples reflects the attitude of some so-called believers and churches. They relegate the place of the children to the background. Some churches do not make good place of worship for them. But Christ said, **“...for of such is the kingdom of heaven”**. Having laid his blessing on marriage, the Lord now blesses its fruits. He saw children as the product of divinely ordained

union of marriage. The children were brought to Christ as a holy and heavenly-sent teacher that He should put His hands on them and pray.

This is a challenge to parents of our days who occupy their children with other things without showing them the way to Christ. When we lead our children to Christ at their early stage, it helps them to have encounter with Him and to receive the touch of Jesus. He gives to all who come unto Him, a cleansing touch (Matthew 8:16), a quieting and illuminating touch (Matthew 9:29,30), a reassuring touch (Matthew 17:7), a liberating touch (Mark 7:33-35) and a healing touch (Luke 22:6,19,51).

Question 4: *Mention some characters of little children which we must possess if we want to enter God's kingdom.*

“...For of such is the kingdom of heaven”. What Jesus meant here was that those that would enter Christ's kingdom must be pure, simple, humble, forgiving and obedient as little children.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Acts	2:42-47	Deuteronomy	13:1-18
MON	“	3:1-11	“	14:1-21
TUE	“	3:12-16	“	14:22-29
WED	“	3:17-26	“	15:1-11
THU	“	4:1-12	“	15:12-23
FRI	“	4:13-22	“	16:1-22
SAT	“	4:23-31	“	17:1-13

Lesson 48

PROPER PERCEPTION OF RICHES

TEXT: Matthew 19:16-30;
Mark 10:17-31;
Luke 18:15-30

MEMORY VERSE: “And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24).

In this study, Jesus’ answer to the rich young ruler’s question reveals self-morals and replacement of sound conversion. This account unfolds the dialogue of Christ with a rich young ruler who approached Him with piety, respect and willingness to receive full instruction and guidance on the requirement to have eternal life.

Question 1: *What do you learn from Christ’s response to the rich young ruler’s question?*

“And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). Christ as a teacher that comes from God was always accessible to all. As the young ruler came with question of knowing the qualification for inheriting eternal life, He gave him attention. In his discussion with the Lord, the young ruler claimed to be morally upright and law-abiding. But Christ who has all knowledge knew he lacked one thing and counseled him. “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell

that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21). However, the counsel of Christ grieved the man and he left sorrowfully. The Christian youths should note that morals, titles and deeds of kindness cannot replace genuine salvation.

THE PROJECTION OF MORALITY WITHOUT PERFECTION

(Matthew 19:21; Luke 18:20-22; Matthew 6:20,21)

"Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up" (Luke 18:20,21). The young man claimed to have kept the entire commandments of God from his youth. But Christ revealed he lacked one thing, and that was putting his trust in riches. Conformity with denominational practise and moral without genuine conversion will earn no one eternal life. Neither will activities (like singing, ushering, working at the electronics unit, attending school fellowship, fasting, attending vigils e.t.c) in the church replace new birth experience.

Question 2: *What must a youth do to inherit the kingdom of God?*

Every youth who desires to inherit eternal life must be ready and willing to forsake all sins and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Such youth must be ready to let go of anything forbidden by Christ which may be peculiar to the youth and pose a hindrance to his or her journey to heaven. The rich young man was not ready to drop earthly riches for heavenly possessions. He wanted to combine the love of God with the love of the world. Christ said, **"Ye cannot serve God and mammon"** (Matthew 6:24). Also, many youths are not willing to drop their sins. Some want to serve God and still

stick to their worldly friends, pleasure, parties and cosmetic desire. Jesus emphasized to the man the need to seek treasures in heaven, **“and thou shall have treasure in heaven: and come follow me”** (Luke 18:22; Matthew 19:21). Every Christian youth should seek heavenly riches (Colossians 3:2) and lay up their treasures in heaven. **“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also”** (Matthew 6:20,21).

THE PERIL OF EARTHLY WEALTH WITHOUT SALVATION (Luke 18:24-27; Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:19; Mark 8:36; 1 Timothy 6:17,18; Ephesians 2:8)

The young man’s hope of inheriting eternal life was dashed when he was asked to sell all that he had, distributed to the poor and start following Christ. The condition to get to heaven, which Jesus told him could not be attained by human effort but by grace of God (Mark 8:36). Also, salvation cannot be attained by human effort alone but by the grace of the Lord. **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”** (Ephesians 2:8).

The place of the rich in the church and the possibility of making heaven needs to be x-rayed from the Scriptures. The rich man eventually left Christ sorrowfully and this made Jesus to say, **“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God”** (Luke 18:24). This does not mean that rich people cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But Christ was only emphasising the need not to place our confidence and trust on it. Riches could be deceptive (Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:19), it could make people to be high-minded (1 Timothy 6:17). Wealth could make possessors put their trust in earthly riches (1 Timothy 6:17). Also, riches could make people desperate and corrupt (James 5:2).

Question 3: *What warning did Paul give to Timothy about the are rich?*

Paul warns Timothy to, **“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate”** (1 Timothy 6:17,18).

