



Teaching The Gospel

By David Phillips

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Introduction

In today's world it seems that many Christians have either lost the ability or the motivation to take the gospel to the lost. This may be due to a lack of desire, a lack of understanding, or fear of how people will respond to the message of Christ. Nevertheless, we learn in the scriptures that it is the responsibility of every Christian to both learn the gospel and teach it. In short, we are our brother's keepers. Therefore it is the goal of this study to change the pattern cited above by showing all Christians how they can fulfill their responsibility in the work of teaching the gospel.

The New Testament church provides us with wonderful examples of men and women who were able to boldly proclaim God's word in every place and every circumstance. We have several examples where all Christians, mature and babes alike, were able to take the gospel to the lost. That's right! Even babes in Christ were able to teach the gospel. With the proper information, faith, and motivation God gives all Christians the ability to do their part in this work.

Throughout this series we will learn what it takes to follow the example set for us by the New Testament church. There are many tools available to us that we will be learning how to use. There are many opportunities to which we will be learning how to open our eyes. There is much confidence to be had which we will be striving to grow in so that we can fulfill the Lord's commission, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...*"

David Phillips

The Need to Teach

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 1

One of the best tools for motivating people to accomplish a task is to show them the benefits of fulfilling that task. Therefore in this lesson we are going to consider the need and the benefits of learning how to teach the gospel. First of all we must see our need as Disciples of Christ. Jesus said, “*The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost*” (Matthew 18:11). Later He said, “*A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher*” (Luke 6:40). If we are going to be true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ then we must learn to be like Him, making it our goal to “*save that which was lost.*”

Learning From Nehemiah

After Israel was released from Babylonian captivity Nehemiah was given permission to go to Jerusalem with a small remnant of Jews where he would survey the city Jerusalem and begin making repairs. When he arrived in 445 B.C. the wall around the city had been lying in waste for about ninety years. “The residents had become so accustomed to the mess that they did not seem to notice. However, Nehemiah caused them to see their condition and called the people to rise up and build. But the work would not be easy. There were both external and internal problems to overcome: certain men criticized and hindered the work at every turn and many of the Jewish leaders were more interested in their financial welfare than that of the nation. At one point the workers on the wall wanted to quit, having become discouraged at the enormity of the task that lay before them” (Kercheville, *Trained to Preach*, pg. 59).

At times congregations may fail to notice that they are not growing, or they notice but do not know what to do about it. We must look at the church from Nehemiah’s point of view. Are our walls torn down? Are they crumbling? We must come to realize that there is great work to be done and all the members of a local church have a responsibility to do their part. “*From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love*” (Ephesians 4:16). A congregation that is not working together cannot grow; the walls cannot be repaired. Therefore let us heed the exhortation given by Nehemiah to God’s people, “*Then I said to them, ‘You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach’*” (Nehemiah 2:17-18). Why do we need to learn to teach the gospel? Because a church that is not growing in the Lord is a reproach to the Lord. Let us therefore be diligent to teach the gospel to all men so that God may be glorified by His people.

Spiritual Growth Requires that we Teach

We must also understand that the growth of the church is not always measured in numbers. Rather, the strength of our walls is also seen in the strength of the current members of the congregation. Therefore our need to teach the gospel is not only to save the lost, but to also strengthen ourselves in knowledge, in understanding, and in faith! Speaking to the general assembly of Christians the Hebrew writer said, “*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food*” (Hebrews 5:12). His point was that over time

Christians need to grow and mature. Those who are taught as babes in Christ, when they mature, must learn how to teach those who become babes after them. Our growth in this manner can be facilitated, in part, by our learning how to teach and by using opportunities to teach. “Soul winning is one of the many ways to grow and bear fruit...[it is] the natural result of maturing in the faith” (Goodall, *Evangelizing the Lost*, pg. 1-2). This is the work that we have to do. A congregation made up of members who do not know how to teach the gospel will neither grow in numbers, nor in strength and maturity. When we fulfill our duty in this, our knowledge, understanding, and faith also become the benefits that we enjoy.

Love Demands that we Teach

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-4 Paul describes in a very powerful way our need to have the love of God within us. “*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing*” (vs. 3). It is for this reason that we must have an undying love for all men; for our brethren as well as unbelievers. We know that it was because of Jesus’ love that He not only came to the earth to teach His people, but that He also died on the cross to give life to all. If we are to call ourselves after His name (Christian) then we must learn to apply this same love in our own lives. We must understand that all who do not hear the gospel and obey it will be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:8). If we truly have a love for lost souls then we will do all we can to take the gospel to them. All men are God’s offspring; we are His creation (Acts 17:28). Therefore in this sense we are our “brother’s keepers.” Let us therefore show the same love toward our fellow man that Jesus showed toward us, “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

Our Teaching Is The Result Of Our Rejoicing

Any person who has found a great treasure is hard-pressed to contain his joy over his discovery. When Jesus healed the deaf and dumb man He commanded him that he should tell no one. In spite of this it says, “...*but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it*” (Mark 7:36). This same thing happened when Jesus healed a man of his leprosy: “*And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.*” Now, if these men could not silence their rejoicing over being healed of their illnesses though Jesus commanded them, how much less should Christians be able to keep silent who have been freed from their sins and commanded to proclaim it to the world? Therefore if we truly rejoice like the Ethiopian eunuch and the Philippian jailor (Acts 8:39; 16:34) then nothing should be able to stop us from proclaiming the same message to the lost by which we were also saved! Therefore, let us learn to be like Saul who, even after he had just been converted, “*Immediately he preached the Christ*” (Acts 9:20).

There is a great need for all Christians to learn how to teach the gospel. This need is not only seen in the commandment, but is also a requirement of our faith and love. Let us therefore be diligent to glorify our Father in heaven by teaching the gospel of His Son.

Questions for Lesson One

1. Why did Jesus say He came to the earth? Give a scripture to support your answer.
2. Does the above answer have any bearing on our need to teach the gospel? Explain.
3. What did Nehemiah help the people of Israel to accomplish?
4. In your own words describe how Nehemiah's account illustrates our need to teach the gospel as the Lord's church today?
5. List two ways that teaching the gospel can help the church grow.
 - a.
 - b.
6. How can teaching the gospel effect our own spiritual growth?
7. How does teaching the gospel prove our love for God and our neighbors?
8. How does our rejoicing in our own salvation provide a need for us to teach the gospel?

Teaching According to Ability

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 2

Many Christians avoid their responsibility to teach the gospel on the premise that they are “No good at teaching or talking to people.” That some have a harder time communicating than others is very true, and God takes this into consideration. However, God also shows us that though all Christians do not have the same abilities, the abilities of all Christians can be used to accomplish His will. Therefore, having learned of our need to teach the gospel, let us now study to know how to teach according to our own abilities.

The Parable of the Talents

Read Matthew 25:14-30. In this passage Jesus gives the parable of the talents. In the parable He compares the kingdom of heaven to a man traveling to a far country who leaves some of his goods in the hands of his servants so that they can make a profit for him. The master in this parable represents God. He gives us all that we have including His word, our physical blessings, and our abilities or “talents.” Christians are the servants and stewards in God’s kingdom (1 Peter 4:10). The purpose of this parable is to illustrate the responsibility of God’s people to work in the kingdom of heaven. We may also use it to illustrate how each Christian can teach the gospel.

First of all we will notice that each servant was given a certain number of talents “*each according to his own ability*” (vs. 15). Second we will notice that it did not matter how much each servant was given, they were all expected to do something profitable with their talents (vs. 29). In like manner God understands that each Christian has different abilities than most others. Not every Christian is required to be a skilled preacher or Bible class teacher. We are merely expected to use whatever abilities we were given in whatever way we can. A preacher, for example, has the ability to speak in public, to boldly proclaim God’s word, and motivate large groups of people to strive to do God’s will. Let us say he is a “five talent servant.” Let us now consider a woman within a congregation who is an excellent teacher, very knowledgeable in the scriptures, and zealous to do the Lord’s work. We know from 1 Timothy 4:11 that she is not permitted to do the public preaching and teaching that a preacher may do, but with her great abilities she can be instrumental in teaching the other women and the children of the congregation. Let us say she is a “two talent servant.” Finally, there may be another man in the congregation who is somewhat soft-spoken and not very confident in public speaking, but is wonderful at gently instructing and encouraging people in one-on-one situations. This man may not be able to teach and convert large groups of people at one time, but he may have a personal touch that is just what many people need. He may be able to reach the one or two people that the preacher is not able to reach through preaching his sermons. Let us say he is a “one-talent servant.”

Notice that each of these people has different abilities or different “talents” than the others. But the fact that two out of these three people were not apt to preach sermons in public did not mean that they were not able to cause growth in the kingdom. Rather, they were able to see their own personal talents and figure out how to use them to the best of their ability. In this same manner every Christian needs to see where their strong points are and learn to use them to do the Lord’s work. When this is taking place in a congregation, that congregation will be able to work as

efficiently and effectively as the human body; each member doing the work that God gave it the ability to do.

How Can I Teach The Gospel?

In order for the above illustration to apply we must all put forth the effort to find ways we can each teach the gospel. As pointed out earlier, God does not expect every Christian to be able to preach a gospel sermon. However, each Christian should know the gospel story, what God expects of sinners, and what we must do to be saved. After all, we all had to know these things in order to become Christians. Having this foundation we can then consider various ways to teach it to the lost.

Invite a friend or acquaintance: *“The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote -- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ And Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see’”* (John 1:43-46). In this passage Philip shows us just how easy it is for even the newest of Christians to take the gospel to the lost; or in this case, bring the lost to the gospel. Any person who truly believes that they have salvation in Jesus Christ will rejoice over their believing in the gospel (Acts 8:39; 16:34). When most people are excited they want to share their excitement with others, especially with those whom they love. In Philip’s case he and the rest of the Jews had been waiting centuries for the Christ to appear, and that time had finally come. Our obedience to the gospel ought to strike this kind of zeal and excitement within us. We should be eager to tell other people about the salvation that we can all have in Jesus. We should be willing to invite our friends and our family to hear the gospel. We do not need to be a Bible scholar or skilled debater to do this. We simply need to have a love for Christ and a love for the souls of our fellow man. Even the softest spoken or the most shy Christians can invite people to the services of the church or into their homes. The least that the other person can say is “no.”

Host a small group study in our home: Despite our most earnest efforts, some unbelievers simply are not comfortable with the “church building setting.” That is alright. Most Christians have friends that are in the world. Some of those friends have even been over to the Christian’s home. This can be a great tool for teaching the lost. Home Bible studies have been very effective in such cases. New Christians (or even older ones) can start a Bible study in their own home to which they can invite their family and friends. Most people feel much less intimidated in a friend’s home than at the church building. If the Christian is not comfortable with teaching they do not necessarily have to be the teacher. A new convert or a person not comfortable with teaching can ask a preacher or one of the other members to teach. This way it becomes both a tool for evangelism as well as a good learning experience.

Offer to hold a community Bible study session: For members who are more confident in their ability to teach this can be a good tool to reach a large group of people. Many people are curious about the Bible and what it is all about. The idea of a study held at neutral location such as a community center, library, or school might be enough to spark an interest. Usually their curiosity will drive them to at least one study, just to “check it out.” From there we can let the word of God do what it does best – *“converting the soul”* (Ps. 19:7).

Strike up a conversation at random: Even when unbelievers do not have time in their schedule to spend an evening in study, simply taking a few minutes when an opportunity arises can be just

as effective. Asking for a phone number or email address during a discussion has often provided opportunities for correspondence which, in some cases, has resulted in a conversion. This is where knowing the gospel becomes very helpful. It only takes a few minutes to explain to someone that all men need salvation, that Jesus died so that we can have that salvation, and that all men can be forgiven when they are willing to obey the gospel. In such cases there is no need to get into a debate about instrumental music, or keeping the Sabbath. One simply needs to concentrate on expressing man's need to be saved in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31). Then, if the unbeliever has an interest, the Christian can either tell them what to do to be saved, or direct them to another Christian who better apt to teach (Acts 16:32-33). More opportunities show themselves at random like this than many people think. They will appear while sitting on an airplane, the bus, at lunch, or just visiting with a friend. For this reason we must always be watching and waiting to share the gospel.

Informational material: In our world today technology has become easily accessible to all. With the help of computers Christians can do a lot more to spread the gospel than was once possible. There have been members of churches who were not comfortable with teaching a formal Bible study, but could do wonders with a web page. If a member is talented with design, they can work with other members to put together leaflets, tracts, informational brochures and many other documents that can then be handed out by all the members. By this means people searching the internet for information on salvation have learned about the gospel, obeyed the gospel after contacting members from the congregation, and have actually become active members themselves. People walking down the street have seen flyers posted that showed them exactly what they have been looking for. With this method, however, also comes a danger that we must be aware of and learn to avoid. Take a moment to consider the observations made by Berry Kercheville in his book, "*Trained to Preach*."

"The goal of successful evangelism must be to teach unbelievers on a *personal* level. Only when we are actually discussing the scriptures with a person face to face can we answer their individual questions and address their needs. Many churches fail in their efforts because they never get to this level. They are content with the impersonal "broadcasting" of the word that is needed to make the initial contact, but do not know how to follow-up in order to get a personal Bible study. Therefore, we cannot be satisfied with: 1. *Sending out and grading Bible correspondence courses*. 2. *Holding gospel meetings*. 3. *Preaching on the radio or television* 4. *Mail-out invitations to the community*. 5. *Inviting friends, neighbors, and relatives to worship*. 6. *Handing out tracts*. 7. *Erecting church buildings*. 8. *Setting up neighborhood Bible studies*. Each of these can be used as tools to create opportunities, but none of these approaches are personal in the sense that teaching is being conducted on a one-to-one basis. We must be aware of the difference, and not allow ourselves or the church to think that we are accomplishing our goals with impersonal approaches" (pg. 60-61).

"Increase More and More"

What we have discussed thus far merely provides suggestions to get Christians started on finding ways to teach the gospel. A congregation, as well as individuals, should spend time considering what they can do that will be effective in their own area. There may only be few members in a single congregation able to teach. That is fine, as long as every other member is doing their part to look for opportunities. We should also remember that members not able to teach now should be learning how to teach (Hebrews 5:12-14). This is the natural progression of our Christian growth. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

Questions for Lesson Two

1. Can you give a good excuse that would be acceptable to God for a Christian who does not strive to be involved in taking the gospel to the lost? Explain.
2. Of the three servants in the parable of the talents, which one was excused from doing work for his master?
3. What if we have little ability, what does God expect us to do with it?
4. Think of a way that each of the people below can use the abilities and situations that God has given them to help teach the gospel:
 - a. A widow whose family takes care of her:
 - b. A middle aged man who has just been converted:
 - c. A man who has been a member of the church for a long time, but is not comfortable with teaching:
 - d. A young woman who has been a Christian for several years who is a homemaker:
 - e. A teenager who has just been converted:
 - f. A man in the congregation who has been trying to get more actively involved in the work of the church:
 - g. An older woman who is knowledgeable in the scriptures:
5. What foundational principle should every Christian know and be able to communicate, regardless of their ability to teach a formal Bible study?
6. Read the following passages and describe how they can help Christians to be more effective in kingdom of heaven:
 - a. 1 Peter 4:10-11:

 - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:1, 10:

Overcoming Obstacles

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 3

Our need to teach the gospel is clearly evident. That God gives all Christians the ability in some way or another to help take the gospel to the lost is also evident. In spite of this many Christians find themselves faced with obstacles that prevent them from fulfilling their responsibility. Such challenges are to be expected, for every command given by God to His people has its obstacles. Part of our duty as Christians, however, is learning to overcome them so that we may prove ourselves to be faithful servants. “*Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*” (James 1:3-4).

In this lesson we will look at a few obstacles that are common for Christians in our society. The reader is encouraged to glean from this lesson principles that will help them to overcome other obstacles throughout their life so that they may continue to grow in strength and ability.

The Problem of “Church Building Evangelism”

When many Christians are asked how active a congregation is they may think of how many Bible classes are being taught on Sunday or in mid-week services. They may think of how many of the total members attend all the services and how hard the members work to complete their lessons and learn the material. Concerning the type of lessons being taught they may think that if the sinner is condemned for his lack of repentance and if the denominations are being condemned for their error then sure, that congregation is an active congregation. As good and as necessary as all of these things are, members of a congregation must also keep their eyes open for what has been called “church building evangelism.” One preacher explained the problem as follows:

“We condemn the sinner for his lack of repentance and the denominations for their error, but the sinner and the denominational member are still not there. We tell the congregation how stubborn and rebellious unbelievers are, but such words only isolate us further from those who need the gospel. The problem is compounded when we convince ourselves that we must be doing the work of the Lord because we are busy. We are preparing sermons, planning classes, meeting with the elders, counseling the members, visiting the sick and the weak, spending time on the Internet, and solving urgent problems...but the lost are still lost. We have done nothing to *seek* them, much less save them. Instead of *leaving* the “99,” many are staying at home to pamper the flock while those who are astray are wandering on the mountains. Some churches go so far as planning ‘college-level’ Bible classes nearly every night of the week. Each quarter the members sign-up for a new slate of subjects and are among the most knowledgeable Christians anywhere. Everyone is busy with the constant homework, not to mention the preparation for ‘midterms’ and then ‘finals.’ The vigorous spiritual schedule convinces the members that they are a part of an active, vibrant church. But no one is teaching the lost because no one has time! The congregation is taking up all the time it has soaking up knowledge. **Few stop to ask why they are expending all this effort in the pursuit of knowledge** (emph. mine, DTP). The church building and all its members are being evangelized, but the lost are still lost” (Kercheville, *Trained to Preach*. Pg. 59-60).”

Let us understand the real problem here. It is not that Christians are working hard to learn more about the Bible. It is not that Christians are trying to learn about Bible doctrines, how to reason

the scripture, and how to refute error. The problem of *church building evangelism* is that many Christians are content to learn ONLY, but fail to use their knowledge to do the Lord's work. God has given us a treasure trove of knowledge. If we are going to please Him with that gift then we must go out into the world and use that knowledge to teach others. We must put it to use before it is taken away, for, "...from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29). Therefore we must understand that the teaching and preaching that goes on when Christians meet together is God's way of putting tools into our hands (Ephesians 4:12). But in order to be faithful we must put those tools to use.

"Isn't That What We're Paying The Preacher For?"

In our culture an attitude has become wide spread which prevents Christians from doing their part is what which says, "It is the preacher's job to teach the gospel," or, "If we are not growing it is because the preacher is not working." While it is true that God has given specific charges to the leaders and teachers in the church (Ephesians 4:11-12), it is also true that those leaders and teachers were given in order to teach the members how to do the work, not to do the work for them. "...according to the effective working by which *every part does its share*, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16). Therefore we must learn from the example of Nehemiah (see Lesson One, pg. 1) that it is the responsibility of the leaders of God's people to *instruct* and *motivate* the people to do the work, and then to *share* in that work.

Fear of Criticism and Rejection

One of the biggest obstacles Christians must overcome when teaching the gospel is the fear of rejection. Many have bravely proclaimed, "I don't care what other people think of me." But it still remains that no one enjoys being mocked, ridiculed, or persecuted for trying to save another person's soul. The fact is, however, the majority of our efforts to teach the lost will end up this way. But we cannot let that discourage us. As Christians we are striving to be like Christ. Just as Jesus sought to save that which was lost, so must we. But also, just as Jesus was ridiculed and persecuted for teaching the truth, so we will be. "*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*" (1 Peter 2:21). "*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known*" (Matthew 10:24-26). And, if we do suffer while teaching the lost we can actually take joy because of the fact that God sees it and will reward us for our faithfulness. "*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you*" (Matthew 5:11-12). "*So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name*" (Acts 5:41).

Hypocrisy In The Church

Sadly many Christians do not fully realize just how much of an affect their behavior can have on an unbeliever's willingness to obey the gospel. A great number of people who have left the church did so because of what they saw the other "faithful members" doing outside of the assembly. Many non-Christians who observe a member's actions in the community will, more often than not, base their opinion of the whole congregation (and even Christ) upon that one

person's example. God also acknowledges this fact in Hebrews 6:6: "...since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

That is why Jesus commanded us to live as lights in the world, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16). We should strive to be godly because of our love for God, also realizing that people in the world are watching. Therefore if a congregation is going to be effective in teaching the gospel all the members must take serious consideration of their actions. Let us all strive to be like Christ in speech and in character so that if men do refuse the gospel it will not be on account of our misconduct. "*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation*" (1 Peter 2:11-12).

Too Busy

When asked why they are not involved in the evangelistic efforts of the congregation many Christians have said, "I am too busy." In truth, this may be an accurate excuse. With our fast-paced-society most people are entirely too busy to do much of anything except work, eat, and sleep. But the fact that it is true does not make it right. Often, congregations of fifty or one hundred will have a small handful of members who are active and zealous in spiritual service while the rest are content to merely attend the worship services. It ought not to be so. If God can cause growth in a congregation by the efforts of a small handful of brethren, consider how much He can accomplish when all of the members are active and zealous. Therefore consider this point very seriously: Our being "too busy" is not a valid excuse, rather it is a sign of mixed up priorities in our lives! Therefore the student is exhorted to answer this question for themselves – What am I too busy doing, God's will or my own?