Question 4: *What are the true riches a Christian youth should seek?*

Christian youths are to seek first the kingdom of God and pursue wealth legitimately. We are to possess: one, riches of Christ’s goodness, forbearance and longsuffering (Romans 2:4), two, riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Romans 11:33). Three, riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy (Romans 9:23). Four, riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7). Five, riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18). And six, riches of glory to be strengthened in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:19).

However, God has promised the redeemed wealth, as a reward of obedience to Him (Deuteronomy 28:1-13; 3 John 2). Godly men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Hezekiah, etc., were rich, yet they did not put their confidence in riches, but in God. It is however, note-worthy that the path to wealth acquisition could be fraught with danger and eternal damnation. Heaven’s pilgrim should therefore, be watchful (Proverbs 11:28; 1 Timothy 6:9,10). Godliness with contentment remains the modest rule for heaven-bound citizens.

THE PROFITABILITY OF SACRIFICE FOR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP (Luke 18:28-30; Matthew 19:28,29; Mark 10:28)

Peter reiterated the fact that they have sacrificed all for kingdom sake. **“Then Peter began to say unto him lo, we**

have left all, and have followed thee" (Mark 10:28). Christ did not deny Peter's acclaimed sacrifice but commended and comforted them.

Question 5: *Mention some blessings that accrue to those who forsake the world to follow Christ.*

"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children or lands for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:28,29).

Also, Christian youth who sacrifice relationship, ambition, convenience, position for the kingdom of God's sake will have hundred folds back in this present time and in the world to come, life-everlasting.

Note that the more you give to the Saviour, the more you get from Him and the more you give to the world, the worse you get from it.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING	EVENING
SUN	Acts 4:32-37	Deuteronomy 17:14-20
MON	" 5:1-11	" 18:1-22
TUE	" 5:12-16	" 19:1-21
WED	" 5:17-32	" 20:1-20
THU	" 5:33-42	" 21:1-23
FRI	" 6:1-8	" 22:1-12
SAT	" 6:9-15	" 22:13-30

Lesson 49

PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS

TEXT: Matthew 20:1-16

MEMORY VERSE: “So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first” (Matthew 20:8).

Several, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the greatest Teacher that ever lived, illustrated the kingdom of God with parables. As a style of teaching, parables are used to help inculcate higher spiritual truths with near-familiar stories or comparisons. Here, we are presented with man as “an householder” who went out “to hire labourers into his vineyard”. The householder refers to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the vineyard is His Church (Matthew 13:27,52; 20:1; 21:33; Mark 12:1). This parable teaches significant lessons about the way of the kingdom of God. It teaches that there is always something to do in the house of God for all categories of believers. People may be engaged in secular work, but they are idle if God’s work has no place in their agenda.

The parable also presents us with the necessity of reaching out to sinners and getting them established in the kingdom of God. Some potential workers complained that nobody hired them to work in the vineyard. **“They say unto him, because no man hath hired us.”** Many people are not aware of God’s plan of salvation for their lives. Believers must intensify

awareness of God's kingdom through productive soul-winning strategies so that no one can claim ignorance of the salvation plan that is meant for all to enjoy. **"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men"** (Titus 2:11).

The householder, after calling the first set of workers, went out about the third, sixth and the eleventh hours to call other labourers so that everybody could benefit from the reward attached to the work (Matthew 20:5,6). The call to serve the Lord is a consistent one. No true worshipper of God should hesitate to respond to this call. Believers should repeatedly call men to come to God's plan for their lives. The householder did not call people just once and afterwards gave up; he did it consistently. One crusade or evangelism outreach is not enough to bring all people to the kingdom of God. Also, believers who are doing little or nothing to advance the kingdom of God should be encouraged to put their hands to the work to pave way for them to partake in Kingdom benefits on the last day (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Question 1: Mention some areas the Lord is calling saved youths to serve in the vineyard and what their attitude should be.

In God's vineyard, there are so many areas born again youth can serve God. They can serve as members of the youth choir, Youth Home Success Fellowship officers, School Fellowship officers, members of Christian literature distribution team and so on. Personal evangelism is also a special area for all believers (Matthew 28:20; Mark 16:15). Our attitude towards the call should be prompt. The call of God is variously described in the Scriptures to show its uniqueness. It is called a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:19), a high calling (Philippians 3:14), and a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1). Those who understand what this call means would place a high premium on it more than any other calls or vocation. It is a call that comes with eternal blessing and value. Believing youths who shun the service of God do not have a comprehensive understanding of the call of God on their lives.

CALL TO THE SERVICE OF THE MASTER (Matthew 20:1-8; 4:19-22; John 4:34; 9:4)

The call to the service of God in His vineyard is the noblest call under the sun. Christian youths are saved so that they can serve. It is therefore, abnormal for a believing youth to fold his hands without getting involved in the work of the Master. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, demonstrated His obedience to the call of God upon His life by going about doing the work of His Father. He publicly declared, “**...My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work**” (John 4:34) and, “**I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work**” (John 9:4). Jesus called Peter and his brother, Andrew, James and John, the sons of Zebedee and they followed Him (Matthew 4:19-22). It is pertinent to note that before we respond to the call to service, we must first respond to the call of salvation. Service done without genuine salvation and reconciliation with God does not attract His approval and blessings. Sinners must first repent of their sins because the call to service requires clean vessels. “**Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee**” (Psalm 51:12,13). King David here realised that he could not teach transgressors the way of God without being in a good relationship with Him. By implication, an unsaved soul cannot render acceptable service to God.