Conclusion

There are many obstacles that face all Christians. We would be foolish to deny that they exist and we would be cowards to flee when they come. If we want to please God and if we put any hope at all in His precious promises then we will do all that we can to overcome. For knowledge we can study (2 Peter 3:18). For Wisdom and strength we can pray (Philippians 4:6-7; James 1:5). God gives us all that we need; therefore to those who love the Lord, let us not be content with where we are. Rather, let us go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1), let us fight the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7), and let us serve our Master with our whole heart no matter what may come, in order that we may have our reward in heaven.

Questions for Lesson Three

1. Is the life of a Christian smooth sailing with ease and comfort? Explain your answer.

2. How does God expect Christians to deal with the challenges that they face in life?

3. List three obstacles not mentioned in this lesson that you believe may affect a Christian's efforts in teaching the lost: If there is time we may be able to discuss them in class.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

4. Is a Christian fulfilling his/her whole responsibility to teach the lost by just attending the services of the church? _____
 - a. Why is it important for us to attend church services? _____

 - b. What does God expect us to do with that? _____

5. In your own words describe the responsibility of a preacher in the work of teaching the gospel.

6. How can Christians learn to overcome their fear of rejection when teaching the gospel?

7. Will God excuse us if we are too busy to do His work? Explain your answer.

Creating Opportunities

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 4

One of the greatest challenges Christians face when striving to teach the gospel is finding opportunities to teach the lost. We may be eager and we may be ready, but at times it just seems that the well is dry. It is in times such as these that we must not grow discouraged. We must put our faith in God to provide opportunities. We must trust that He knows the hearts of men and, like Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, will present us with the opportunities we need.

On the other hand we must also understand our responsibility to look for these opportunities. God may provide them, but we must have the motivation to reach out and take them. We must learn to be like the prophet Isaiah who, when the Lord asked “*Who shall I send, and who will go for Us?*” answered, “*Here am I! Send me*” (Isaiah 6:8). Therefore in this lesson we are going to consider some of the options available for Christians today that, when utilized, will help create more opportunities to teach the lost. The student is reminded that these are merely suggestions based on scriptural examples and methods that have worked in the past. Each Christian, however, is encouraged to look for ways that they can most effectively find opportunities to teach, provided that they remain in parameters of the authority of God’s word.

Get Involved In The Community

It has been the practice of some religious bodies to isolate themselves from the world and from the society around them. Believing that it helps them to be more holy they strive to remove from themselves any connection with the outside world. Even some members of the Lord’s church become so consumed with avoiding the world that they cut off almost all contact with those whom they should be striving to save. This was not God’s plan for His church. According to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians some of the Corinthian brethren had withdrawn from people in the world after receiving a command from Paul, “*not to keep company with sexually immoral people.*” They assumed he meant not to keep company with all unbelievers; therefore they were staying away from people in the world. But Paul corrected them in this by saying, “*Yet I certainly did not mean the sexually immoral of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world*” (1 Corinthians 5:9-11). What was his point? That we should withdraw from “brethren” who continue in immorality, but that we should NOT sever our influence with people in the world. Paul knew that the only way they were going to teach the lost and be as lights in the world was by interacting with lost. For this reason if we are going to find opportunities to teach the lost we must be willing to go where those opportunities can be found – into our communities.

Jesus provides the perfect example for us in Matthew 9:9-11. In this passage Jesus was interacting with the people, associating with those whom the “upper class” deemed to be heathen, teaching them and eating with them. When the Pharisees saw this they said to the disciples, “*Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?*” Where was Jesus? With the “sinners.” Why was He spending time with them? Because, as He said, “*Those who are well has no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*” (Mark 2:17). Are we supposed to be like the scribes and Pharisees, or

like Jesus? If like Jesus then let us also strive to go to the lost so that we can give them the medicine that can make them well – the gospel.

For this reason Christians ought to look in their communities to see how they can be involved. Parents may consider getting involved in school committees where their Children attend school. Young people (high school, college, twenties) can get involved in activities that are appropriate for their age groups. Those whose children have moved out of the house can do the same. It is up to the Christian to figure out what is available in their communities and take the initiative to get involved. Remember, the only way to take the gospel to the lost is by interacting with the lost.

Develop relationships With Friends Or Relatives Of The Members

Many Christians have family members (immediate or distant) who are not Christians. These can be great opportunities for all the members of the church. In many areas non-members have been impressed with the close-knit family environment of the Lord's church (see Ephesians 3:15). The members of a congregation can show this same love for each other's family members by striving to include them in some of their activities. There have been times when an unbeliever has heard the gospel from their relatives, but all they needed was someone with whom they were not as comfortable with to get their attention. Therefore it is good for church members to be involved with one another and strive to get to know the families of other Christians.

Follow Up On Those Who Visit The Worship Services

Sometimes opportunities can present themselves without our ever looking, such as when an unbeliever attends the worship services. They may be curious as to what the church is all about, they may be visiting with family, or wanting to turn their life around. Either way they need to hear the gospel. We cannot assume that because they attend services and hear sermons, they know what to do to be saved. Much of the time unless the need to repent is impressed upon them personally it will not occur to them that they need to do so. That is why it is so important that the members of a congregation strive to contact those who visit. Get their phone number or other information. It is usually best to follow up within the first week of their visit. To wait any longer than that has made visitors feel as if no one was interested, or they may have "moved on to the next church" to see what they were all about. We cannot be shy. It is usually best to ask them for a Bible study on their first visit.

Set Up a Neighborhood Bible Study

We discussed this in our last lesson as a means of teaching the gospel. It is also profitable for creating more opportunities. We may start up a Bible study to reach one family member or friend and encourage them to invite their other friends. There have been many instances where this has resulted in more opportunities than the members could have found alone. There have been times where such an offer has resulted in a class with half-a-dozen unbelievers or more. Consider, for example, Paul and Barnabas' experience in Acts 13:42-44, *"So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God."* Where did "the whole city" hear that Paul and Barnabas would be at the synagogue? The necessary conclusion is that the people they taught the first week invited other people to come the next week. This same outcome can occur in our Bible studies if Christians encourage the unbelievers to invite their

friends.

Making Visits

Visiting unbelievers and weak members is a vital part of the work of the Lord. It is a work many members *can* and *must* do. “But this can be a challenging and frightening task: What will I say? How will I keep the conversation going? Should I call first? What is the goal of the visit? The answers to these questions are fairly simple and with a little practice you will make visitation a profitable part of your job” (Kercheville, pg. 66).

Simply Ask!

Aside from the above options there are many somewhat *impersonal* ways to teach the lost that we can consider:

1. Sending out and grading personal correspondence courses.
2. Holding gospel meetings.
3. Preaching on the radio or television.
4. Mail-out invitations to the community.
5. Inviting friends, neighbors, relatives to the worship services.
6. Handing out tracts.
7. Erecting church buildings.
8. Setting up neighborhood Bible studies.

Each of these options has proven useful in creating opportunities. It would be good for members to coordinate and which options can be profitable in their communities. Above all, however, a tool that Christians must learn to use more than any other is that of simply asking if a person wants to study the Bible. We can study the Bible for ourselves and hand out flyers all we want, but these will never prove profitable until we ask. Though the material may help a person be well on their way, a person cannot be taught and saved without hearing the gospel person to person. “*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?*” (Romans 10:14)?

Questions for Lesson Four

1. What should be the Christian's attitude toward seeking opportunities to teach the lost.
2. What is what of the hardest parts of teaching the gospel.
3. Why is interacting with people in the world so important for teaching the gospel?
4. What is the benefit of getting to know the relatives and friends of other members.
5. Try to think of one to three ways you can create opportunities to teach the gospel.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
6. What is the most important and most effective way of creating opportunities to teach the gospel? Explain.

Starting With the Family

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 5

While seeking opportunities to teach the gospel Christians should be willing to look far and wide without leaving any stone unturned. In doing so, however, we must not forget about the source which is the most readily at hand – the home. Sadly, throughout our nation the home of is often the least considered and therefore the most neglected source when it comes to Christians teaching the gospel. This was not the plan Christ had for His church. All Christians, both old and young, need to learn from past generations that when it comes to teaching the gospel we must start with the people in our own families: sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers. After all, what parent who truly loves their children would deprive them of the greatest treasure known to man – eternal life?

For this reason we are going to consider some of the principles God establishes in the scriptures to help us learn how to teach those in our own families.

Establishing Familiarity

An observation in life is that whatever habits parents instill in their children while they are young will remain even when they are old. Therefore it is written, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). When parents establish a familiarity with godly things in their children they will most likely continue in them when they have grown. This was why God placed such great emphasis upon teaching the children in the Old Testament. Notice, *“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). How were parents to teach their children the way of the Lord? By establishing familiarity with the word of God. In the New Testament we see the result of this pattern being carried out where Paul writes of how Timothy was taught the scriptures by his grandmother and mother. *“When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also”* (2 Timothy 1:5). *“...and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Timothy 3:15). This should be the goal and focus of every parent. Many parents have said in their minds, “This is a lot harder than it sounds,” and for the most part, they are right. But let us notice a few things that will help in this endeavor.

Building Good Habits

Notice in Deuteronomy 6 the frequency with which parents are to speak of the scriptures with their children: *“...you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up...”* How often? ALL THE TIME! This is the only way to make the gospel a fixture in a child’s life. It is a wonderful thing that most congregations hold classes specifically for children. But parents should understand that it is not enough to let children learn when they assemble with the church. It is not enough to tell them to go read their Bibles or to make sure they do their homework. These things are good, but in order to impress

upon children the importance of what they are doing, more is required. Parents who want their children to be good readers read *with* them when they are very young. Parents who want their children to be good athletes start them training when they are very young and continue to work *with* them as they grow. Parents who want their children to love the Lord teach them of the Lord when they are very young and work *with* them throughout their entire childhood. This form of teaching must include more than learning facts and characters. It requires great involvement on the parent's part, helping children to know what the Bible says AND showing them by example how God wants His people to live. By being actively involved with their children parents will be able to teach them that reading the Bible is more than something that we must do; rather, it is something that we get to do and should want to do. They will be able to show their children that love, humility, reverence, respect, and service are things to be honored rather than avoided.

Providing a Pattern to Follow

For this reason all Christians must live according to the gospel. Notice how Paul words 2 Timothy 1:5, "...*the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice...*" Timothy's mother and grandmother shared their faith with him. They showed him what true faith will do and how it will live. They not only taught him what the scriptures say, but also how to live by them. They guided him so that he would make their faith his own. This is what all Christian parents should strive to do with their children. Parents must not only teach their children what the Bible says, but also show them how to do what it says. They must be living the godly life described in the scriptures. Again, this requires that parents be involved with their children. Even if a parent is a new Christian they can still teach their children the importance of knowing God by taking time out of every day to read stories like the creation, Noah and the flood, David and Goliath, and the story of Jesus. Then they can show their children how important the church is by including them in activities with the brethren. They can teach their children what a Christian really looks like by taking the children with them when they help other people.