Question 2: *What steps can a sinning youth take before serving God acceptably in His vineyard?*

A sinner must repent of sin, recognise Christ as Lord and personal Saviour and abide in the truth and holiness. The Church has a lot of unfinished tasks, making it more compelling for all to get involved in the work.

In the parable, some gave excuses of not being invited and immediately the householder reached out to them so that they could join the work force. The Lord expects all leaders in the church to encourage saved youths to see the need of

working for God.

Question 3: *Why is it important for all saved youths to get involved in the work of God and evangelism?*

The Great Commission cannot be accomplished if we do not join hands to achieve its goal. The people in the days of Nehemiah responded positively to the work of God: **“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work”** (Nehemiah 4:6). Born again youths should get involved because they are saved to serve; evangelism is the only means the love of God can get to the people.

COMMITMENT TO SERVICE WITHOUT MURMURING
(Matthew 20:10-12; Mark 10:35-41; John 6:43; Philippians 2:14; Colossians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:58)

“But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house” (Matthew 20:10,11). The Lord expects us as believers to render acceptable service to Him.

Question 4: *How should a born again youth react when God blesses a fellow youth of the church?*

We are not to serve in expectation of personal gain but in appreciation of what God has done for us. Hence, our services should not be done with murmuring, complaint or jealousy. The first set of workers in this parable murmured and complained because they expected greater rewards than the other workers who were called later. This is not the Lord's standard or perception of service in the Kingdom. Believers serving God should avoid this pitfall. The Bible admonishes us to **“Do all things without murmurings and disputings”** (Philippians 2:14). Older members of the church should not feel sad when God uses and blesses younger converts but should praise God for His mighty acts. As believers, we

should not be surprised or take offence when God rewards others in unexpected ways. When we are converted, we become members of the body of Christ; and as we grow in grace, we should reason that when any member is honoured, the honour is for all of us. We must shun murmuring as we serve God in His vineyard.

We should do our work for God with commitment because we have examples of saints who have gone before us who were very committed to the service of the Lord. David put his life in his hand and killed Goliath because he was committed to defending the glory of the God of Israel. **“And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”** (1 Samuel 17:26). Also, he offered a special burnt offering that cost him something in order to demonstrate his commitment (2 Samuel 24:24). Today, there are many sinners out there who can only gain their freedom if only we put our necks to the work of evangelism (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15). Paul the Apostle placed a curse on himself in order not to neglect the preaching of the gospel. He said, **“...woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”** (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Question 5: How can a born again youth demonstrate commitment to the work of God?

Believing youth can demonstrate their commitment to the work of God by identifying a work area and devoting time to serve there. We must take steps to ensure the work of God is done acceptably. Paul admonished his co-worker, Archippus to **“...Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it”** (Colossians 4:17). This godly counsel is instructive to believers of all ages. Some workers, like Demas, who were working diligently for the Lord before have down tools before the time of their reward. The mundane gains of this world should not make believers to leave the work. We should rather strive and labour to the very end without quitting the work. We are to occupy till the Lord comes.

CORRECTIONS FOR THE SERVANTS IN THE MINISTRY (Matthew 20:13-16; 1 Samuel 30:21-25; Hebrews 12:5,6; Luke 18:14)

The householder promptly corrected the erring servants in our parable when they began to murmur and complain against his good gesture of rewarding the servants accordingly. **“But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?”** (Matthew 20:13). God corrects those He loves. Believers should count it a thing of joy when they are corrected by the Lord through His ministers. **“...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”** (Hebrews 12:5,6). Position seeking and self-aggrandizement should not be mentioned in the house of God. Believers must serve in humility, unity and love and should earnestly pray for sanctification so that they can serve God acceptably (John 17:17).

Question 6: What important lessons can we draw from correction of the householder?

There are lessons to draw from the corrections of the householder. One, we should be contented with whatever the Lord gives us. Godliness with contentment is crucial in the life and service of a true child of God. Two, God holds the prerogative to determine what He does with His resources. He distributes to people according to the counsel of His own will (1 Corinthians 12:11). Three, we should glorify God when He blesses others and not become jealous (Luke 18:43). Four, we should not compare our service with others. God knows how to reward those working for Him according to His purpose. Carnal comparison should be avoided. Five, we must understand that God owns us and all that we have. The services we render to Him are products of the grace He gives us freely. We have to allow Him to have control over our ambitions. We should not dictate to Him the way He should

reward us. Six, God does not want His children to run others down in order to get more advantage. Seven, we should never resent God's gracious acceptance of the despised, the outcast and sinners who have turned to Him for forgiveness; neither should we be jealous of what He has given to another person. Rather, we should focus on God's gracious benefits to us and be thankful for what we have.

In summary, we should receive the call of God on our lives with gratitude and serve Him with all our hearts without comparing ourselves with anyone. Our focus should be to please the Master who knows how to reward everyone accordingly. Since there is no partiality with Him, no one would be short-changed or owed anything; the Judge of all the earth cannot do unrighteously (Genesis 18:25; Hebrews 6:10). Let us labour fervently till the Master comes!

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

EVENING

SUN	Acts	7:1-10	Deuteronomy	23:1-25
MON	"	7:11-28	"	24:1-22
TUE	"	7:29-43	"	25:1-19
WED	"	7:44-60	"	26:1-19
THU	"	8:1-13	"	27:1-26
FRI	"	8:14-25	"	28:1-14
SAT	"	8:26-40	"	28:15-44

Lesson 50

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY AND CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

TEXT: Matthew 21:1-27;
Mark 11:1-33;
Luke 19:28-48; 20:1-8

MEMORY VERSE: “And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matthew 21:9).

Christ's entrance into Jerusalem marks the beginning of the last phase of His public ministry. This event was so significant that the four gospels recorded it (Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19:28-48; 20:1-8; John 12:12-16). The triumphal entry revealed the plan of God to beam out the glory of Jesus as the Messiah whose kingship, dignity, honour, dominion, power and authority was declared in Jerusalem. Though He had entered many cities, this one was uniquely striking. It was a prophetic fulfilment. **“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”** (Zechariah 9:9). Thus, in theological term, it is called, “the Triumphal Entry”, in the sense that Christ rode on this specially prepared colt, which had not been used by anyone before then. It also heralded His royalty as King of Israel. It was His last entry into Jerusalem before He died on the cross at Calvary. It was accompanied by spiritually inspired procession: spreading leaves on the way,

with shouts of hosanna to herald His entry.

The whole city was moved at the news of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. **"And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee"** (Matthew 21:10,11). The crowd, which probably consisted of those who greatly admired Christ's ministry and personality, as well as devoted Jews who came earlier to prepare and purify themselves for the feast of Passover, were not made up of great men and rulers, but the common people (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

JESUS ENTERED INTO JERUSALEM (Matthew 21:1-3,6,7; Mark 11:1-7; Luke 19:28-35; Matthew 21:3; 1 Kings 20:4)

At the Mount of Olives, in the vicinity of Bethphage and Bethany, Jesus told two of His disciples, **"Go into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a Colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him and bring him hither"** (Luke 19:30). The disciples carried out the assignment with enthusiasm, courage and thoroughness.

Question 1: *How should saved boys and girls do to the Great Commission from the attitude of Christ's disciples above?*

How applicable this message is to the Great Commission and the need for a fulfilled ministry. Believers are to go, without excuse at God's command, to the hideouts of sinners and rescue them from the snares of Satan. In fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy, the disciples were accosted. This is instructive to end-time believers. We are messengers of the Good News. Our obedience to the call to go and loose those who are bound by sin, sicknesses and Satan should be prompt. We must also be prepared to face any opposition, resistance or persecution; standing on nothing other than what Jesus has commanded.

The owner of the colt released it for Christ's use. This

demonstrated Christ's divine ownership over all things and persons, and as such, has authority to use them at will. For believers, Christ's ownership over us is two-fold: by creation and redemption. Therefore, redeemed and blood-washed children of God must willingly submit themselves and all that they have to Him for **"...The Lord hath need of them..."** (Matthew 21:3). In His service, our understanding of divine ownership will enable us freely give our all to God. **"And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have"** (1 Kings 20:4). Our lives, talents, time and treasures are not useful until they are surrendered for use to the glory of God (Luke 19:34,35).

Question 2: *With the knowledge that God is our rightful owner, what should be the attitude of Christian youths when needed by the Lord?*

Simon Peter surrendered his fishing boat to be used by Christ (Luke 5:1-6). Denying the Lord the use of our time, talent, treasures, etc., is akin to renouncing His lordship and His need of these things.

JESUS, EXAMINED AT JERUSALEM (Matthew 21:14-27; Mark 11:12-33; Luke 19:36-44; 20:1-8)

The texts display events that attest to Jesus' demonstration of authority over all natural and supernatural elements. The healing of the blind and lame at the temple (Matthew 21:14), the casting out of those who sold and bought in the temple (Luke 19:45), the cursed and withered fig tree (Matthew 21:18,19).

Question 3: *What is the implication of the miracle performed by Christ at Jerusalem?*

The miracles performed by Christ at Jerusalem show that Jesus has power over all things, whether physical, physiological, natural, supernatural, social, material, human

or spiritual. However, the miracles and Jesus' authority in casting out of the temple those who sold and bought angered the religious Jews so much that they challenged His rabbinical authority, hoping to discredit Him as a mere impostor and self-motivated person. **“And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority to do these things?”** (Mark 11:28).

It is surprising to note that these challengers of Jesus' authority, recognised Him as Master but opposed His exaltation as 'King' and wanted Him to stop and rebuke the disciples for allegedly doing wrong. Some religious people of our time believe Jesus is a Prophet, but not their Saviour, Lord and King. It is a pity such people cannot experience salvation, sanctification, Holy Ghost baptism and other blessings, which come only by acceptance of Christ as Saviour, King of kings and Lord of lords.