Approach the Gospel with Love and Affection

Sometimes, without realizing it, parents can paint God, the church, and the gospel in a negative light. For example: when children need to do their chores parents will command them to get the chores done. So, children often hate doing their chores. When children need to do their homework parents command them get it done. Again, most children hate doing their homework. This is not the way we should approach the gospel. Let us not confuse the point however. As children grow older they will balk at the instruction of their parents; that is part of growing up. In such cases parents should hold a firm hand and stress upon their children how important God's word is – just like driving safely, not doing drugs, and not putting their hand in the fire. However, the rest of the time parents ought to show their children by example what it means to love the Lord and to love His word. It is not enough to tell children to get their studies done, but to show them how and show them the benefits. To accomplish this it is better for parents to study with their children rather than only putting homework in front of them. Parents should show children how to love their neighbors rather than just telling them. By this children will learn that our service to God is not a burden but a privilege. How the parents respond to serving others will often determine how the children respond. If parents want to teach their children to look for opportunities to serve, rather than cringing at the thought, then they must show the children by example. Only when children see our examples and are given opportunities to practice loving the Lord will that love be familiar to them when they have grown old. In this manner let us teach the

gospel to our families.

Keep Our Children Active in the Lord's Work

In previous lessons we have discussed the benefits of group Bible studies. A common practice among Christian parents is that when such studies take place they will go out of their way to make sure their children have something to keep them busy during the study. But if we are to instill familiarity with the gospel in young people, what can be better than to involve them in our efforts to teach the lost? When participating in group Bible studies arrange to have a study for the children at the same time. This not only establishes good habits in the minds of our children, but also encourages visitors as well. One preacher noted, "Visitors are often excited to know that their children can learn the Bible at the same time" (Kercheville, pg. 62). Children who are old enough can sit in the study with everyone else. Even if they do not understand the whole discussion it will provide a good opportunity for parents to explain it to them later. If the children are too young for this, parents can take turns teaching them in a separate room and focus on material more appropriate for their age. Either way children are learning how to be involved in the Lord's work.

At times there may be several young people between the ages of ten and eighteen who become interested in studying the Bible. When this is the case parents can work with their children to organize a Bible study specific for that age group. This not only teaches children how to be a good example, but also helps them learn how to invite other people to hear the gospel, it helps parents keep a working productive relationship with their children, and provides an opportunity for the young people to see how to conduct a study, which will be useful for when they have moved out of the home.

The Rest of the Family

In many cases there are unbelieving family members in the home who are not children, but parents, siblings or others. Though we have spent much of our time in this lesson discussing children, many of these principles can be applied to other family members as well. In such cases the principle of letting our lights shine is very appropriate (read Matthew 5:14-16). Christians can spark the interests of family members by talking to them about the gospel. They can provide a pattern to follow by attending all the services, being active in Bible study and visiting the other members. They can approach the gospel with love and affection by reading their Bible's every day and treating their family members the way God says we should treat all men – with love. They can invite other church members into their homes so that the family can see the love God's people have for one another. Holding Bible studies in the home will allow the family members to hear the gospel. Even if they seem disinterested or disgruntled at times, at the very least they will be able to see our zeal and love for the Lord. With time this alone may plant a seed in their heart.

The home is a rich source of opportunities. Let us remember to consider this. Let us strive to help one another to teach our families.

Questions for Lesson Five

1. What is one of the most readily available sources for Christians to teach the gospel?

2. In your own words explain how involved Christian parents ought to be in teaching their children the ways of the Lord. Give a scripture to support your answer.

3. List five things parents can do to instill spiritual values in the minds of their children:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

4. Along with teaching what the Bible says, what attitudes should parents strive to teach their children?

What can parents to do accomplish this?

5. List several ways parents can teach their children to be involved in serving the Lord.

6. List five ways Christians can teach family members who are not their children:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

Knowing What to Teach

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 6

A Christian's work in teaching the gospel requires much more than simply looking for opportunities. Once an opportunity presents itself the Christian must have prepared themselves through study, prayer and contemplation in order to know what to say. This is often one of the greatest challenges for individuals to face. How can we know what to say to people when talking to them about the gospel?

In Luke 12:11-12 Jesus reassured His apostles saying, *"Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."* We know from other scriptures that the apostles were given the Holy Spirit in order to speak the will of God and were, therefore, inspired of God (John 16:12-15). In this way Jesus' promise was fulfilled, for the Holy Spirit literally taught them *"in that very hour"* what to say. However, the process of knowing what to say is different for us today. The revelation of scripture having been completed in the first century (Jude 3) removes the need for the Holy Spirit to inspire men directly. It is still true that we are taught by the Holy Spirit what we ought to say, but we learn what to say by studying the scriptures which were written by the apostles and prophets (2 Timothy 3:16-17). For this reason, in order to know what to say to unbelievers we must strive to fulfill the command given to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (KJV). By studying the scriptures and learning the things spoken by the apostles we can gain an understanding of what we must say as well. We will be able to fulfill the command, *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."* Therefore in this lesson we are going to lay out the foundational principles of the gospel which all men must know and believe in order to be saved.

The Authority of God

No matter who we are talking to, the only way that person is going to respect the commands given within the gospel is if they first understand the authority of God and man's responsibility to submit to that authority. As long as a person believes that God allows us to do whatever we want (and many do believe this) they will never submit to Jesus as Lord and King. In the book of Acts we find examples in the book of Acts where preachers established this authority in their gospel sermons using several different approaches.

1. By clearly stating the Lordship of Christ (Acts 2:32-36). In Peter's sermon in Acts two he clearly proved to the Jews that Jesus had been exalted to the right hand of God and had become Lord and Christ. What is the significance of this? Simply, if Jesus is our Lord then we must submit to Him. He has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18). He is King! We can point out to the unbeliever that if Jesus truly is King then we owe Him our complete allegiance and obedience. Read Hebrews 5:8-9.
2. By declaring the coming judgment (Acts 17:30-31). Many people do not believe in the judgment to come. But we can point out to them that this is one of the most foundational

principles of gospel preaching (Hebrews 6:2b; Acts 24:25). The Judgment was a major part of Jesus' initial message to the Jews. "...but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). It was included in the gospel message preached by the apostles in the beginning. Peter – "be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40), "And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23). Paul – "Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25), "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained" (Acts 17:30-31). How should this affect our respect for the authority of God's word? Jesus is the one who will judge the earth. Because of this all must understand that the only way we are going to avoid condemnation is by obeying His word. Only when we believe and obey Him can we be saved, for He has said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him -- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). If we want to have eternal life we must obey His words. He is Lord! He is worthy!

3. By showing the fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 13:33-41). The prophecies of king David point to the Christ as the Holy One whose body would not see corruption. Showing that Jesus was this Holy One, Paul told the people to beware lest they perish. The application is that since Jesus has been approved of God and glorified in His resurrection from the dead, He is the one to whom we must listen. According to David's prophecy, Jesus is King. For this reason any person who does not listen to Him or obey His commandments will perish. If we want eternal life we must turn and obey.

Having spent a few moments to show the necessity of submitting to Christ's authority we can then point out that the commandments which we must obey are found only in the scriptures. "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). In other words, if any person claims to be spiritual, a prophet, a man of God, a "Bible scholar," or in any other way a religious leader then they will submit to the scriptures in all things, for in them are the commands of the Lord. If anyone speaks anything different by adding to or taking away from what the scriptures say we are assured that they are not from God. "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

The Life of Christ

When discussing the life of Christ it is important that we show people that Jesus' life did not begin at His physical birth. Rather, He was in the beginning with God; He was and is God (John 1:1-3). When they understand this then the physical life of Jesus will make much more sense. He was not just a good man, prophet, or teacher. Rather, He was God in the flesh (John 1:14); "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). He became a man so that He could live among us and die for us. He was tested in the flesh just as we are and suffered just as we do, yet He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). Having lived a perfect life Jesus was then willing to die for all of us so that we can be saved from the judgment to come and have eternal life.

The Death and Burial of Christ

In this part of the discussion we can also read Isaiah 53 where Isaiah prophesied of the suffering that Jesus would go through just before His death. We can point out to people that Jesus' death proves that He is the Christ because everything that was prophesied concerning the Christ was fulfilled in Jesus. Therefore Paul said in Acts 13:28-29, "... *Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree...*"

We can point out to people that Jesus was obedient to the Father in everything. He was even willing to die in order to obey the Father (Philippians 2:5-8). We can also point out to them that Jesus offers salvation to all men, but in order to receive it He says that we must follow in His example of obedience. "*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*" (Hebrews 5:8-9). If we truly love Jesus then we will obey Him. "*If you love Me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15, 21). After reading or quoting this passage we can then ask people, "Do you love Jesus?"

The Resurrection and Glorification of Christ

Most people are buried when they die, but the salvation which comes through the death of Jesus is established by the fact that He did not remain buried. Jesus in fact rose from the dead. Therefore Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:17, "*And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*" We must believe in the resurrection of Christ if we are going to be saved. Having been raised from the dead Jesus was seated at the right hand of God where He remains today and is able to forgive our sins if we turn to Him. In that exalted state Jesus acts as the mediator between man and God (Hebrews 8:6). He became our high priest and goes into the presence of God for us in order to plead our case (Hebrews 6:19-20). Therefore He is our Advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1).

We may reiterate that when Jesus was resurrected from the dead He was given all authority according to Matthew 28:18. With that authority Jesus has stated that though salvation is available for all men, it will only be given to those who believe in Him and obey His gospel. It is for this reason that Jesus sent His disciples into all the world saying, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:15-16). If a person does not hear the gospel and obey it, they cannot be saved. Also, if a person hears the gospel and does not believe it, they cannot be saved either.

What We Must Do To Be Saved

Finally, we can tell people that this is the gospel and ask them if they believe what it says. If they say yes, then we can ask them if they are willing to do what is necessary for salvation. If they have an honest heart they may ask something along the lines of, "What must I do to be saved?" Then, we can tell them that Jesus, with all authority, commands all men to repent of their sins, confess Him as Lord, and be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). We must also remind them that when they obey the gospel that is not the end of their responsibility to Christ. Rather, when they are saved they are added to the church (Acts 2:47). If they truly believe Jesus is Lord then they will devote the rest of their lives to obeying Him and being an active and faithful member in the Lord's body, which is the church. This is what we must do to be saved.

Questions for Lesson 6

1. Once an opportunity to teach the gospel presents itself, what must we be ready to do?

2. Does the Holy Spirit teach us what to say in the same manner that He taught the apostles in the New Testament (i.e. through direct inspiration)? Explain and provide scriptures to support your answer.