JESUS CLEANSED THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM

(Matthew 21:12,13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45,46; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20)

Though the omniscient Christ predicted the total destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44), He still embarked on reformation with the hope that the people will submit to divine instruction to do right. Therefore, Jesus **“went into the temple and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought”** (Luke 19:45). He did this by whipping them with a scourge of small cords (John 2:14,15). This is one act of regal authority that Jesus demonstrated in His days. The look on His face and the tone of His word, made those that sold and bought in the temple astonished and compelled them to yield to His command; thereby, fulfilled this Scripture: **“A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away evil with his eyes”** (Proverbs 20:8). Even though the sale of those animals was for the convenience of those that could easily bring more money with them than animals for sacrifice and changing money for those that wanted it changed, the whole process was turned

into making worldly gain.

Question 4: *Mention some ways people pollute the Temple of the Lord today.*

Similar practices are being perpetrated today. People establish churches as money-making ventures. Some assemblies do bazaar, thanksgiving, money-collecting ceremonies, display of false Christian books, distribution of business cards and contract papers to canvass business opportunities inside the church and during programmes at campgrounds. These practices tend to replace spiritual activities such as prayers and the study of God's word. They hardly listen to the word of God because they must network among worshippers during or after the service. God is angry with such people who make His house a market. Christian leaders, and of course individual Christians, should have eagle eyes and the Christlike courage to radically cleanse the church by taking definite steps to identify and stop such people from desecrating God's house.

Question 5: *What is the true temple of God in our dispensation?*

There are two-fold meanings of 'the temple': the place of worship and the believer's body. The place of worship is to be revered and kept holy. Some worshippers desecrate the church building and premises by throwing spittle, food wastes, plastic wrappers, etc. on the floor. Others allow their children to loiter and run about, while some youths pass notes to one another when the service is on. All disorderly conduct in the house of God dishonours Him.

We should avoid anything that makes us appear to take God for granted. Believers are the spiritual temple of the living God; and as such, we must be careful not to engage any member of our body in self-destructive habits like smoking, drinking, drug addiction and immorality, as such will amount to desecrating the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16,17). As believers, the Spirit of God dwells in

us. Therefore, “...**dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God**” (2 Corinthians 7:1). We must live a consecrated, obedient and holy lifestyle, and “**glorify God in [our] body, and in [our] spirit, which are God’s**” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
SUN	Acts	9:1-9	Deuteronomy	28:45-68
MON	“	9:10-19	“	29:1-15
TUE	“	9:20-31	“	29:16-29
WED	“	9:32-43	“	30:1-10
THU	“	10:1-8	“	30:11-20
FRI	“	10:9-22	“	31:1-13
SAT	“	10:23-32	“	31:14-21

Lesson 51

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED SERVANT

TEXT: Matthew 21:28-46;
Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19

MEMORY VERSE: “And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty” (Mark 12:2,3).

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He demonstrated that He was the greatest Teacher. This was evident in the style, manner and ways in which He taught the people using parables. A parable is a story that teaches moral. Parables are earthly sayings which have heavenly meanings. Our Lord Jesus Christ used many parables to give life-enriching messages to enhance the understanding of His audience. Christ’s method was so effective, that even the officers that were sent by His detractors to arrest Him came back saying, **“Never man spake like this man”** (John 7:46).

Question 1: *Mention reasons Christ used parables in His teachings and what lesson can Christian youths draw from it.*

Jesus’ parables were quite simple, straightforward and life-changing. He used most of these parables to teach many important aspects of the Kingdom life, to reveal deep truths of heaven, to unravel heavenly mysteries and to confound the

wisdom of the earthly wise men. Christ's message was simple and clear. Youth ministers should ensure that they make the gospel message straight and simple so that all hearers may have the opportunity to understand and be led to Christ. Meanwhile, in the parables under consideration Christ gave a sad commentary on the Jewish stewardship of the vineyard of Almighty God.

The entire study under our consideration is naturally subdivided into three areas which are: the parable of the two sons (Matthew 21:28-32), the parable of the wicked servants (Matthew 21:33-44) and the reaction of the council of elders who tried to denounce the authority of Christ (Matthew 21:45,46).

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS (Matthew 21:28-32; Luke 15:11-32; Ezekiel 18:21,22; John 4:34).

“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went... And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not” (Matthew 21:28-30). In this parable, our Lord Jesus Christ addressed those who were bent on trapping Him in His speech. They were determined to find fault with Him by all means. Here, He painted a picture of the chief priests and the elders with the religious Jews. The parable represented two kinds of young people: the disobedient and the obedient sons. The son who said **“I go, sir: and went not”** represented the Scribes and Pharisees who professed to know God, but never obeyed Him. They honour God with their mouth but their heart is far from Him. The son who said **“I will not”** but repented and went, represented the publicans and the sinners. Like the first son, there are youths who speak good words and make fair promises but go no further. The Lord commands us to be doers of His word and not hearers only (James 1:22). God expects unconditional and prompt obedience to His Word.