3. How do we go about learning what do say when teaching the gospel?

4. What must a person understand and respect before they will be willing to obey the gospel?

5. List three ways that we can go about teaching people the need to obey Jesus as our Lord and list passages where we see these methods being used in the scriptures.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

6. List five things that a person must do after hearing the gospel in order to be saved.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

Conducting Home Bible Studies

Teaching The Gospel¹: Lesson 7

In our last lesson we learned what to say about the gospel when discussing it with other people. It may be the case that after our initial discussion the person will have many questions about what was said. He or she may be a member of a denomination with conflicting beliefs and with an interest in learning what the Bible really says. In such situations, a regularly-scheduled series of Bible studies is necessary. These studies require great consideration and thought on the part of the Christians conducting them. Many times an unbeliever has agreed to a study only to be disappointed by a fruitless discussion on random religious issues, a Christian who has not prepared for the study very well, or a teacher more interested in arguing against what he thinks a person believes rather than actually instructing the person according to their needs. In order to help avoid such an outcome, we will consider in this lesson some principles necessary for conducting effective home Bible studies.

Where To Begin

Studies with No Foundation: In the examples Jesus left to us, we learn that effective teaching must have a foundation. It is sad, however, that today many sermons and Bible classes fall prey to the “shotgun approach.” In such cases, lessons are not geared toward one specific goal; there is no direction. As a result, the audience often experiences a sense of frustration and confusion, for where there is no foundation there is no clear purpose. Our Bible studies with unbelievers can have this same effect if we are not careful. If we do not establish a foundation in our studies, they will become bogged down and move too slowly. Therefore, we must learn from the example left by Jesus.

Setting the foundation of a study is much like an archer taking aim at a target; it provides focal point and establishes the goal that we will accomplish in our studies. To help us learn how to establish a foundation, we will consider the main points from the previous lesson. In our initial studies, we must set our focus on the authority of Christ, what He did for our salvation, and our need to obey Him. Our target or goal is to guide the student toward conviction of these three things. Like an archer we must take aim by preparing our lessons so as to direct the minds of the student in the direction of the target. We must release smoothly so as not to allow our arrow to veer to the right or to the left. Each lesson must move in a straight line toward the goal, and then hit the bull’s-eye. Without a foundation, the arrow may go in any direction and hit any target, except the one we want. Therefore when preparing for home Bible studies we must make sure that we have our minds and our lessons firmly fixed on the target.

Beginning at the Right Place: Beginning at the right place is also a critical part of teaching. Many studies have begun with miscellaneous issues such as instrumental music, denominationalism, Calvinism, etc. Though each of these issues is important, it would not be very profitable to discuss them until a solid foundation has been laid. Kercheville has proposed a

¹ Note: Most of the material in this lesson was gleaned from chapter nine of Berry Kercheville’s, *“Trained to Preach.”* Exact quotes are cited.

beginning point that has proven effective in many studies. It is given here as a suggestion to consider.

“Other than teaching an atheist, there is a natural progression that should be followed with everyone you teach. I include the following four things in the first lesson: (1) A *brief* historical survey from Adam to Christ (which includes teaching concerning the abolition of the Law of Moses. (2) The importance of strictly keeping the commandments of God (using an example like Nadab and Abihu). (3) An outline of the plan of salvation, and (4) an overview of the practices of the New Testament church. This lesson not only lays a proper foundation but instills within them a desire to study further. In just one lesson, you have demonstrated their need for salvation, and pointed to Jesus as the only One who can fulfill that need” (Kercheville, pg. 68).

Remember, until the student has developed a respect for the Bible and a recognition of their need for salvation, they will see no need to obey the gospel or to change their way of life in accordance with the commands of God.

Do not Jump Ahead: Referring back to our bow and arrow analogy, when we have let the arrow loose (established a beginning point) it is important that we not jump ahead. A certain progression must be followed to lay a proper foundation. If we jump ahead of that progression, it may cause problems in subsequent studies. Within the first one or two studies we must establish the authority of the New Testament and the abolition of the Old law in order to draw the minds of the student to the New Testament for their guide. For example, let us say that several lessons into the study we plan to have a discussion on instrumental music. If we jump ahead of ourselves and discuss instrumental music before we discuss the abolition of the Law of Moses, the person may refer to the law in order to justify their use of instruments in worship. Then we will have to struggle to set forth the principles of authority that should have been established in the very beginning. “This failure will put you on the defensive and make it more difficult for the one you are teaching to see the truth” (Kercheville, pg. 69). It makes sense, then, to stick with a good plan and not jump ahead.

Teaching Subsequent Lessons

Plotting a Course: Once the essential principles have been taught in the first one or two lessons, we can then take the class in the direction that suits the needs of the student. For this reason, it is important to get an idea of an individual’s background: which religious group they are affiliated with, how they approach the Bible, their understanding of salvation, etc. With such information in hand, it will make it easier to decide how to direct the class.

“If you are teaching a Pentecostal, the next lesson would be on the Holy Spirit and the ending of miraculous gifts. Again, until you know they are convinced on salvation, do not move on to other subjects. If you are talking to a person who is from a typical Protestant denomination, you might do a second lesson on the examples of conversions in the book of Acts so that the process of salvation is reinforced. If you are teaching a person who has questions about inspiration, then your second lesson would be to confirm the scriptures as the inspired word of God. For some people there may not be a pressing need to cover special lessons on the Holy Spirit or Premillennialism. In such cases these points can be taught as you teach the book of Acts later” (Kercheville, pg. 69).

Use The Books of the Bible: After specific foundational topics have been covered, it is important to study the books of the Bible which are centered on Christ, His teachings, and the church. The four gospels and the book of Acts usually work best for this. After studying these

books, the student can read the Bible for themselves, allowing the Holy Spirit do what He does best, “*converting the soul*” (Psalm 19:7). When studying these books there are several approaches that one can take.

1. One may conduct a topical study of these books. There are a great number of topics discussed in the gospels and in Acts which are necessary to a person’s understanding of the church, Christian life, and our commitment to God. By discussing the essential topics developed in these books, the student can better understand what God’s word says and make the decision as to whether they will believe it or not.
2. Many people have had great success simply reading through one of the gospels. The gospel of Mark is great for this approach because of its brevity and fast pace. “In addition, Mark’s account focuses more on the works and miracles of Jesus which help create faith in a new Bible student. Read through the book at a rapid pace, a paragraph at a time, limiting your comments to an explanation of the main points. I usually cover four chapters in the first class and then two or three chapters in subsequent lessons...Whenever a question arises, always take the time to give as thorough an answer as needed for the person’s level of understanding. Concise clarifications are best. It is like explaining where babies come from to a five year old: too much information is confusing. Do not overwhelm a person with details. Above all, do not sound like a critical commentary” (Kercheville, pg. 69-70).

Things to Avoid in Home Bible Studies

Christians must not become disappointed in themselves if people reject their teaching. If people rejected Jesus’ teaching, they will surely reject our teaching. On the other hand, we do not want a person to turn away because we did a poor job of presenting God’s word. The following considerations will help our studies go more smoothly.

1. *Do not begin in the middle.* We would not teach a child algebra before the child learned addition and subtraction. For this same reason, we must not teach on various doctrinal issues until we are sure the person understands the foundational points listed earlier. We will save ourselves many arguments by establishing an understanding of Bible authority before proceeding to other more difficult issues. Besides, if we cannot convince a person that baptism is for the remission of sins, then there is little chance we will have success convincing them of the truths on more difficult subjects.
2. *Do not make it your goal to correct every misunderstanding a person has.* Obviously, we want a person to eventually accept the whole truth and reject every error. But if our intent is to correct every misstatement, we will come across as having a condemning attitude. “For example, I knew a first-time visitor who never returned because the local preacher gave him a speech on why the Baptist preacher in town was a false teacher and not a true pastor. All the visitor had done was ask the preacher if he knew Pastor “Smith”. What was the benefit of instruction on the meaning of “pastor” when the visitor had not yet learned of the abolition of the Law, authority, or salvation?” (Kercheville, pg. 71) If we *first* show people what is right and authorized by the scripture, we can be more effective showing them what is unauthorized by the scripture.
3. *Do not act superior.* It is a general rule that knowledge puffs up a person who is not controlled by a humble heart. For this reason, there is a tendency for a teacher to show a haughty attitude during discussions on the scriptures. A sure way to test whether we are

acting superior is to examine our behavior. Are we always interrupting the person talking? If so, then we are likely coming across with a superior attitude. This behavior causes dissensions and harsh arguments. It does not foster an atmosphere of learning.

4. *Do not use too many scriptures when proving a point.* When we overwhelm a person with too many verses of scripture, he will not remember any of them. It is better to choose a few, very clear texts and then stick with them. Patiently listen to any objection our friend has, and then go back and emphasize the plain words of the text. Do not keep referring to new passages with every dissent.
5. *Do not be afraid to admit you do not know the answer.* Sometimes in a discussion we may be tempted to “fly by the seat of our pants.” There will be times when we *think* we know the answer, but we have no idea what passage might back up our assertion. At that point, just admit that we will have to do more study before giving an answer. Besides, why should anyone believe us when we have no Biblical proof? Further, we risk teaching error when we are not completely sure. People we teach will respect us more if we are cautious with our words and with our use of the text.
6. *Do not manipulate those you teach.* It is not uncommon for zealous Christians to manipulate a person into being baptized. This is done by applying the same kind of pressure used by many salesmen. Typical of this approach is when one overemphasizes baptism and understates the cost of discipleship. Little is said about what it means to be a member of the local church and the importance of regular attendance. They are concerned only about baptism. One can easily baptize more people using manipulation rather than by teaching the whole counsel of God and warning about the costs of discipleship. But those who are taught by manipulation soon fall away. Again, it should be our aim to “*make disciples*,” not simply baptize people.
7. *Do not have more than one teacher.* It is always good to see members of a congregation cooperating in their efforts to teach the lost. There is a danger, however, in not distinguishing which one will take the lead in a study. If a “teacher” is not designated ahead of time it will create a situation much like that described in 1 Corinthians 14:26, “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation...” The apostle’s point was that each person’s desire to say something created confusion in the service. Thus, when there is more than one person trying to teach a single study it can cause confusion and frustration in the mind of the student. Rather than discussing one focused lesson at an appropriate pace, the student may feel bombarded or attacked from all sides by an aggressive Bible football team. Of course such an approach is not helpful. There is nothing wrong with other Christians giving some input, as long as it is orderly and respects the authority of the designated teacher. In fact, constructive input from other participants can help to “fill the gaps,” as well as allow the teacher to compile his thoughts. But we must learn to follow the instruction of Paul in the above passage which he concluded saying, “*Let all things be done for edification.*”

Questions for Lesson 7

1. Before one begins a study with an unbeliever what must he/she establish for the study? Explain.

2. Should we begin a Bible study with whatever the unbeliever wants to study? Explain.

3. Why is it important that the Bible class teacher stick to a class schedule and lay out a foundation before moving on to other subjects?

4. After specific topical studies have been covered, which books of the Bible are helpful for establishing faith in Christ and an understanding of Christian life?

5. Briefly described six things that one should avoid when conducting a home Bible study.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.

When We Don't Know

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 8

When teaching other people it is inevitable that the Christian will be faced with questions that they simply do not have answers for. There is nothing wrong with that. Even the most seasoned teachers run into subjects or questions that they have not considered or have not thought about very much. Knowledge is necessary for every person who seeks to instruct another. But it is only one factor in our effectiveness as teachers, for a good teacher not only knows the subject being taught, he also knows how to find answers to questions not yet studied. Because the level of knowledge and understanding varies from Christian to Christian this is an essential tool in our ability to teach the gospel.

Overcoming Pride

It is always a difficult situation for a teacher when they do not know the answer to a student's question. It is the same for a person trying to teach the gospel. Many teachers have been pressured to do and say things that they normally would not, simply because they do not want the student to think that they do not know. This is a common problem that occurs when we let pride get in the way. This is a mistake that we cannot afford to make when teaching the gospel. Paul warned Timothy of those who, "*desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm*" (1 Timothy 1:7). We must avoid giving answers to things that we do not understand.

When the person we are teaching asks a question to which we do not know the answer, often times the best thing to say is, "I have not considered that. Would you mind if I study it and give you an answer the next time we get together." There may be situations where a more immediate response is required. In such cases we should not be afraid to ask someone else. Remember, the church is a body in which all the members should be working together. When we are stumped it is always helpful to ask one of our brethren if they have considered that question, or if they know of any passages that will provide the answer.

Sometimes, our willingness to tell the unbeliever that we do not know can do more to impress them than making up our own answer. Many people in the world are tired of men who make things up and say things just to look good. When they finally meet a person who is honest and seeks only the truth it can be a breath of fresh air.

Learning to Find the Answer

When we do come across questions to which we do not know the answers, we should strive to find the answers for the person, but we should also strive to learn how to find the answers for ourselves. Know how to answer questions from the Bible is one of the most essential tools for Christian growth. It is how we "*test all things*" (1 Thessalonians 5:21), "*Grow in the grace and knowledge for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18), and come to "*know what the will of the Lord is*" (Ephesians 5:17). The greatest growth we can undergo as Christians is when we are searching the scriptures for our answer. But it takes time, patience, and much practice. After a while, we may also be able to put that practice to use during our studies. Paul exhorted

Timothy, “*be an example to the believers*” (1 Timothy 4:12). We can be an example to those who we are teaching by searching for their answers with them. After we have learned to search the scriptures, we can then help them to do the same. But where do we begin.

Constant Bible Reading: In order to now how to find the answers we must be familiar with the source for those answers – the bible. The best way to make ourselves familiar with the Bible is to be reading it every day (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). The more we read the more material we will have in our minds to use in our teaching and answering questions.

Using a Concordance: A concordance is a book that lists every word used in the Bible and the passages in which those words are used. It is a wonderful tool for learning what the Bible says on different subjects. If a person has a question on baptism we can look up “baptize,” “baptized,” “baptism,” etc., choose which of the passages will be most helpful and begin studying those passage. The concordance is a great way to find scriptures that we may have forgotten about in our daily Bible study, or have not read yet.

Determine the Context: Once we find the passages that discuss the question we have, we must then make sure we understand that passage. The best way to do that is to establish the “context” of the passage. The context is the background, the information that gives a statement or passage its meaning. In order to determine the context the following steps should be taken.

1. Note the speaker – whether God, the devil, etc. Some of the greatest errors are made when scriptures are taken out of context. When reading the dialogue that takes place between Jesus and the Devil in Matthew 4:1-11 the new Bible student may get confused as to what is going on if they do not know that both Jesus and the Devil are speaking in that context. The same is true for the account in which Satan tempts Eve in the garden
2. To whom is the text addressed? Many Bible questions can be answered by simply understand who a passage is addressed to. Many have asked, “Why do not we keep the Sabbath today?” This question is easily answered when we know that the Ten Commandments were given to Israel as a covenant (Ex. 4:13; 5:2), but that they no longer stand as the law for God’s people today. Instead Christ gives us our law (See Hebrews 7:12; 8:13).
3. What is the background behind the passage? What was going on when the statement was made? Read a few verses before and after the text. Is it a passage stating history or doctrine? For example, in Jeremiah 44:15-16 Israel offered sacrifices to false gods and refused to hear the word of the Lord. We must understand that this passage is a statement of history, not an example of the doctrine we are to follow today! We should also consider if it is a command or example for those under the Law of Moses or the Law of Christ (Sabbath, festivals, etc.)?
4. Seek to find the author’s application, and not our own. Many false doctrines exist today because men twist the scriptures to say what they want them to say, rather than determine what God mean in the passage. For example, Satan applied Psalm 91:11-12 in such a way that made it acceptable for the Jesus to purposefully jump off a high place. But Jesus corrected Satan by showing that the proper application of the statement in Psalm 91:11-12 was that “*There shall no evil befall thee.*” It was not giving Him permission to tempt God.
5. How does the passage harmonize with the rest of the scriptures? Is there another scripture that specifies whether what is written as a good or bad example? (See 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21). Jesus used another scripture to put Satan’s misapplication back into its context. “*The scripture cannot be broken*” (they cannot contradict one another, John 10:35).

Therefore if we find a passage that *seems* to contradict another, our understanding may be wrong, but the scripture is not wrong. In Ezekiel 18:2 the People of Israel had misapplied a proverb that Jeremiah gave and used it to say they were suffering for their fathers' sins. Since this doctrine contradicted other scriptures Ezekiel put the passage back into the context in which Jeremiah gave it (see. Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:3-20).

6. Do not go beyond what is written: Paul commanded the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4:6 to "*not think beyond what is written*". Speculation is one of the biggest causes of error. In the Old Testament God made it clear that the things kept secret belong to God and not men (Deuteronomy 29:29). Therefore He also commanded Israel that they should not add to or take away from His word (Deuteronomy 4:2). We are told in the New Testament that this same principal applies to us today (Revelation 22:18, 19; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9). Many people also tend to rely on commentaries for their understanding of the scriptures. It is true that commentaries are useful tools for giving us other points to consider when studying the Bible, but we must remember that they are the works of men, and must be treated as such. When we answer people's questions our answers must only and always come from the Bible.

Conclusion

Knowing how to find answers to the unknown is also helpful for convincing the student of the truth by showing them HOW to find answers to their questions. The guidelines set forth in this lesson are very basic and are helpful for those new to the Bible. As we study further, gain practice and understanding we may expand on these principles. With time we can begin to help others learn to search the scriptures as well. Let us not be afraid to say, "I don't know," and let us always rely on God and His wisdom for our answers.

Questions for Lesson Eight

1. We most of us be able to answer every question off the top of our heart that people ask?
2. When we do not know the answers to questions, what evil attitude must we avoid? Explain.

3. What are several things can do find an answer for questions to which we do not know the answer?

4. How can knowing how to answer questions using the Bible help us in our spiritual growth?

5. List three steps we can take in order to find a Bible answer:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

6. What is “the context?”

7. Describe six things that we must consider in order to understand the context of a passage:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.

Jesus The Master Teacher

Teaching the Gospel²: Lesson 9

There is much confusion in the world around us. In Christ, however, there is simplicity (2 Corinthians 1:12; 11:3). Through Jesus we can know the truth and the truth can make us free (John 8:32). When we learn from His example, we can walk through the darkness of this world as though on a path of light (John 8:12). Similarly, the life and teachings of Jesus must also be our guide for teaching the gospel. A person can search through any Christian bookstore and find a vast variety of training manuals on how to teach or how to talk to other people. These may be helpful to some extent, but if we want to learn how to teach the gospel in a manner that pleases God, we must look to Jesus as our pattern and guide. From the scriptures we learn what to teach (1 Peter 4:11) and in Jesus we learn how to teach, for He is the Master teacher. In this lesson we will consider some of the principles that Jesus exemplified as a teacher. Through His example we will be able to see the character, attitude, and focus a teacher of God must have. Let us ponder His example and consider how to follow it.

A Teacher Sent From God (pg. 85)

In John 3:2, Nicodemus, a member of the esteemed Jewish ruling council, visited Jesus by night. During their discussion he made the comment, *“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. No one could possess the ability to perform the signs that you do, unless God were with him.”* In John 7:45-46, when soldiers were sent by the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus, they returned to them empty handed and reported, *“No man ever spoke like this Man!”*

Even while Jesus was still alive, men recognized Him as the greatest teacher ever—as a teacher sent from God. His character, His message, and His words were so powerful that even His enemies recognized His greatness. Through His example we are able to see the true power of God’s word. This is because Jesus only spoke as the Father directed Him (John 8:28-29). When we abide in the words of the Father as Jesus did, then our teaching can have a similar effect. In order to do this, we must speak only that which is from God (1 Pet. 4:11). All of God’s revealed word provides wisdom and instruction so that we may know how to be obedient to Him. But as we strive to imitate the life and teaching of Jesus, we will be able to harness that wisdom in such a way that will allow it to change the way we live and the way we think forever (2 Cor. 3:16-18). It will also affect the way we teach the gospel.

Every person who has attempted to imitate Jesus in their teaching will know that failure is certain. We should not allow this to deter us however. Just as faithful Christians strive to imitate Christ in their Christian walk, so we must strive to imitate the character of Jesus’ teachings. *“...there are elements of the Lord’s teaching which, even in an inexact or imperfect combination (as they will always be), have inestimable power to draw men to Christ and instruct them in his wisdom and the salvation which he came to provide”* (King, pg. 84). The following are a few aspects of Jesus’ teaching which are essential to our success.

Skillful

Jesus was skillful. He understood people and used that in His teachings with great effectiveness. “Jesus possessed a sympathetic insight into the nature, structure, and functioning of human personality and of social groups. This made it possible for him to meet the learning needs of each. In other words, he discerned their deficiencies and knew what kind of help they needed in order to enable him to ‘fill the gaps’ of both knowledge and understanding” (King, pg. 85) He was also able to take great spiritual truths,

² Note: Most of the material in this lesson was gleaned from Dan King’s, *“At the Feet of the Master Teacher.”* Exact quotes are cited.

both unchangeable and eternal, and set them in the minds of his hearers using their own surroundings and experiences. He was able to express His message with unparalleled clarity, efficiency, and permanency. This is a skill that we too can learn. However, it is something that will take the most serious thought and effort. All Christians should strive to teach the gospel, but none should take it lightly. We must contemplate how Jesus related His message to the people so that we can learn this skill and use it in our teaching as well.