Question 2: *What should be the response of believing youths to God's word?*

When the word of God comes to you as a youth, duty demands that you just obey. The call to preach the gospel requires practical and immediate obedience. We must launch out with our gospel nets today to catch youths for Christ because the night comes when no man can work (John 9:4). The Lord has promised to reward our efforts (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Question 3: *Why is every believer expected to engage in soul-winning now?*

Preaching the gospel is the sole responsibility of every Christian youth. We must be engaged now because sinners can die at any time and go to hell. We must remove every excuse and obstacle that will want to hinder us from doing it.

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN (Matthew 21:33-44; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18)

“Hear another parable...”. Jesus was consistent in His method of using parable. Christian youths and their leaders should emphasize the gospel message when opportunity calls for it until it is fully understood and embraced. **“...There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country”** (Matthew 21:33). The Lord used the imagery of the vineyard in this parable, and spoke directly to the children of Israel and their leaders. The vineyard represents the children of Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:8-16; Jeremiah 2:21); the householder represents God while the hedge around the vineyard represents the law i.e. the statutes and the ordinances that God gave them. The law accounts for their distinctiveness amongst other nations and it is the hedge of God around them.

God planted Israel in the land of Canaan and handed over

the nation to the judges, chief priests and elders within their tribes. These were the husbandmen, the cultivators. They were to make the children of Israel bring forth fruits of equity, justice, judgment, praise worship, love, righteousness and acceptable sacrifice of sweet smelling savour unto the Lord. But the leaders of Israel did not lead the people in the right way. They did not appropriately and adequately teach the law. The people therefore, went astray. This made the Lord to send prophets to them so that they could lead the people back to Him. **“And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruit of it. And the husbandmen took his servants and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another, again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise”** (Matthew 21:34-36).

Here, our Lord briefly and appropriately captured the attitude of the leaders of the people to the prophets. He clearly shows the persecution of heaven-recognised servants. The persecution consists of their beating by degenerate Israel. Right from the time of the kings, they had always accepted the false prophets; while they rejected the true messengers from God (2 Chronicles 24:20,21; 2 Kings 6:30,31; Hebrews 11:32,36-38).

Question 4: In the parable of the householder, what do vineyard, householder, hedge and husbandmen represent?

Backslidden Christians are doing the same today. The backsliders make jest and criticise the people of God and His word. The uniform testimony of Scriptures is that what the backslidden Israel did will be repeated by the backslidden, apostate youths in the Church at the close of the age. They will accept false prophets and reject the true prophets of God (Matthew 24:11,12; 2 Timothy 4:3,4). When your heart becomes critical against the word of God and those who teach it, it is a sign of backsliding and degeneration. You may then begin to persecute those who are in the faith. Believing youths should focus on the word of God and be followers of

exemplary leaders and preachers of the Word.

Question 5: *What should be the attitude of Christian youths to persecution?*

One quality stands out in the life of the servants sent by the householder. Although they were persecuted, abused, stoned, misused, reproached and even killed, they stayed at their posts. Moses, Joshua, David, Jeremiah, Amos, Shedrach, Meschach and Abednego stayed at their duty posts. Several others in the New Testament like John, Paul, Stephen and Philip did not abandon their calling even when they were persecuted. Believers should resist temptation, endure trials and stand for Christ even in the face of fierce opposition to their faith.

“But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him” (Matthew 21:37-39). Here, the Lord talks about Himself and His position as the rejected Son. He knew that the people standing before Him would persecute Him but with calmness, He kept on in the mission the Father gave Him. This is a lesson for the youths. We must not fear them which **“kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”** (Matthew 10:28). Jesus spoke prophetically that He would be killed. God wanted the Heir of all things to be honoured and heeded. But Israel would not. They plotted, schemed and killed the Son of God. This evil was not committed ignorantly. They accepted full responsibility for the consequences of their action by saying, **“His blood be on us, and on our children”** (Matthew 27:25).

“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you,

and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:42-44). Youths who reject the doctrines of the word of God on restitution, sanctification, divorce and remarriage, etc., should beware, lest the 'Rock of offence' fall on them. Those who reject the ministers of the gospel should also beware, lest they reject the Fountain from where the Lord satisfies their thirst.

Sinners and backsliders must turn to the Lord today, **"fall on this stone"** and be broken. For **"a broken and a contrite heart... God wilt not despise."** But for those who hold on to their sin till the judgment day, the Stone shall fall on them and grind them to powder. They will suffer eternally in hell.

THE PITIABLE RESPONSE OF THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES (Matthew 21:45,46; Luke 20:19; 2 Kings 17:14; Nehemiah 9:16,17; Jeremiah 19:15; Hebrews 3:13; 2 Timothy 4:3)

"And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them" (Luke 20:19). The reaction of the chief priests and Scribes depicts the pitiable condition of hardened sinning youths. Instead of turning away from their evil ways, they were infuriated and sought for a way to kill Christ. They did not allow the Saviour's message to effect the necessary transformation in their lives. Hardened sinners and backsliders still act like the chief priests and Scribes. Although they are exposed to the undiluted word of God, they reject faithful preachers and their message which is capable of saving their souls. Youths who persecute and speak evil of God's ministers or servants because of their stand for righteousness cannot escape God's judgment except they repent.