Simple

In a world of education, men take pride in creating literary works so scholarly that it is impossible for the average person to understand. They seek to present their thoughts with words and phrases so complex and intangible that the uneducated may say within themselves, "He must be brilliant." Not so with Jesus. The power of His teaching was not in the complexity of His message, but in simplicity. He taught in such a way that all could understand from the greatest to the least. His words and phrases were familiar to all. This truth can be seen through the subject matter of His parable (read Matthew chapter 13). The statements used in His lessons were concise and simple. He did not make His thoughts ornate or complex, but clear and easy to understand (consider the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew five through seven). Jesus taught so that the simple folk could understand, and if He attracted those from other classes in the process, they too would be able to understand. But if He had addressed His message to the well educated, the uneducated would have been left out. "Someone has said that God must have loved common people since he made so many of them. Jesus certainly extended God's love and his message to them, leaving the rest to "bend down to get it" (King, pp. 86-87).

Clear

A person may use simple words without being clear. It has happened many times in every person's life that we have tried to say one thing, but are understood as saying something completely different. Teachers often run into this same problem. In an attempt to be thorough concerning a subject that might otherwise be easily understood, they may fill their pupils' minds with so much information that their pupils become lost and confused. Jesus, on the other hand, was not unclear. There were times when the true meaning of His message was hidden. But when such was the case it was always deliberate (Matt. 13:10-17, 36; Mark 4:33). When He desired all to understand, all did understand (Matt. 15:10-14). For example, we may spend hours discussing man's obedience to God, but Jesus summed it up in two phrases, namely: "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,*" and "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matthew 22:37-40). Concerning these He said, "*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*" Clarity is characteristic of a great Teacher. Jesus was a great teacher. The gospel message is simple and it is clear. Let us remember that when teaching others.

Relevant

In religious circles today, there is a statement that is often used which says, "keep it relevant." We must note that this statement refers to man's desire to remove from God's message all things that seem "old" to the present generation. This is not how we are using the term *relevant*. For there is that which seems relevant in man's eyes, and there is that which God knows to be relevant. Jesus always spent His time talking about things which were relevant to man's salvation. "The teachings of Jesus were always pertinent to both his audience and the general situation of the instruction given. In other words, the audience needed what Jesus taught...He never wasted his breath by talking to no one in particular about nothing special or important, unlike rambling tangents of many modern-day, ill-prepared Bible class teachers" (King, pg. 88). Jesus spoke to men about trust in God (Matt. 6:25-26). He provided guidance for interacting with our neighbors (Matt. 7:1-2). He taught men how to approach God in prayer (Matt. 6:6-13; 7:7). And He taught men where true treasure can be found (Matt. 6:19). These are the types of things that should be on our minds and on our lips (Phil. 4:8).

Questions for Lesson Nine

1. Why should we look to Jesus as the example for how to teach?
2. Who sent Jesus to teach men?
3. Why is it important that we understand who sent Jesus?
4. What is meant by, “Jesus was a skillful teacher?”
5. Explain how we can learn to be skillful in our teaching?
6. How do we keep our teaching simple?
7. How do we make our teaching relevant?

Casting Our Pearls Before The Swine

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 10

As disciples of Christ we have a mission on this earth: “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:19-20). As faithful servants we must do all we can to fulfill this commission. Yet, we must also understand that in spite of our efforts there are going to be people who simply do not want to obey the gospel. What is a Christian supposed to do when this is the case? Jesus illustrates it for us in Matthew 7:6 to help us understand.

Casting Pearls Before the Swine

“*Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces*” (Matthew 7:6). The dogs and the swine in this passage are those who reject the word of God. Just as swine could not care less about pearls, so the scoffer could not care less about the gospel. Understand that the message we teach is holy and the time we spend teaching is precious. When we continue to teach those who have already rejected God’s we are casting our pearls before the swine. Our goal is to preach the gospel to every creature (Colossians 1:23). But if we spend our time on those who have already rejected the treasures Christ offers, then we waste time that we could be looking for other honest hearts to teach. For this reason, when men reject the gospel we are commanded to leave them and move on. On this matter Jesus commanded, “*And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet*” (Matthew 10:14-15).

Learning the Difference

When we study with people, they may believe and obey after one study or four, two months or two years. The point of this lesson is not that we should give up on people who take a long time to obey the gospel. If they are taught correctly then they will understand that becoming a Christian holds great responsibility and necessitates great change. This was the point that Jesus made in Luke 14:28. Because of the sacrifice this requires, many people will want to think long and hard about their decision. We may study with a person who honestly desires to know the truth but has had their past doctrine so ingrained into them that it takes them a while to see it. Therefore, just because a person does not convert immediately after hearing the gospel does not give us the right to stop teaching them. We must be willing to teach as long as they will hear. Even when Agrippa had impure motives for visiting Paul, Paul still used their visits to teach him—even after two years (Acts 24:24-27).

We must learn the difference between a person who needs time to think and those who reject the gospel and judge themselves “*unworthy of everlasting life*” (Acts 13:46).

Teaching with Hope, But Prepared for Rejection

Whenever we teach the gospel we should be optimistic that men are going to obey. After all, that is the reason we are teaching them. However, we must also be prepared for if men reject the gospel. To help us prepare, God has given us examples of how men have reacted to the gospel and instruction on how to deal with it. Those who simply refuse the gospel will make it known in several ways. Some situations will be easier than others, but we must be prepared.

1. Some will simply not want to study any longer. When Jesus was teaching in John chapter six, He gave the people doctrine that was hard for them to bear. John 6:66 describes their reaction after rejecting His words: *“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”* People today will respond to our teaching in this manner as well. Yet we must not be discouraged. Jesus was not discouraged nor was He embarrassed. If we read further on in John chapter six, we will find that Jesus kept preaching. He understood that those who were of the world and whose hearts sought the things of the world would not accept that which was from God. *“He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God”* (John 8:47). We must understand this as well and learn to move one when men decide to *“walk with Him no more.”*
2. Some will insult us on account of the message that we preach. Jesus assured us that this would happen in Matthew 10:25-26. *“It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.”* We must not be afraid when men react this way. We must put on our shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16). We must put on the attitude that Paul had when he wrote, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation...”* (Romans 1:16). Indeed, we must be willing to overcome such evil with good (Romans 12:21). *“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you”* (Luke 6:27-28). We must learn to teach the gospel with our godly examples as well as our words so that when men curse us on account of the gospel *“they may be ashamed”* (1 Peter 3:16).
3. Some may actually go out of their way to hinder the work that we are trying to do. *“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews...But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds”* (Acts 17:10, 13). We must understand that this is part of the battle that we face as soldiers of Christ. Not only do we fight against sin in our own lives, but against the sins of those who seek to hinder the work of God. Therefore, we must be ready to fight such battles in a godly manner. First and foremost we must understand that our weapons are spiritual, not worldly. Therefore, when men try to hinder our work, under no circumstances should we seek revenge, become bitter against them, or seek to *“give them a taste of their own medicine.”* Our weapon is the *“sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Ephesians 6:17). Our battle consists of keeping our own faith and casting down arguments using the word of God (2 Corinthians 10:4-6). God has said, *“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord”* (Romans 12:19). We must overcome evil with good. We must overcome contention with truth. When Jesus said, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”* (Luke 9:23), this is what He meant by *“take up his cross*

daily.” We must be aware of the persecution that is in the world, prepare for it, and strive to overcome it with good, just as Jesus did. As Peter wrote, “*To this we were called*” (1 Peter 2:21-25).

Keeping Our Goal in Mind

Remember, just because is not converted does not mean we have failed. Rather, we have succeeded. Our responsibility is to preach and to teach the gospel, not to simply baptize every person in sight. Yes, we should desire that all men be saved (Acts 26:28-29), but we must understand that our mission is to spread the word. After that we must trust God that His word is powerful enough to draw those who are willing. Paul recognized this in his ministry as he wrote to the Corinthians saying, “*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...*” (1 Corinthians 1:17). Therefore, we fulfill our task by teaching sound doctrine and holding fast the pattern of sound words. Beyond that is the realm of God’s work, not ours. “*I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the increase***” (1 Corinthians 3:6). The power to convict and convert people does not rest with us, but with the word which God has given us (Romans 1:16-17).

It is always difficult when men reject the gospel. But when we keep our minds focused on the goal then it will make it easier for us to press on. Therefore, let us press on toward the goal, move on when we reach a dead end, and not grow weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9).

Questions for Lesson Ten

1. What is the Christian's commission as a disciple of Christ?
2. Will every person we teach automatically want to obey the gospel?
3. To what two animals does Jesus compare those who reject the gospel? Give a scripture.
 - a.
 - b.
4. Why is it so important that we not "cast our pearls before the swine" when men reject the gospel?
5. If a person takes a long time to obey the gospel should we just give up on them? Explain.
6. What are three reactions that we should expect from those who reject the gospel? Give a scripture for each.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
7. If a person is not converted after we teach them, have we failed to achieve our goal?
8. What is our goal?

A Plan of Evangelism

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 11

Throughout this series we have discussed the work of teaching the gospel from the individual's point of view. We have discussed how individuals can invite people to Bible studies or talk to people in their day-to-day interaction with them. A study on teaching the gospel is not complete, however, without also discussing the need for a congregational plan for evangelism. As much as individuals have a responsibility to spread the word in their personal lives, it is also the responsibility of the church as a collective body to make a unified effort to reach the lost. For this reason, the church is referred to as the "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" in 1 Timothy 3:15. The church in Thessalonica provides a wonderful example of this kind of unified effort. Paul commends them saying, "*For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.*" In this same manner, it must be the goal of every congregation to sound forth the word of the Lord. To coordinate recourses and efforts in order to proclaim God's word far and near.

The Benefit of Working Together

A few years back, a test was performed to see how much weight two Clydesdale horses could pull together, verses the two working separately. In the test one horse was able to pull 1400 lbs. and the other 1600 lbs. When harnessed together, one might suppose that they would be able to pull a total of 3000 lbs. However, the test showed that when the horses worked together they were able to pull a total of 4,800 lbs. When people work together in this way it can have the same effect. Members of the church may be able to convert people by themselves in their own personal lives, and thus we should be doing this. But when they coordinate their efforts and work together, the benefits can be staggering (Eccl. 4:12).

A Plan Must Have A Purpose

In order for Christians to effectively work together, a specific goal or purpose must be in mind. Some may say that our purpose is to teach the gospel, and they would be right. But we must be more specific than that. Is our goal to reach a specific group of people (older, younger, racial divisions, denominational groups, neighbors, etc.)? Is our goal to reach a certain number of people or to cover a certain area in a specific amount of time? For example, Jesus specified to His disciples that they were to preach to the Jews only in Matthew 10:5-6. Then, later on, He sent them into the rest of the world according Matthew 28:19-20. Paul also had a specific goal whenever he entered a city while on his missionary journeys. He would always go to the synagogues first in order to reach the Jews first. "*It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first.*" Then, depending on the reaction of the Jews, he would take his message to the gentiles. "*But since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles*" (Acts 14:36). When establishing such a purpose, it is also important to establish a method of accomplishing that purpose—a *plan of action*.