It is important for us to draw lessons from these parables as pilgrims on our way to heaven. **"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that**

we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). We should always maintain a positive disposition any time we hear God’s word. The Lord wants us to be sincere and accept His correction and rebuke.

Question 6: What should be the attitude of sinning and backslidden youths to God’s word?

Sinning youths should come to God today in sincere repentance and backsliders should return to the Lord for full restoration.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

EVENING

SUN	Acts	10:33-43	Deuteronomy	31:22-30
MON	“	10:44-48	“	32:1-18
TUE	“	11:1-18	“	32:19-40
WED	“	11:19-30	“	32:41-52
THU	“	12:1-10	“	33:1-14
FRI	“	12:11-19	“	33:15-29
SAT	“	12:20-25	“	34:1-12

Lesson **52**

JESUS CONFOUNDS THE SADDUCEES AND PHARISEES

TEXT: Matthew 22:1-46;
Mark 12:13-37; Luke
20:20-47

MEMORY VERSE: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:36,37).

Before Jesus came, the Pharisees and the Sadducees had held so much sway that they constituted themselves as the final authority as far as religious matters were concerned. Their hold on the masses was so overwhelming that the people were afraid of opposing them for the fear of being ostracised. Rather than stay with the word of God, they reduced the teaching of God’s word to mere opinion and traditions. They taught the commandments of men as doctrines, thereby making the word of God of no effect. But the Lord, the Truth personified, showed up with the pure and unadulterated teaching of God’s word, which birthed spiritual life and renewal in the hearers.

Question 1: *What is the effect of Christ’s teachings on the hearers?*

The people experienced tremendous change, healing, deliverance and reawakening. The response was immediate and the impact, far-reaching. Slowly, but surely, His fame spread and He became a threat to the religious leaders of His

days. Rather than accept Him and align themselves with His doctrines, they made themselves His enemies. This study focuses on the encounter of Christ with the Pharisees and the Sadducees, their plot was to entangle Him in His talk. But Jesus Had supremacy over them in wisdom as regards the commandment of God and the revelation of the Kingdom.

THE GRACIOUS CALL INTO THE KINGDOM (Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 19:7-9; Psalm 15:1-5; Revelation 22:17; Matthew 11:28-30; Isaiah 55:1-7; Proverbs 1:24-33)

The Lord began by narrating a parable of the Kingdom. He left no one in doubt as He attempted to drive home His message to His audience and aimed more specifically at the religious Pharisees. The Lord was fearless in His declaration of the matters of the Kingdom. At the commencement of His ministry, He announced the Kingdom of heaven and sustained the message.

Question 2: What can Christian youths learn from Christ's fearless stance in preaching sound doctrine amidst opposition?

Just like Jesus, we must maintain the message of the Kingdom in spite of opposition and rejection. This is needful because it is only the Good News of the Kingdom that can bring transformational change in man.

The parable here reveals that a certain king made a marriage for his son. The king is a depiction of God the Father, the King of heaven and earth, with authority and dignity who invited guests to the marriage of His son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The king sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden according to the custom in the oriental world. The initial invitation, which was usually sent ahead of the occasion was normally followed by a reminder. The king here had given a royal invitation to those who were bidden: a privileged class of guests. The servant's job was just to notify them that it was time. It is highly probable that they would signify their intention to honour the invitation.

Unfortunately, they turned down the generous invitation of the king at the last minute. Rather than respond in fury to their disregard and insolence, the compassionate king sent out the same set of servants again with a more detailed message, assuring them of his readiness and provision that all things are ready. **“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them”** (Matthew 22:5,6). All they needed to do was just to come unto the marriage. Their response was shocking as the reaction of the king was swift as he passed judgment on them and destroyed them and their city.

The parable reveals the relationship of God with the chosen seed of Abraham, Israel, and their response to His divine offer of free salvation. After His extension of the invitation and their refusal to reciprocate, God abandoned them and threw the invitation open to all. God is preparing the marriage supper of the Lamb for the Bride, the purified Church.

Question 3: *Mention some salient lessons derived from this parable.*

Some salient lessons can be derived from the parable: one, God has a beautiful plan for all and will make personal and timeless effort to bring it to pass. Two, God **“is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9). Three, the servants of the King must always be ready to do His bidding. Four, God’s invitation must be swiftly responded to; otherwise, we risk the danger of missing out a place in the Kingdom. Five, sinners and saints alike must be careful not to make light of divine truths and privileges. Six, despisers of God’s invitation risk His punishment. Seven, refusal of the free and full salvation will always bring incalculable loss and ruin.

God’s invitation is now open to all (Isaiah 55:1-7). His

universal call to man is the call to salvation through Jesus Christ. God's desire is to gather all men, both the good (those that feel they are morally alright) and the bad (those who think they have gone too far in sin and evil). As God's servants, Christians youths must preach the gospel message of hope, love and life. We must assure them that all things are ready. Jesus Christ has paid the ultimate price for all to receive pardon and cleansing for free.

The king usually provides befitting wedding garments for guests and it was shocking when he discovered a man without the garment. He immediately ordered his expulsion. Today, only the garment of righteousness would qualify us to make it to heaven and participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9; 14:5; 7:14). Nothing else will do. He has made the provision for our righteousness and He is waiting to cleanse and purify the penitent sinner who would accept His call, because without holiness **"no man shall see the Lord"** (Hebrews 12:14).

GRIEVOUS COUNSEL AGAINST THE KING (Matthew 22:15-33; Mark 12:13-27; Luke 20:20-40; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:1-22)

"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men" (Matthew 22:15,16). The Jewish leaders sent their disciples to entangle Him with a deceptive question. They wanted to know whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not. Their intention was to set the authorities against Jesus and His ministry. However, by discernment of the Spirit, Jesus saw their hypocrisy. After requesting for a penny on which the image and superscription of Caesar was inscribed to be brought to Him, He made the landmark verdict: **"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"** (Mark

12:17). This conclusion made the people to wonder at His wisdom!

Question 4: *What lessons can the Christian youths learn from Christ's response to their question?*

From the response of Jesus, we learn the following lessons: first, believers should not be ignorant of the devices of the enemy in seeking to draw them away from the fountain of life. Second, they must possess the Spirit of discernment in order to recognise the enemy's deception. Third, all Christians must perform their civic responsibilities in the society and obey constituted authorities. Fourth, they must render willing and acceptable service to God in His vineyard by giving their time, talents and resources for the expansion of His Kingdom.

On the same occasion, the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection came to Jesus with the question of the veracity of the doctrine of resurrection. They relayed an account of how seven brothers took turns to marry the same woman, after the death of the previous one, in order to raise children for their deceased brother, in line with the Law of Moses. They ignorantly presented the story in a manner to make light of the resurrection and portray it as meaningless. Thus they asked, **"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her"** (Matthew 22:28).

Jesus Christ thereafter exposed their error and ignorance of Scriptures on the subject matter. He systematically explained to them, by first clearing the air on the issue of marriage in the life hereafter: **"And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the**

dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err" (Mark 12:24-27). This means that even though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not physically alive at that material time, God said, "I am" not "I was", signifying that these patriarchs are living in their glorified bodies.

The systematic approach Jesus adopted in answering the question of the Sadducees is very instructive to Christian leaders. Like Christ, our Master and perfect Example, they must **"...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"** (1 Peter 3:15). A thorough study of the Scriptures will make them approved workmen **"rightly dividing the word of truth"** (2 Timothy 2:15).

To say there is no resurrection is tantamount to saying the gospel is void and without substance. Paul the apostle said, **"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain"** (1 Corinthians 15:12-14). Our preaching and faith is not and cannot be vain. We believe by the Scriptures that Jesus Christ died, was buried and resurrected on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). The doctrine of resurrection is therefore, pivotal to the gospel message.

THE GLARING ANSWER TO THE SCRIBES' QUESTION BY THE KING (Matthew 22:34-46; Mark 12:28-37; Philippians 2:5-11)

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:35,36). The Scribes were present when Jesus Christ gave answers to the questions of the Sadducees and Pharisees. One of them acknowledged that Christ had answered them well and further asked, **"Which is the first commandment of all?"** Jesus answered him that the first commandment was to love God with all the soul, mind and strength. He added that the

second commandment was similar to the first: to **“love thy neighbour as thyself”**. The Scribe, pleased, seconded Jesus’ answers: **“Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices”** (Mark 12:32,33). Jesus was impressed by the discreet but definite response of the Scribe and said unto him, **“Thou art not far from the kingdom of God”**.

Question 5: Does right interpretation of the Scripture implies one is saved?

From the above, we learn that the Scribe had a good knowledge of the Scripture, which won the admiration of Jesus. Believers must ensure they read and study the Bible regularly to have a good knowledge and understanding of the Holy Writ for proper and correct application. However, despite the Scribe’s knowledge of the Scriptures, he was not in the kingdom of God. Knowledgeableness of the word of God and mere moral uprightness do not qualify anyone to become a member of the Kingdom of God, Christ clearly declared.

Question 6: What must sinning youths (with scriptural knowledge) do to be saved?

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Therefore, for sinners to be received into God’s kingdom, they must acknowledge their sins, confess and forsake them and believe in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Only this can guarantee them a place in heaven.

Jesus’ answer also touched on His divinity. Having provided satisfactory answers to the Sadducees, Pharisees and the Scribe, He asked them what they thought about Him and “whose son is he?” They answered, the son of David. He further probed by asking them why David called Christ Lord,

referring to Psalm 110:1, where David, by the inspiration of the Spirit referred to Jesus as his Lord. But they could not give any answer. Jesus Christ was driving at a point to open their eyes to His divinity as the Son of God. But they were completely blind to this divine truth. **“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”** (2 Corinthians 4:3,4). Jesus Christ indeed is the Son of God (Matthew 17:1-5; Philippians 2:5-11).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING

SUN	Acts	13:1-13
MON	“	13:14-25
TUE	“	13:26-43
WED	“	13:44-52
THU	“	14:1-10
FRI	“	14:11-20
SAT	“	14:21-28

EVENING

Joshua	1:1-11
“	1:12-18
“	2:1-24
“	3:1-17
“	4:1-24
“	5:1-15
“	6:1-27