New Testament Examples

Luke 10:1: When Jesus sent the seventy disciples out among the Jews to preach the gospel of the kingdom, He sent them two-by-two. This is a method that is commonly used today. It is used whenever two people work together, traveling from city to city, village to village, or house to house. It is a method that can be very effective in locating people who are interested in Bible study. Those who choose to spread the gospel in this way must also consider the warnings that Jesus gives and

prepare their hearts for whatever situations they may encounter. *“Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves...But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you...But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’ But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city”* (Luke 10:1-12).

Acts 13:2-3: As commanded by the Holy Spirit, the church in Antioch sent two men to teach the gospel. Churches today can follow this same pattern by having one or several men visit neighboring areas churches have not yet been started. Usually, this plan requires that those involved be able to devote all of their time to the work. A variation of this pattern would be for members to walk around their own neighborhoods or near by neighborhoods. This can be done one the weekends or other free days and would actively involve all of the members. It is often the case that one congregation consists of members located in several different cities or towns. This can be beneficial for covering a wider area.

Acts 16:13; 17:17: Paul located places in each city where people gathered who had an interest in spiritual things. Members in a congregation can work together to find such places in the town where the building is located or in the towns where the members live. The members can coordinate their efforts to visit these places. They can also get involved in community activities where people might be interested in spiritual things. Sometimes, members are hard pressed to find such a location in their town. When this is the case, they can create their own “community activity” by setting up a community Bible study and advertising it to the community. For those who are really ambitious, this can be used in combinations with the “door-to-door” method. Those going door-to-door can invite people to the study.

Being flexible: These are simply three methods that were used by gospel preachers in the Bible to reach the lost. There are other methods available today, but individual congregations must be willing to work together to come up with a plan that works best for them. There is a danger in this, however, that must be avoided. Sadly, many people assume that since a plan has been established there is no other proper way to reach the lost than that. That is to say, if a plan is in place no person can go outside that plan to find opportunities. Some members have their eyes so focused on “the plan” that they forget to keep their eyes opened for other opportunities. If opportunities arise without using “the plan” that is ok. That sort of thing happened all the time in the New Testament. Consider Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip had been busy preaching in Samaria when suddenly God wanted him to go to a road in the middle of the desert (Acts 8:26). Peter was working in Joppa when the Lord sent him to Caesarea to preach the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:19-20). God is able to provide opportunities in ways and during times that we may least expect. Therefore, we must always be watching and ready to take every opportunity that presents itself.

Conclusion

These ideas are merely suggestions from examples we find in the Bible. It is recommended that a congregation meet for the specific purpose of discussing this matter and establishing a plan of their own which they feel would work best in their specific situation. Remember this also, a successful plan is not one that fills seats, but spreads the word of truth according to the pattern of truth.

Questions for Lesson 11

1. Should a congregation be content with letting individuals teach people as they have the time? Explain.

2. What did Paul praise the church in Thessalonica for?

3. Who is responsible for establishing a plan of evangelism for a congregation?

4. List three plans or methods of evangelism that were used by Christians in the New Testament. Give a scripture for each.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

5. Once a plan of evangelism has been established, should the members of a congregation rely solely upon that plan to find opportunities? Explain.

Saving Our Own

Teaching the Gospel: Lesson 12

A great many churches are active in evangelism. They are keenly aware of the great commission given to them by Christ to “*disciple all nations.*” There is one aspect of that commission, however, that we must not overlook. It is true that Jesus commanded us to “*Go therefore and disciple all nations,*” but at the same time Jesus commanded us saying, “*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*” (Matthew 28:19-20). A person’s obedience to the gospel does not mark the completion of our task in teaching the gospel. Rather, it is only the beginning. The apostle Paul understood this as he completed his missionary journeys and said to his companions, “*Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing*” (Acts 15:36). It is also recorded that after they had preached the gospel in many cities they “*returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’*” (Acts 14:21-22, *emph. mine, DP*). In following this New Testament pattern, our work in teaching the gospel must also consist of strengthening the souls of all the members of the church.

New Converts

Throughout the world there are many new converts who are excited about their salvation and about the kingdom of heaven. Yet, they are being neglected by older, more mature Christians. This is a pattern that God does not approve of in His church. Our obedience to the gospel is of such a nature that we are told in 1 Peter 1:22, “*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.*” When this sense of brotherly love exists in us, then we will not allow any new convert to be neglected. Instead, their joy over their salvation will be magnified by their joy over the love that God’s people will show them. Jesus has called us unto many things: to righteousness (2 Timothy 2:2), to be saints (to be faithful, Romans 1:6-7), to justification and glorification (Romans 8:30), to fellowship (Romans 9:7), and to peace (1 Corinthians 7:15). He has also called us unto love, as it is written, “*By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:34). In order to fulfill all of these things Christians must be involved with one another. We must be willing to care for each other’s needs and to strengthen one another. We must also be willing to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

The only way we can fulfill all of these things is if we all strive to do our part to teach and encourage new converts. This is why Bible studies on foundational principles are so important. Just as a young child needs the proper nutrition in order to grow and mature, a Christian needs the proper diet of spiritual food in order to develop as a child of God. “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4). For this reason one of the most important aspects of a congregation’s work in teaching the gospel is that of teaching new converts, beginning immediately after they have obeyed the gospel. When we do this we will be like those who were converted in the first century who, after they obeyed the gospel in Acts 2:42, “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (*emph. mine, DP*).

Erring Brethren

In spite of our efforts to instruct men in the way of truth and to teach the gospel to all the members, there are some who fall away. Jesus understood that this would happen when He spoke the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-9. However, no matter how true this may be, it does not excuse Christians of their responsibility to teach the gospel to their brethren who are in sin. Paul commanded in Galatians 6:1, “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*” In our modern-day world of “live and let live” many congregations have missed the mark when it comes to properly dealing with erring brethren. We must not allow this to happen. Jesus did not neglect us when we were in sin, as it says, “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). Therefore, we must not neglect our brethren, especially when they are in sin.

What are we supposed to do? We cannot *force* a person to live a righteous life, nor can we keep a person from making bad decisions. The Psalmist prophesied of God’s people saying, “*Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power*” (Psalm 110:3). Therefore, if a person is going to be obedient, it must be of their own free will. His/her brethren cannot force them into submission. Nevertheless, there is still much that we can and must do. By our examples we can encourage a right attitude in erring brethren. By taking a firm stance on matters of godliness, morality, doctrine, and faithfulness, we can lessen the likelihood of our brethren falling deeper in to sin; we can even encourage them to come out of sin. When we encounter those who are unwilling to put off their sinful practices, we can follow God’s instructions so that their irreverence does not influence other members.

In each case, we must instruct our brethren with patience and humility. If we see a brother in sin we *must* go to them and exhort them to repent. “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted*” (Galatians 6:1). Sometimes, a Christian may sin out of ignorance. When this is the case, all that is needed is gentle exhortation, correction, and encouragement. If the person has a good heart then they will see their error, repent, and replace their sin with that which is from God. Read Acts 18:24-28.

At times, a brother who is sinning may be hesitant to admit that what they are doing is wrong. “I don’t see anything wrong with it.” “The Bible doesn’t say anything about it; therefore I can do it as much as I want.” When this is the case, we cannot simply leave him alone. Doing so would ensure that he continue in his sin and be condemned when the Lord comes. Rather, we are commanded to *reprove* him. To reprove means to convince or to convict a person of what the scriptures say. In order to do this we must be willing to sit down with the person and reason the scripture with them; to convince them of God’s righteousness. Even if there is some resistance on his part, we must continue to instruct him—his soul is at stake. Our hope is that, with time, he may be convince and eventually repent.

What if a person has done great sin or will not repent of their sin? Consider the immoral man mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:1: “*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles -- that a man has his father’s wife!*” Paul rebuked the Corinthians for allowing such a sin to persist within the church. Notice that even though this one man was sinning, the rest of the congregation was rebuked for

allowing that sin to persist among them. In order to deal with that situation properly Paul commanded those brethren to “*deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (1 Corinthians 5:5). There are other passages that teach this same thing. “*...withdraw from every brother walks disorderly*” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). “*From such withdraw yourself*” (1 Timothy 6:5).

Many people today consider this type of action to be too harsh. But God shows us that when such an action is carried out according to His instructions, it will end up for the better. Paul wrote again concerning the immoral man in 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, “*This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.*” The man repented of his immorality and was restored to the body. When we withdraw from one of the members, this is the response that we hope for.

Sadly, not every person repents when they are withdrawn from. However, there are other purposes for which we must carry out this type of action. 1) “*A little leaven leavens the whole lump*” (1 Corinthians 5:6). This means that when one man’s sin is allowed to persist, it can affect the rest of the members, even influence them to follow in his example. Therefore we must withdraw from a brother who continues in their sin so that the rest of the body is not influenced. 2) “*Such sexual immorality is not even named among the gentiles*” (1 Corinthians 5:1). The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Christians are the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). We can be neither of these if sin is allowed to continue among us. We are striving to teach the world concerning the righteousness of God. When we allow sin to persist without following God’s instruction to remove it, we are showing the world that God’s righteous standard is not really that important. We cannot allow this to happen! In our efforts to teach the gospel, we must also ensure that the gospel is being obeyed by all the members of the church. It was for this reason that Paul charged Timothy to “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*” (2 Timothy 4:2). Therefore, let us be willing to teach the gospel to the lost, and let us be just as willing to instruct those who are in sin according to God’s holy pattern.

All Members

One does not need to be a new convert or to be in sin in order to hear the gospel. Even the most mature Christians need the continual nourishment of God’s word. In spite of all that God has spoken on the subject of pride, there are still some Christians who believe that they have learned all that they can learn and have gone as far as they can go, and just do not need to study any more. It is just not so! The apostle Paul was more active and more zealous and had more insight into the word of God than any of us living today can hope to have. Yet he was the one who said, “*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me*” (Philippians 3:12). No matter how hard we study or how long we have been Christians, we still need the gospel and all the truth that is revealed therein. It is a gift from God and the guide for our lives. Therefore, as we teach the gospel to save the lost, we must always remember that the church as a whole needs the gospel just as much. Therefore, let us strive to *save our own* as we work together to teach the gospel. The gospel is for all!

Questions for Lesson 12

1. Does the church's responsibility in teaching the gospel end with teaching unbelievers? Explain.

2. Who needs to hear gospel preaching besides the lost and why?
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

3. When we obey the truth what should our attitude be toward our brethren?

4. What will the answer for question three cause us to do for:

New converts?

Brethren in sin?

5. What are the consequences of sin being allowed to persist in the church?

6. Describe the steps that can be taken in order to remove sin from a congregation.

7. Will any Christian ever reach the point that they will no longer need to study God's word? Explain.

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